

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 5, Issue 3: March, 2011

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

Mark your calendars!

March 12: MCHA Organization meeting for Mn. City Day and Regular meeting; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City; 9:30 a.m.

March 17: Minnesota City Community Readers; Riverway Learning Community; Selection: Seeley: *The Chuckling Fingers*; 6:30 p.m.

March 19: School Reunion planning meeting; Steve’s Anchor Inn, Minnesota City; 9:30 a.m.

March 20: Bob Bambenek County Recorder presents on Census Information, historical and current, and on Native American Land Grants; **Free public presentation;** Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City; 2:00 p.m.

Minnesota City Day:
* May 21, 2011*

County Recorder Bambenek Presentation on Sunday, March 20: Showing Us the Numbers

On Sunday, March 20 at 2:00 p.m. at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street in Minnesota City, Bob Bambenek, Winona County Recorder, will present information on historical census information in Winona County as well as information from the 2010 census. This is a free presentation, open to the public.

Bambenek will also present on his investigation of land grants to Native Americans in this area. Most individuals are aware of the exhaustive effort in Winona County to include all residents in the recent census. Bambenek’s presentation will inform the audience of the significance of the results. The Wikipedia site gives visitors an idea of the interesting and sometimes surprising material produced by censuses. “In 2000 Minnesota City males had a median income of \$30,000.00 versus \$22,500 for females. No families were living below the poverty level, although 2.5% of the population was, with 10 % of those over 64. The area of the city is listed as 0.3 sq mile, and population was 235. Racial makeup was 99.57% white and 0.43% Hispanic or Latino of any race.” (Wikipedia site). Although Minnesota City’s Native American population was quickly removed from the area as white settlers came, land grants were “in the mix” of land acquisition and ceding of area locations. Little research on this has been generally available; persons with an interest in Native American History will find Bob’s research informative.

MCHA Hosts March 12 Minnesota City Day Planning Meeting

The Minnesota City Historical Association is hosting a meeting on **March 12 at 9:30 a.m. at Riverway Learning Community**, 115 Iowa Street, to plan for May 21 Minnesota City Day activities, food, and presentations. Any individual or group with ideas for the day is invited to be present to coordinate planning of time and spaces, and to discuss this community celebration.

Since 2009, Minnesota City Historical Association has invited representatives of Minnesota City and area groups to attend a planning meeting for the annual celebration. Several groups responded and have organized successful days of informative, fundraising, and community building events. All groups profit from increased numbers in the city on that day.

On May 21, MCHA will be hosting open hours and tours at its archival site at the historic First Baptist Church at 140 Mill Street. Additional previous events have included city-wide garage sales, pancake breakfasts, open house at the historic First Baptist Church, dessert-conversation events, craft sales, fire truck display, sing alongs, and other activities. Additional commitments from entertainers have been made at this time, and include the GBDRF scheduled Dad’s Belgian Waffle Breakfast at Riverway.

Minnesota Citizens Volunteer for "Causes"

"Driving Need," a front-page story of Winona Daily News, featured Mitch Halbakken of Minnesota City to describe the contribution of the Southeastern Minnesota Citizen's Action Council program that transports people 60 and older back and forth to medical appointments. Federal government and private donations fund the program. "We all know more elderly are coming into the system," according to Mitch, "and they're going to need a program like this." Halbakken is on the road five days a week. He is one of twenty active drivers. Erlene Weshons, transportation director, would like to have twenty-five or thirty drivers on call. To volunteer, call 1-800-944-3874 or visit www.semccac.org.

The February 6 Winona Daily News described the activities of local Veterans of Foreign Wars working to pay off mortgages for their building in Winona by selling plaques with donors names. Among the organizers and workers for the fund drive is Hollis Donehower, Minnesota City. Donehower stated that the Vets hope to pay off the building mortgage and then be able to fund other community services for veterans in need. The Winona group transports veterans to medical appointments, among other services.

On Sunday, February 13, Minnesota City resident, Kevin Kearney and daughter Kayla, were among the participants in the Goosebump Jump, an annual event to support the activities of the Winona Park and Recreation Department for providing services for low-income residents. Funds derive from T-shirt sales and registration fees. The event has been held each year since 2007, and Kevin has participated three years.



James and Samuel O'Grady, sons of Scott Jensen and Kate O'Grady, with their aunt, Sarah O'Grady, jump into Lake Winona at the Feb. 13 Goosebump Jump.

Riverway Learning Community Engages MN GreenCorps Member

Rochelle Jansen, in an AMERICORPS program called MC GreenCorps, is working at Riverway Learning Community. Placed at Riverway after a competitive application process, Jansen provides outreach and education on waste prevention, local foods, and water conservation. The program is an initiative to preserve and protect Minnesota's environment. At Riverway she is focused on increasing on-site food production, reducing waste, and setting up a rainwater collection system as well as education about these topics. (Winona Post, Feb. 27, 2011)

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 28TH CANCELED

A Public Hearing on Improvements which had been scheduled for Monday, February 28, 2011 beginning at 6 PM at the Riverway Learning Community in Minnesota City was canceled and will be re-scheduled at a later date. Bonestroo was going to present an update of the municipal wastewater collection and treatment system and discuss the costs of these improvements and the assessments involved, but they have chosen to delay this presentation until after more of the engineering has been completed and costs determined.

Memberships Sustain and Promote MCHA Goals

The mailing list for Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) continues to grow. The combination of members and non-members who receive the newsletter now numbers some 120 persons. Those persons who pay the fifteen-dollar annual membership support the Association's costs, which routinely include postage, archival materials and computer maintenance. Persons who read the newsletter support Association goals by promoting extended communication of Minnesota City History, past, present, and future. The numbers of "workers" in the Association is limited. **Persons who send in memberships without reminder reduce the need for other mailings by the Secretary.** The Association is grateful for members and non-member friends. Membership is not required to receive the newsletter. Questions about membership may be directed to 689-4103.

Have I Reached the Party to Whom I am Speaking?

Readers old enough to remember the great success of the Lily Tomlin shows in the 60s will be reminded of her telephone conversation line "Have I reached the party to whom I am speaking?" when reading Elder Ely's account of attempts to consult mediums in the settlement of Minnesota City.

Since the beginning of the Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA), a number of individuals have mentioned hearing about medium consultation. This newspaper account presented by Orrin Smith, Winona Historian, from the Winona Republican Herald for the February, 1937 meeting of the Winona County Old Settlers is a written account of Elder Ely's presentation at the Winona County Old Settlers meeting for January 16, 1876. "While speaking of organizations, I must not forget the organization of a society of Spiritualists. A Mr. Henderson, a lapsed Methodist minister, had with a few others adopted views held by spiritualists generally. They had found among the residents some speaking mediums. Mr. Henderson thought that all or nearly all the members of the association could be brought to stand on one religious platform. Mr. Henderson, as chairman of the committee, drew up a paper, which, before he presented it to the people on the Sabbath day, he referred to the departed and saintly Wesley. His wife acted as medium. She found Mr. Wesley in the seventh sphere, engaged in such high and exalted employment that he could not come to attend to the matter. He sent the spirit of General Washington from the fifth sphere. The spirit of that statesman never came to tell Mr. Henderson that he approved of the paper which contained the church platform, except he suggested some verbal alterations which would not materially alter its meaning. Mr. Henderson and most of his followers left early in the fall and have not been heard of since." The Ely narration moves from the mediums discussion to one of flatboat trips.

Former Denzer Road Resident Authors Book

Kevin Fenton, a resident of Denzer Road from 1969 to 1973, has authored *Merit Badges*, a semi-fictional account of his years in Winona Senior High School and the community. Fenton, who has a law degree as well as an MFA, currently lives in St. Paul. The book's title is central to the structure of the novel, with each chapter being headed by a Boy Scout merit badge requirement. On February 23, a signing event for the author was held at Winona's Independent Bookstore, The Bookshelf. Owner Chris Livingston has reviewed the novel, suggesting that Winona (Minnesapa in Fenton's novel) may have found its own Holden Caulfield. The sales success of the novel may well depend on how Fenton parodies other coming of age stories.

Minnesota City Community Readers are a registered Minnesota Book Club, and were therefore able to participate in (and won!!!) a drawing for one of two copies of the novel awarded to Post Readers. Some Community Readers were surprised by the appearance of Fenton's novel, unaware of his writing achievements. Sales of the book in Winona have been good; the bookstore had only three copies left available for purchase the evening of the signing event. Kevin's sister, Colleen, also a former Minnesota Citian, was in the evening's audience, as well as some Minnesota City and Rollingstone "neighbors". Fenton has a memoir related to Rollingstone near publication.



Kevin Fenton, former Minnesota Citian addresses listeners at Blue Heron Winona book signing on February 24.

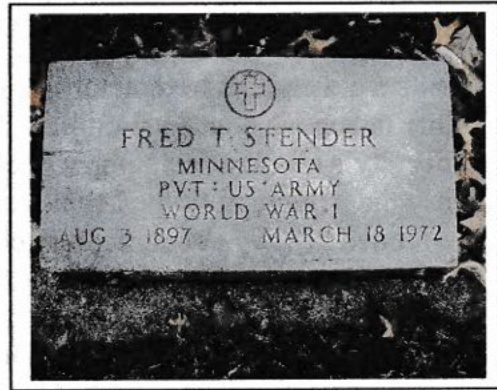
July School Reunion Planning Continues

At a meeting on February 26 at Steve's Anchor Inn in Minnesota City, several individuals continued to plan for the July 16 and 17 reunion of Minnesota City School alumni. Jackie Denzer reported findings about possible food options and pricing. Friday's gathering will be an informal event at the L-Cove in Minnesota City. This will include finger food and a cash bar. Saturday's gathering will include a dinner at St. Paul's church and an event at Riverway School (formerly Minnesota City Elementary School). People with an interest in the event are encouraged to contact Leasah Lilla at minnesotacityreunion@charter.net.

Buried in Oakland: Fred Stender 1897-1972

Fred Stender was born August 3, 1897 to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stender of Rollingstone. With the exception of a few years in Minneapolis, he spent his entire life in the area as a farmer and then as an employee of the Williams-Wilbert Vault Co. He married Martha Zenk on June 12, 1918 at the Minnesota City Lutheran Church. Rev. Alfred Sauer performed this ceremony. In October 1918, Stender is listed as one entrained for the military and sent to Camp Forest, Georgia. In later years, he was a member of the Winona Post of the American Legion. In March, 1936, Fred and Martha, returning to Minnesota City, were in a three-car accident on slippery roads. Martha sustained an ankle injury. Fred, the driver, was uninjured. In 1968, three sisters of Mrs. Stender hosted a fiftieth year wedding anniversary celebration for the couple at the Golden Frog Restaurant in Fountain City. Local papers through the years carry many notations of the Stenders' visits to area friends in Plainview, Wabasha and other places. Fred was a member of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church and served as its custodian. He also was a sexton of the Oakland Cemetery and a member of the Minnesota City Boat Club.

Stender died suddenly March 18 at his home on Mill Street, directly across from the former Catholic Church, now the home of the Schoen family. His wife survived Stender; Martha died in 1986. Pallbearers for the funeral were James King, Melvin Hohensee, Richard Hanson, Anthony Kelly, Harry Jessie and Glen Alleman. Services were held at the First Lutheran Church.



MCHA congratulates:

Kelly Hoff who was honored by the Exchange Club as the Middle School Student of the Month. Hoff attends Riverway Learning Community and is the daughter of Laurie and Gary Hoff. She is described by her teachers as someone who is dependable, well-liked and very involved in her school activities. Kelly's family is one of the longest attending families at Riverway, and her mother, Laurie, was a board member. Several of her siblings have attended Riverway. (Winona Daily News, 3/1/11)

MCHA Thanks:

Gerald and Barb Okland for a family photo for the archives of several Cotton family members. Samuel and Sarah Cotton are among the earliest Minnesota City settlers. Cotton also had a land claim near Utica where he broke up about four acres, which was about the first breaking done on the prairies. Gerry is currently researching the presence of William Haddock, President of the Western Farm and Village Association, one of the "Skaters" that located the mouth of the Rollingstone Valley in May, 1952. Gerry is attempting to account for his whereabouts after he (Haddock) left Minnesota City.

MCHA extends sympathy:

to the family of Lillian M. Bunke, 86, who died in Winona on February 9. Bunke was the secretary treasurer for the family business, Canton Mills, in Minnesota City, a fertilizer and feed business that she and her husband Delmer started some fifty years ago.

to the friends and family of Lorraine Bambenek, Minnesota City, who died on March 2 at age 79. She was an active member of St. Paul's Catholic church and other groups.

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.