

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 4, Issue 7: July, 2010

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

## **Mark your calendars!**

July 10: Open hours at the archives; 9:30-11:30 a.m.

July 24: Open hours at the archives; 9:30-11:30 a.m.

August 14: 9:00 a.m.  
Meeting on Bylaws of MCHA; 140 Mill Street;  
Regular monthly MCHA meeting; 9:30-11:30 a.m.

August 14: Open Hours at the Archives; 9:30-11:30 a.m.

August 28: Open Hours at the Archives; 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**May 21, 2011**  
Minnesota City Day:  
Belgian Waffles by GBDRF  
8:00-12:00 a.m., Riverway Learning Community

**Note:**  
No July or August Reading Group meeting;  
No July MCHA meeting

## **MCHA Announces Open Hours at Mill Street Archives and Work Session on Bylaws**

At its June 12 meeting, MCHA members agreed to hold open hours in summer months at the Archives of the Association housed in the renovated space in the rear of the First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street in Minnesota City. Association members will be available to direct visitors to files on general Minnesota City information, on specific family information, to receive information and/or materials from visitors and to visit. Visitors will be able to check out a number of items for home use, including DVDS of the 2008 flood (donated to the archives by GBDRF) and books on Minnesota history. **In July and August, open hours will be from 9:30 to 11:30 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays.**

Following the sesquicentennial celebration in 2002, MCHA members drafted a mission statement and bylaws. MCHA members are beginning the redrafting of the bylaws to better match the organizational needs of the association at this time. Committee work on the bylaws will begin at 9:00 preceding the meeting on August 14; the regular meeting will begin as usual at 9:30. **All persons with skills and experience and interest in these matters of legal protocol are asked to please attend and assist this process.**

## **MCHA extends Sympathy**

to the family and friends of Delores Kukowski, Denzer Road, Minnesota City, who died on June 8.

to the family and friends of Jean Riedemann, wife of Minnesota Citian, Donald Riedemann, who died on June 11. Currently living in Mukwonago, WI., the Riedemanns formerly lived in Minnesota City.

to the family and friends of Ray Denzer, who died on June 10 (see **Buried in Oakland**).

Check Out The Website: [www.minnesotacity.org](http://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.



## July in Minnesota City History

The opening of the Oaks was a significant event in the history of Minnesota City. This ad (below, right) was from the July 1, 1930, *Winona Republican Herald*. The message for the opening read, "The management has determined to operate this roadside tavern in a high class manner. Feel free to bring your friends and enjoy the finest kind of food. We especially cater to special dinner parties and private parties. Our food is prepared by Al Hammer, former chef at the Oxford Hotel, St. Paul and Hotel Martin, Rochester."

## Neighborhood News in 1901 Minnesota City

(From *The Winona Republican Herald*, July 24, 1901):

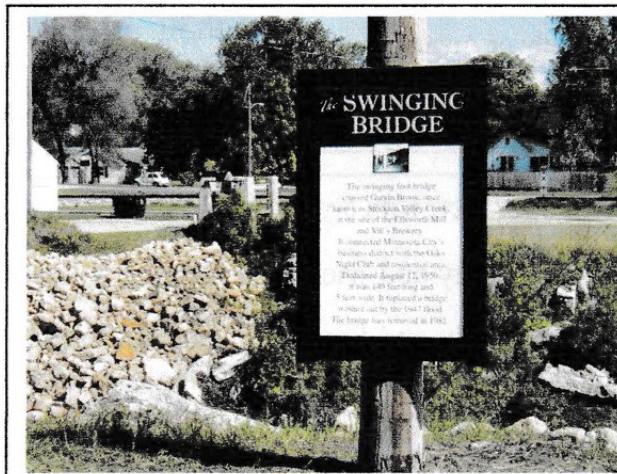
"Frank Kennedy's swimming school down by the slaughter house is a great institution. Ladies and gentlemen and little boys and girls gather there these hot evenings and don their bathing suits, some of which are very striking, and disport themselves for an hour or so in the warm waters of the Rollingsstone. Some of the ladies are becoming quite expert and there is quite a rivalry between the married ladies as to who is the most graceful in the water. Of course, it wouldn't do for the gentlemen to express an opinion on that point... Our blackberry crop is cut very short by the dry weather... Chris Ludwigen has not yet found his little finger which the horse bit off and swallowed. The wound is still very painful and he is under the doctor's care yet... It's hot work on the railroad grade here these days and men and horses have to quit work frequently. It's hard to keep men on the work... Harvest is in full progress. The yield is fair although the spring wheat is badly damaged."



## Swinging Bridge Commemorative Sign Placed at Garvin Brook Site

As part of MCHA's mission to mark historical sites, a sign was placed at the site where a swinging bridge previously joined the residential areas on either side of Garvin Brook. A bridge crossed the creek for many years. In 1947, a flood washed out the bridge; it was replaced in 1950. The bridge was removed in 1981 because of liability concerns.

Funded by a grant to MCHA from Experiment in Rural Cooperation, the city of Minnesota City mounted the sign for Minnesota City Day, 2010. At the dedication, David Eckert, MCHA board leader, read the inscription and poured water from Garvin Brook over the sign.



While reading the sign, observers view the creek which is now heavily rip rapped. Although the sign was readied two years earlier, its placing was delayed because of the flood. MCHA has now participated in marking the sites of the First Baptist Church, The Oaks, The Bridge, and the Whetstone Homestead. In the future, these will become part of a Minnesota City Walking Tour of historic sites.



## Buried in Oakland – Ray Denzer 1919 - 2010

There have been many changes in Denzer family history since Ray purchased land north of Minnesota City about two miles from the farmstead where he was raised. At this home, he and Lola raised their family of eight children. Married in 1940, Ray was working for a Winona Foundry for thirty seven cents an hour, he reported to Riverway students who interviewed him in 2002. After the first baby's birth, Ray asked for fifty cents an hour. This request not being granted, he went to work in Milwaukee "for sixty nine cents an hour piece rate, not a daily rate." When he returned to Minnesota City after his time in the army, he built the house they lived in until recently—"every inch of it out of solid oak." He also built a barn and shed,

purchased two cows and started farming. Ray's description of farms with land in the valley and on the ridges, typical of many of the area farms, was "farming on two decks." Not liking the hill roads, the Denzers planted the ridge land in pines and stopped farming it. While working for Standard Lumber Company, Ray started the sawmill which now is a pallet company operated by his son Dallas. One of Ray's hobbies was woodworking, and students visiting in 2002 saw solid antique rockers he had fashioned. A story which intrigued his listeners at the interview was Ray's acquisition of a Chinese import tree, a ginkgo, which Dr. Robert Tweedy gave him when Tweedy was going to build a tennis court. In 2002 Ray still had the lumber in the shed.

Many events and accomplishments of Ray's life seem like dreams come true—his starting and owning a sawmill, seeing the mill passed on to a son, his ability to work into nearly his last years on wood and machines, the travels around the world, the cabin on the hill, and especially his wife and family who have shared so many of these experiences. One son, Raymond, died in a plane accident. All others were present with children and grandchildren at Ray's funeral service.

Ray attended Minnesota City Historical Association presentations. Two of these were memorable connections. The first was in March of 2004 when Pamela Aune presented the history of the Burley Family in Minnesota City. D.Q. Burley was a member of the Western Farm and Village Association, the founding group of Minnesota City. The Burley land was sold by Alvah Burley, a son to D.Q., to John Denzer, Ray's father. A second connection was the recent presentation by Kay Vanderzee Denzer and Dallas Denzer of the Denzer family history in this area. Many persons in attendance knew that Ray's health was not good; it was a particularly poignant moment when Lola and Ray entered the building. For many, this last connection reminds of the significance of family in the Denzer history.

Ray William Denzer died in Winona on June 17, 2010. Ray was born on March 23, 1919 in Winona to John and Esther Whetstone Denzer. In 1940 he married Lola Woodard; they were the parents of LaRay, Laurel, Raymond (deceased), Aloha, Dallas, Nancy, Robert, and DeAnn.

Ray worked as an apprentice tool and die maker, parts maker for PT boats and airplanes, Western Coal and Oil Company in Winona, Standard Lumber, and at the Denzer Saw Mill. Ray was a member of the First Baptist Church and the local Teamsters Union.



Ray Denzer visits with Pamela Aune and Wallace Burley at an MCHA presentation in March, 2004. The Burley land was purchased by the Denzer family.



## Minnesota City Community Readers Invite New Members for Fall Discussions

The Minnesota City Community Readers have completed another year of dynamic discussion of reading selections that have informed, entertained, and challenged. Historically, as in previous years, the group will not meet in July and August. Readers have selected books for three months beginning in September:

September 16 -- Willa Cather, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*

October 21 -- Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

November 18—Carl Hoffmann, *The Lunatic Express*



Readers are able to secure copies of the books from inexpensive venues including libraries, garage sales, friends, Amazon.com. Group member Lori Donehower has been instrumental in securing a number of copies of some selections; readers help each other locate books. Persons are always welcome to attend whether or not they have read the selection. The last topic of discussion generated by Stockett's *The Help*, --integration, societal/cultural goals related to integration-- is one that will be expanded by the September selection, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. In it, Cather examines the role of "good slave owners."

### MCHA Congratulates:

Jim and Sandra Nelton Stevens on their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Sandra was the daughter of Art and Helen Nelton, Minnesota City residents. Sandra had one brother, David, who died in 1977. The Stevens were married at St. Paul's Church on July 2, 1960, and celebrated their anniversary at the parish hall. The Stevens' now reside in Winona.

### Minnesota City 12U Grey Team Successful in Tournament

Winona Post, June 16, 2010 reports first place achievement of the Minnesota City Cardinal Baseball 12U Grey Team in the La Crescent June 12-14 tournament. Brady Heftman was cited for pitching a no hit 6 inning game, and was the star of the championship game.

### MCHA thanks:

- Donna and Betsy Friesen for the Saturday refreshments at the Archives and for the lawn care at 140 Mill St.
- the City Council of Minnesota City for their contribution of \$500.00 to support the goals of Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA).
- Rollingstone Township for photographs (still to be identified), an antique kerosene lamp, and a voting box filled with township documents. The documents include voting regulations, many maps, and records of Winona County Planning and Zoning Boards.

### Father Donald Lovas Retires from Active Ministry

Rev. Donald Lovas, a native Winonan, officially retired from active ministry as a Catholic priest on July 1. Lovas has had responsibility for Holy Trinity Parish in Rollingstone since 2005 and for Holy Trinity and St. Paul's Parish in Minnesota City and St. Mary's Parish in Minneiska since 2006. Lovas has taught and administered in many parishes of the Diocese of Winona. A farewell gathering was held for Rev. Lovas on June 27 at Holy Trinity Hall, Rollingstone.

*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.*