

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 5, Issue 2: February, 2011

Mark your calendars!

February 12:
Monthly MCHA meeting, Riverway Learning Community, 9:30 a.m.

February 17:
Minnesota City Community Readers, Selection: Mankill's *Faceless Killers*, Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m.

February 19:
School Reunion Meeting, Steve's Anchor Inn, Minnesota City, 9:00 a.m.

February 19:
Old Settlers Meeting starting at 9:00; Campbell presentation 1:00; Winona Middle School Auditorium

March 20: Bob Bambenek, County Recorder presents on Censuses, Riverway Learning Community, 2:00 p.m.

Minnesota City Day: May 21, 2011

February 28 Public Meeting on Wastewater Treatment

A public hearing on improvements for Minnesota City including a wastewater collection and treatment system will be held at 6:00 p.m. on February 28, at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Mn. City. Persons who wish to be heard with reference to the proposed improvements will be heard at this meeting, and written or oral objections will be considered, according to City Clerk, Lori Donehower.



Joe Palen, Bonestroo Employee, Project Engineer for Minnesota City, addresses Minnesota City residents about proposed Wastewater Treatment

A public information meeting was held on Wednesday, January 12, at Riverway Learning Community in Minnesota City to update residents and property owners in Minnesota City on the progress of the municipal wastewater collection and treatment. To finalize engineering plans for the project, Bonestroo contacts property owners to plan property easements. The city has been awarded two grants totaling approximately

\$1.8 million to offset the cost of this project. The remainder of the cost will be provided by low interest loans. (Bonestroo is a full-service engineering, planning, and environmental science firm serving the municipal, agency, private, energy, and industrial market ...)

MCHA Sponsors County Recorder Bambenek March 20 presentation on Numbers and People

Bob Bambenek, County Recorder, will present a lecture at Riverway Learning Community, March 20 at 2:00 p.m. Bambenek will have results of the 2010 census, and will also present his own research on data from the censuses of early Winona County history. Bambenek will also present on his investigation of land grants to Native Americans in this area. Persons who have heard Bambenek presentations on other occasions have appreciated his customized approaches to material and to expected audiences.

Local Historic Building Owner, Brian Campbell, Winona County Old Settlers Feb. 19 Presenter

Brian Campbell, the owner of the former City Nite Club, 159 Mill Street, will be the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the Winona County Old Settlers on February 19. The meeting is being held at Winona Middle School, beginning at 9:00 a.m., lunch at noon, with Brian's presentation at 1:00 in the school auditorium. MCHA sponsored a presentation by Campbell of the history of his building in November of 2009. A broad range of interests are accommodated with the history which includes the appearances of many entertainment groups at the site, its connections with The Oaks, the history of its many owners, and the sometimes raucous events of the effects of prohibition. Persons still connected with this edifice found Campbell's research particularly informative.

Date Change for School Reunion: July 16

At meetings on January 9 and January 22 at Steve's Anchor Inn in Minnesota City, attendees moved forward the organizational aspects of the planning for an all Minnesota City School Reunion on July 16. Date for the reunion was changed from July 30 to July 16, with an additional gathering time planned for Friday evening. Individuals are volunteering to head Food, Program, History, and Friday Night agendas. Facebook will be used to assist in location of alumni from the schools. On January 22 the committee persons named were financial: Teresa Valentine; Secretary: Debbie Berhow, Communications: Andrea Church and Jody Berhow, Food: Jackie Denzer. Reunion contact person is Leasah Lilla (minnesotacityreunion@charter.net), and LaVerne Fritz continues to inform, motivate, and encourage the progress of the group.



LaVern Fritz discusses committees for all school reunion with Jean Gardner, Jackie Denzer, Leasah Lilla, and Alec Lilla.

New in the Archives:

Don Evanson has contributed a 2000 issue of *North Western Lines*, a journal published by the Chicago and North Western Historical Society. The issue contains a twenty page article called *The Wooden-Axle Road, The CGW 'Winona Line.'* Included are a large number of photographs from the Winona County and Minnesota State Historical Societies, from Tenny, Gensmer and other photo collections. Those of trestles portray impressive structures for the train crossings. Minnesota City MCHA readers will be interested by the many familiar locations and individuals named, including Winona, Bethany, Rollingstone, Bear Creek, Skunk Hollow, Altura, Eyota and others. Among the contributors of research to the article is listed MCHA member, Erik Brom. Author Huddleston concludes the information with this poignant passage: "Sometimes I think of the ghosts of trains flowing nightly through Norton Township reaching for higher ground. A small 4-4-0 and a couple of wood coaches pass through oak trees and open barn doors and across invisible trestles. I imagine the distinguished orators on a lumber stage that predicted the railroad would make Winona a great American city. And the cheerful applause from Winonans excited about the city's future. The railroad is gone today, leaving only toppled stone abutments from a steel bridge, a rock cut in the wooded hills, and a string of moss covered ties on a hillside. Remains that bear witness to the expansion fever that built a forgotten railroad." *North Western Lines*, Winter 2000, p. 37. Readers are welcome to view this magazine during open archive hours in summer months, at MCHA events at the archives, or to request it for loan: 689-2440.

Minnesota City Youth Baseball February 22 Registration Set

Minnesota City Youth Baseball signup times have been scheduled for February 22 at the Minnesota City City Hall. 6:00-6:30 p.m. is the announced time for 8 and 10 year olds and 6:30-7:00 is the time for 12, 14, and 16 year olds. Minnesota City players are signed up first, followed by all returning players. This is a non-tryout program. Fees are \$35.00 for players with \$15.00 for additional siblings. According to information contributed last year from the organizers of the group, "We are a very hard working group of people who come together 4 months out of the year to teach our kids the right way to play baseball and to not only respect the game, but also the people we play the game with and against. We teach our kids how to win graciously and how to lose with dignity and class." Readers who follow the progress of these teams will know that their success rate is high. For information, call Scott Fritz, 452-1299.

Riverway Learning Community Students Exhibit Photographs

According to *The Winona Post*, Riverway students, for a second year, exhibited at Mugby Junction on Huff Street, the photographs they entered in The Friends of the Upper Mississippi Refuge photo contest. The display opened on January 19.

MCHA Thanks:

- Jean Gardner for *Pioneer Press* information from Minnesota Historical Society (see page 4).
- Marianne Mastenbrook for archival research assistance.
- Don Evanson for the *North Western Lines* issue detailed on page 2.

Congratulations to:

Senior Christine Penrod, daughter of Kelvin Penrod and Lori Ledebuhr, WSHS Winhawk of the Week, as reported in the Winona Daily News of January 8.

Teachers described Christine as “hard-working, committed, polite, honest and pleasant, friendly with a positive attitude.” Christine plans to join the army following graduation. Christine’s family lives on Mill Street in Minnesota City.

MCHA extends sympathy to:

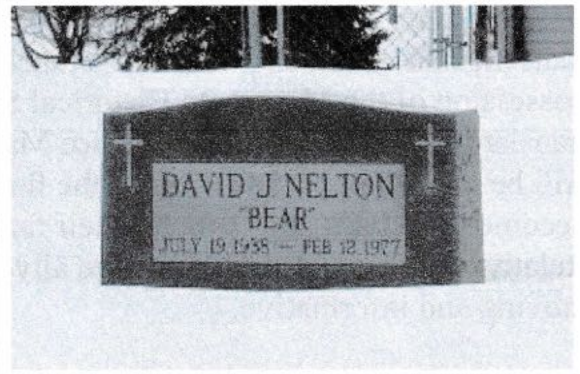
- the family and friends of Lilla E. Ford, 91, of Minnesota City, who died January 16, 2011.
- Jackie Denzer, on the death of her brother in law, Rodney Pellowski, who died in Winona on January 25.

Buried in Oakland: David Nelton; 1938-1977

David Nelton was the son of Helen Canfield Nelton and Arthur Nelton. He was born in Winona on July 19, 1938. At the time of his death, he was living in Holmen, Wisconsin and was the assistant superintendent of the LaCrosse, Wisconsin YMCA. Nelton’s death was the result of injuries received in a head-on collision on Highway 53 near LaCrosse. He had lived in Holmen for the six years previous to his death, and before that in

Houston, Mn. David was married to Diane Rivers on July 26, 1958 at Holy Trinity Church in Rollingstone. He was the father of five children: Dirk, Kendrick, Janita, Davita, and Dee Ann. David graduated from Minnesota City School, Winona Senior High School, and Winona State University. He is included in many school news stories from the years of his attendance in Minnesota City. In one account in the Winona Republican Herald from April, 1954, David is listed as one of the Minnesota City school children who helped put out a 25 acre bluff fire that threatened the Oaks Nite Club and the home of Oswald Vill.

Helen Nelton was the manager of the City Nite Club for a period of time, during which David assisted her. His father, Art Nelton was a contractor for whom David worked at the time of his marriage. He was a teacher in Houston MN. for several years. David had one sister, Sandra Nelton Stevens who survives him and lives in Winona. Funeral services for David were conducted at Fawcett Funeral Home in Winona and St. Paul’s Church in Minnesota City. Rev. Joseph Frisch officiated, and burial was in Oakland Cemetery. Pallbearers were Richard Hohensee, Wayne Valentine, Charles Neuman, John Brown, Hollis Donehower, and Robert Rolbiecki.



Native American Presence Recorded in Minnesota City Settlement History



This Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) camp near Minnesota City was photographed around 1898. Ho-Chunks were pushed west and north by settlers in Wisconsin.

This photo was contributed to the archives in 2002. Source unattributed. Similar photos place this location on the current school site.

The history of Minnesota City includes many incidents of interaction of Western Farm and Village Association settlers (1852) with Native Americans, and newspaper accounts exhibit a variety of attitudes toward these encounters. In 1882 (June 21), the Winona Daily Republican, quoting Elder Ely, reported “Mr. Wright was one of the most active and useful of the early settlers. He went several times to Prairie du Chien to get flour to give the Sioux Indians to keep them quiet till the treaty should be ratified which hung for a long time in Washington.” (p.3) When Ely came to Minnesota City in May, 1852, the land was still

the property of the Sioux, with Indian trails going in all directions. The Winona Daily Republican, February 15, 1888 contains this notice: “On February 15th, the Indians buried a child of George and Nellie Fawnmaker. Their grief seemed deep and genuine.” (p.3) In May, 1902, the Winona Republican Herald Reported: “Frank Kennedy and Dave Whetstone and the Indians are doing a land office business selling carp on the prairie. Hundreds of big carp are being speared daily.” (p.7)

Jean Gardner submitted a January 21 article from the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, describing the transcription of Indian prisoners’ letters following the 1862 Conflict in Minnesota; letters in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society. The work is being done by a Dakota language translator, Clifford Canku and Bruce Maylath, an NDSU English professor. The letters which will be published next year detail the fears and realities of the prisoners, included pressures to become Christians and fears for their fate following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Relatives of some of the writers are alive, and the content of the letters is both emotionally moving and informative.

The MCHA archives have collected a large number of informative pieces related to Native Americans at the Minnesota City location; these are available for interested persons.

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.

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.

Note: apologies to persons who have not received newsletters because of our computer issues. If you have not received a newsletter by the Thursday after the first Monday of the month, please notify mgogrady@embarqmail.com.