

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 5, Issue 6: June, 2011

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

Mark your calendars!

June 11: Monthly meeting MCHA; 9:30 a.m.; Historic First Baptist Church 140 Mill Street. Archives.

Archives Summer Open Hours:

Thursday, June 16,
Thursday, July 21,
Thursday, August 18.
4:30-6:00 p.m.
or by appointment.
Call 689-2440.

July 15-16 Minnesota City School Reunion

Friday, July 15 3:00-9:00 p.m. L-Cove Social Gathering
Saturday Dinner, July 16 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
St. Paul's Church



Riverway Learning Community , 115 Iowa Street
(Riverway web site photo)

Facebook site: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Minnesota-City-All-School-Reunion-2011/211708962202736>

Reunion Contact: minnesotacityreunion@charter.net

School Reunion Secures Facebook Site

Thanks to the skills of Andrea Church, the Minnesota City School Reunion Event now is on Facebook with interesting information and photos. Check out this site which will be an important communication vehicle for the reunion.

Area Recorder's Report Concurs With Settler's School Location

Interested persons generally are in agreement that the very first school/s in Minnesota City were in home school settings, one of them being the home of the George Church Family. The subscription school of 1852, taught by Miss Ann Orton, was followed by a log cabin structure that has been described by Denman, one of the first settlers. Denman wrote, "Miss Hester A. Houck, afterward Mrs. William H. Stevens, taught the first public school in the county at Minnesota City. It was opened Oct 31, 1853, and continued for 13 weeks. There were 27 pupils. This school was held in a double log house, the north half of which was occupied by the Thompson family," thus states Mr. Denman in a recent letter. Mr. Denman also recalls that this double log house was located across the road from the Campbell brick house, now occupied by George Whetstone and family. "Yes, the school was held in a building just across the road from the home of Mr. Thorp, and I believe had been used at one time by him as a blacksmith shop. The old Thorp home was located next door to the old Cotton home, in later years known as the Kennedy farm, and is a quarter to a third of a mile east of what is known as the old O. M. Lord home. Therefore the school was located near the old highway about midway between the brick residence of George Whetstone and the old Kennedy home, now painted yellow, and occupied by the Peterman family".

Bob Bambenek, County Recorder has given the archives the earliest county index for the NE1/4 section of Rollingstone Township, land claimed and deeded to O.M. Lord prior to Minnesota Statehood. Except for a slight property line change with Otto Troost (Mill Owner), there were no conveyances in the NE1/4 NE1/4 through 1870 (Bambenek notes). The area, therefore that Denman describes, would be in agreement with this possible sight.

Area Students Write Prize Winning Essays

Emily Mastenbrook, Minnesota City, was a silver prize winner in the Laws of Life Contest held annually. The contest was founded in 1987 by Sir John Templeton to promote character development in secondary schools, colleges and universities. The contest was begun in Winona in 1996 with the support of several local businesses and individuals. The students write about their values, ideals and principles. Emily received a \$200.00 cash award and a \$1000.00 scholarship. Emily attended Riverway Learning Community and is now a student at Winona Senior High School.

As reported in the May 9, *Star News*, and many other news outlets during National Charter Public School Week, fifty some students were honored at the Minnesota State Capitol for their award winning essays about their best day in school. Over 2000 essays were submitted. The grand prize winner was **Kayton McKern**, a ninth grader from Riverway Learning Community. Kayton's approach was unique—she wrote that she had not had her best day yet. That day would be the day she graduates. McKern hopes to become a special education teacher. Center for School Change in Minneapolis sponsors the annual essay project. There are now 35, 000 students in charter schools in Minnesota (Reported in May 9 *Star News*).

Minnesota City Community Readers Summer Hiatus

Minnesota City Community Readers will not meet during the summer months of June, July, and August. Discussions will resume in September with *Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoyevsky.

Apologies and correction:

- to Emil Sulla. In last month's newsletter we mistakenly used his brother James' name as the celebrant of an 80th birthday.

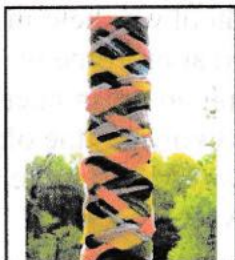
MCHA expresses sympathy

- to Delwin Tschumper family and friends on the death of Sherrie Tschumper, 75, who died on May 23 in Winona. Sherrie and Delwin were early members of MCHA and have been supportive of the organization since it began. Sherrie is the sister of Jean Brust, Minnesota City.
- to family and friends of Timothy Daniel, 56, who died on May 25 at his home in Stockton, Mn.

Congratulations to:

- David and Judith (Smith) Kleinbach who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 16.
- Kevin Kearney, Minnesota City Mill Street Resident, Winona Police Community Liaison, who was named 2011 Harbormaster for Steamboat Days.
- Cliff and Janet Hill Seabern who will celebrate their forty ninth wedding anniversary on June 9.

Maypole Dance, Sack Races, Ring Toss Participants Replay Historic Activities



The intricate woven result of a carefully executed Maypole dance

Rain curtailed the games at the park, but not before children had time to beautifully execute the Maypole dance, run some sack races, and toss some rings. In the colonial period, games children played were to have fun, but also to learn skills that they would need later in life as farmers and parents. Games taught children how to aim and throw, to solve problems and do things with their hands, and how to follow directions and rules. They also learned to be fair, to wait their turn,



Juliana Shelton and Aaliyah Schultz, Mill Street residents, run sack races in the park.

and to use their imaginations. Observers at the park on Minnesota City Day saw all of these skills being used. (Everyone should participate in a Maypole Dance once in a lifetime!) Taped music was used for the Dance as was live music, provided by James O'Grady (Violin) and Marvin O'Grady (Bodhran drum). Please check MCHA website for additional Minnesota City Day photos: www.minnesotacity.org



MCHA member, Lynda Brzezinski (black and white, middle) sings with Take Note at Minnesota City Day (Contributed photo)

“TAKE NOTE” CHOIR PERFORMS ON MINNESOTA CITY DAY

"Take Note!" advertises that their spring show has people tapping their toes and humming along with the chorus of fun songs from the 50s and 60s. This was the case at First Baptist Church on May 21 when Southeastern Minnesota's Broadway Show Tune choir performed for Minnesota City Day attendees.

Directed by Judy Myers, Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at St. Mary's University in Winona, the group is sponsored by the

Rushford Area Society of the Arts. The group has been singing since the fall of 2006. Choir members come from Rushford and many surrounding communities, including Preston, Chatfield, Lanesboro, Peterson, Winona, Rochester, and Minnesota City. The beautiful, dynamic music could be heard up and down Mill Street, perhaps reminding some of equally sonorous choirs of many years ago. Audience was given brief information about selections that included hits such as "Sugar in the Morning," and "High Hopes." Each selection had an interesting historical background because of occasion, success or vocalists connected with it. Costuming was appropriate to the decades; our vote for best signifier was a class ring worn on a neck chain of one singer.

Sights and Sounds of Minnesota City Day 2011:

- The green space opposite the Post Office that resulted from the 2007 flood destruction of a home site being used by Riverway Learning Community and others for information and presentation with the legislated impermanence of these a reminder of the ever possible return of the high waters.
- Some old friends —Gale Hill, Howard Volkart, Neil Denzer, Jean Gardner, Len Mastenbrook visiting at the Historic First Baptist Church.
- The marked graves of the recent Oakland Burials: Gloria Denzer, Ray Denzer, Gilbert Stewart, Mitchell Berhow and Julianna Stoltman.
- The bustle of activity at the GBDRF Waffle Breakfast—great laughter, conversation, food and service.
- Excited conversation about Hank Vogel's Bix Beiderbecke horn (Did I hear that right)?
- Mill Street children running sack races in the city park.
- Gladys Volkart showing a daughter and granddaughter the picture of her father in the Church family photo in the archives.
- The arrival of Barb and Gerry Okland, Cotton family members from Thief River Falls
- The music that backgrounded the weaving of the Maypole by local and visiting children.
- The music that resounded outside the Historic First Baptist Church as Carla Burton led a sing-along, and "Take Note" sang their "really rocking" music of the fifties and sixties.
- The laughter and listening, the noise and the silence of response to Kate, Jim O'Grady, and Becky O'Grady Weiss's presentation of Hardwoods Home Companion. Does anyone have a larger coffee cup than Java Jill—or has anyone so appropriately interwoven wolves into so many contexts?
- Standing together: The old and the new--Roger Church, 30 year postmaster at Minnesota City, and Mike Ties, the current postman.
- The last sounds of Hardwoods Home Companions presentation, Mellencamp lyrics, "Well, I was born in a small town, And I live in a small town, Prob'ly die in a small town, Oh, those small communities."
- and many others -- heard and seen by others.

GBDRF Sponsors Successful Waffle Breakfast and Pavilion Dedication

Information from Garvin Brook Disaster Relief (GBDRF) personnel indicates that both of their events on Minnesota City Day were well attended and well received. Nearly 300 tickets to the breakfast were sold which will yield a substantial donation to the Minnesota City Youth Baseball Program. Families from the baseball group were particularly helpful for the execution of the breakfast project, and sponsors were pleased with local attendance. Advance sales were important to this event as well as walk ins.



Lola Denzer and LaVern Fritz cut the ribbon on the new pavilion (Susan Althoff photo).

GBDRF was also the sponsor of the pavilion building erection and dedication. The memorial pavilion to honor Jaye Fritz and Ray Denzer is located just beyond the creek toward the ball fields. Susan Althoff, GBDRF board member, read the dedication comments which outlined the contributions of Jaye Fritz to Minnesota City Youth Baseball and to the flood recovery efforts of 2007. Denzer was a lifelong area resident, who raised family and operated the Denzer saw mill north of Minnesota City. Both spouses, LaVern Fritz and Lola Denzer, were present to cut the ribbon for the dedication. GBDRF hopes to mark the pavilion with a commemorative plaque. Additional photos contributed by Susan Althoff will be on the Minnesota City Website. www.minnesotacity.org

Minnesota City Day Yields Community People and Place Connections

Minnesota City Historical Association appreciates the following—and many other individuals and groups—that helped execute the connections of Minnesota City Day 2011:

All persons who support the work of Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA)

All attendees from far and near

Minnesota City City Council

Minnesota City Fire Department

Minnesota City Youth Baseball Program

Oakland Cemetery, esp. Lori, Marianne, Cliff and Janet

Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF)

Local Media, newspapers, radio, marquees, bulletins, etc.

Riverway Learning Community (Rochelle Jansen)

First Baptist Ladies Aid

Jean Gardner and Gen and Kate O'Grady (church and archives cleaning)

Betsy and Donna Friesen (lawn and refreshments)

Marv O'Grady (new roof on the storage building)

All presenters, entertainers (Kate, Jim, Becky, Carla, Take Note Choir, Hank, Roger, Rochelle, Kevin, Fire Dept.)

A goal of MCHA is fostering community connections related to history—people and places. These are abundantly realized each year on Minnesota City Day. The Cotton family descendents who visited from Thief River Falls, family members and relatives of several Minnesota City families, the gathering of Fritz family and Denzers for the pavilion memorial dedication --all of these honored our history. Donna Friesen even connected history most significantly with her baked refreshments by providing photos and recipes of relatives. We continued the marking of historic buildings that will soon constitute ample reason to walk Mill Street and the area tuning into the past and the present. Plaques were purchased this year by MCHA for the City Nite Club (owner, Brian Campbell), the first post office, and the first school. Already marked with plaques are the First Baptist Church, the Swinging Bridge Site, the Oaks, and the Campbell (Althoff) home. A brochure to augment the dates of the plaques is being developed.