

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 5, Issue 8: ^{August} ~~July~~, 2011

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

Mark your calendars!

August 13: MCHA Monthly Meeting: Historic First Baptist Church, Mill Street, 9:30 a.m.

August 18: Archives open. 6:30-8:00 p.m. (or by appointment call 689-2440.) Historic First Baptist Church, Mill Street

Note: Community Readers meet next in September.

Selection:
Brothers
Karamazov

Go “Green”!

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

The Bell of the First Maybury School Rings Again

Although excitement about the Minnesota City School reunion had increased incrementally as registrations came in, it increased dramatically for the people who learned that permission had been given by Winona County Historical Society to “borrow” the bell from the pre-1938 Maybury School in Minnesota City. A group of individuals from MCHA—David and Brenda Eckert, Don Evanson, LaVern Fritz, Hollis Donehower, Marv and Jim O’Grady accompanied Mark Peterson,

Winona County Historical Society Executive Director, to the Bunnell House in Homer where they removed the bell from storage and took it to Minnesota City. The bell was displayed at Riverway Learning Community. Faith Ann Schmidt Jackson invited all former Maybury students to come forward and ring the bell. The large number of students surprised many in the audience. Former students who rang the bell included Janet Hill Seabern, Gale Hill, Roger Church, Maxine Church Spaag, Jean Gardner, Dorothy Gardner Brom, Shirley Tschumper Green, Argene Tschumper, Janice Tschumper Drazkowski, and Margaret Elliott. Others were in the audience. When a suitable site, a suitable display structure, and suitable use are forwarded to the Winona County Historical Society, MCHA hopes to regain the bell on a permanent or temporary loan.



Faith Ann Schmidt Jackson and Marv O’Grady discuss text as Maybury alumni prepare to ring the bell. (Andrea Church photo)

Congratulations to all who participated in the Minnesota City All School Reunion, especially the Reunion Committee, and made it a resoundingly (that was helped by the bell!) memorable day in the history of the Community.

Successful Minnesota City School Reunion Rewards Work of Reunion Committee

In numbers and in experiences, the Minnesota City School Reunion met, perhaps exceeded, the plans and hopes of the School Reunion Committee. After a number of meetings to plan sites for socialization opportunities, food, and program, and to provide information about the reunion, the school and community history, the committee experienced, on July 15 and 16, the success of their planning work. Over 100 persons attended the reunion dinner and program. Many comments of satisfaction were offered: “I’m so glad you did this!” “This was a great day.” “This was just a wonderful day!” Former teachers, Anah Munson, Margaret Elliott, Berniece McNally spoke about their teaching experiences at the school. Former students related stories about experiences and about teachers. LaVern Fritz was an initiator and continuing promoter of the reunion, aided by a number of steady helpers. The committee is meeting on August 3 to “debrief.”

School Reunion Open Archives Attract Large Numbers

Friday evening, July 16, brought a number of first time visitors to the archives, and Saturday, before and after the dinner and program, the number and energy of visitors was the largest of any occasion since the archives opened. Visitors took photos, viewed bulletin boards featuring all Minnesota City Schools, saw artifacts including books used in the Maybury building, and investigated other regular archive materials.

Visitors shared stories with each other. Many asked for materials, information that the files and shelves now hold; some sought materials still not available, but in many cases, were provided directions for finding them elsewhere. After this weekend many more individuals know that there is now a place for their contribution of their historical materials. The awkwardness of telling individuals to notify their families about this repository for their histories begins to seem less necessary. The impression now is building that the history of Minnesota City and their personal histories is a significant one. MCHA is grateful for all the support expressed to them and for them during the weekend, and invites interested persons to watch for additional open archive hours, or to make appointments by calling 507-689-2440.

Artifacts contributed to the Archives by reunion visitors included:

A Martin Shoe Store Engraved Pencil from Gale Hill

Family Photos from the Riedemann Family

A textbook from the Maybury School used by Shirley Tschumper Green

A Matchbox with Church Bros. advertising from Argene and Beverly Tschumper.

Poker chips from the Oaks found on the day of the fire from Shirley Tschumper Green.

Snakes Leave the Hills for Greener Pastures—Perhaps

By this time of the summer, many river area readers have their own snake stories to tell. This timber rattler is being transferred from a barrel where Marv and Jim O'Grady had placed it, to a garbage can container of Phil Cochran, Biology Department Head from St. Mary's College. Cochran places sensors in the snakes and then relocates them. Data on the snake is conveyed to the reporter. When Cochran left the O'Grady's, he was headed to Winona immediately to pick up another snake. Timber rattlers are classified as *Threatened* in Illinois and Minnesota; hence, the effort to relocate them rather than shoot them as was frequently done in the area, when bounty was collected for the rattles. The snakes are found along the forested river bluffs of the Mississippi. Cochran dispelled a number of rattlesnake myths, one being that the snakes often travel in pairs. This, Cochran said, would depend on the mating cycle. Mating patterns and reproductive conditions are believed responsible for movement of timber rattlesnakes.



Timber rattlesnake at the O'Grady property; relocation by St. Mary's College Biology Department

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.

Minnesota City Historical Association extends sympathy to all family and friends of these individuals.

Rick Martin, 154 Mill street, Minnesota City, who died on July 26 in Rochester—sympathy to Holly, Mercedes and Wes, Susan, and Barbara .

Viola Mueller Yarolimek Ramer, a long time Minnesota City Resident, mother of Delores and Shirley, died on July 4 at St. Anne's in Winona. Viola was 98 years old.

Betty Denzer Haedtke, 82, a long time Minnesota City Resident, mother of Kimberly and sister of Lester Denzer, died at St. Anne's on July 1.

Doris Kimber, 88, mother of Tom (Jacqueline) Kimber, Whitman Deering Road, Minnesota City, died on June 29. Doris lived in Preston, Minnesota.

Nancy O'Reilly, Winona, 80, Winona, former Minnesota City Resident, died on July 12.

Russell Church, 93, Stockton Valley, who died on July 20; father of Jenny, Reid, and Dawn; brother of Gladys Church Volkart and cousin of Roger Church. (See Page 4). Russell is buried in Oakland Cemetery.

MCHA congratulates and Thanks

Youth Baseball teams and coaches on too many wins and placings to detail. Great work, everyone!

Duane Hutton; Duane was named a Winona County Fair Hall of Famer, 2011.

Pamela McNeill, former Minnesota Citian, daughter of Susan Althoff, for her selection as a Great River Shakespeare Fest "On the Green" performance. Pamela performed July 30 at 6:30. Some readers will remember McNeill's performance and original composition for a benefit following the 2007 Flood. "On the Green" concerts are free; Local media carry information about these events.

Gerald and Barb Okland for a DVD player for Archival use.

Duane Hutton's Contributions Acknowledged by Winona County Fair Organization



Duane Hutton invites audience participation for Barbershoppers on Minnesota City Day 2009 at Historic First Baptist Church.

Duane Hutton, who operates his consulting business from the back of the former Church General Merchandise Store on Mill Street in Minnesota City, was recently inducted into the Winona County Fair Hall of Fame. A former teacher, Hutton is the FFA Superintendent at the State Fair. He is a member of the

Minnesota City Historical Association and also a board member of Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund. Duane performed with the Barbershop Chorus on Minnesota City Day in 2009 in the historic First Baptist Church. Duane and his wife Linda run a consulting business for farmers and also do farm taxes. Duane credits Linda's support for his ability to contribute to so many community functions. The Huttons live in Winona.

From the Winona Republican Herald, Mar 7, 1936.

A description of a Minnesota City P.T.A. play concludes with this line: "Those taking part in the song 'The Rheumatiz' will be Dorothy Gardner, Richard Schwandt, Lucille Pierce, Dale Fleming, Shirley Mae Tschumper, Allen Whetstone, Maxine Church and Argene Tschumper. Refreshments will be served and there will be a fish pond." Dorothy, Shirley Mae, Maxine, and Argene were all present at the school reunion on July 16.

In Memoriam—Russell T. Church

When I was a young child, we would drive through Stockton Valley now and then. My father's family home was opposite that of the Church family, on what is now County Road 23. I don't remember how it started, but as we drove, we would name all the farms on the way, starting with Strengs. I still remember some—Church, Fakler, Haase up on the hill, Bronk, Pierce, Gardner, Chalberg, Degnan, Merchlewitz, Steinbauers and others. If we missed one, as I probably am doing now, our Dad would say "That's whoever..." and we'd file it away for next ride. I had the information early on, that my Uncle Joe Jilk, who farmed together with my dad, had gone with Russell Church to California as young men—twenty three or twenty four—the paper account says they visited Edward Fleming and Roger Church. Through the years, as a reader of the local papers, I was aware of the many involvements in agriculture of both Edith and Russell. The exchange students on their farms interested me, and I now know it was an opportunity we should have advantaged. I remember an incident about fifteen years ago when I was directing a chorus in some "foreign language" piece that I didn't know and couldn't pronounce; a friend said "Why don't you go over to Churches? They probably have a student who will know it." The trip to California by my uncle with Russell had always seemed uncharacteristic, and when Russell was at an MCHA meeting, I asked him why they had gone. His reply was thoughtful and a little amused, "I'm not sure. It just seemed like something to do." Since the Minnesota City Historical Association began in 2002, we have continued to acquire information on the Church Family, especially the valuable research of Andrea Church, working with her father Roger (first cousin of Russell), entitled "*Descendants of Octavius Church in Winona County.*" In it, Russell is in the section on the children of Raymond T. Church. Andrea writes: "Russell Church was born in 1918. He grew up helping his father Raymond run the Church family farm in Stockton Valley. He married Edith Marie Smith on May 18, 1949 in Indiana. They raised their three children (Reid, Dawn, And Jenny) on the farm that had been built by Octavius in 1860 and maintained by his grandfather George T. Church". Many involvements of Russell are listed: the local American Dairy Association, Participation with 4H and FFA, developing the farm inherited from his father, Ray. "The farm is distinctive for its participation in the student exchange program sponsored by the University of Minnesota Institute of Agriculture." The Church family also participated in the Family to Farm program of the Winona County unit of the American Dairy Association, bringing urban families to dairy farms to experience better understanding of both. In 1970, Russell received the Premier Dairyman award by NSP, the Midwest Breeders award, and the 1969 herd award from the DHIA. Until the time of his death, Russell continued to live on the Church family farm, now being run by daughter Dawn and husband Ian.

On the Saturday before Russell's death, I visited briefly with Dawn at the MCHA Archives, opened for the Minnesota City School Reunion. The last thing I asked her was "How is your Dad?" I would soon hear of his death. I did not "know" Russell Church. I knew about him; I encountered him infrequently in these recent years when he attended MCHA sponsored events. I knew that the Hil-Ray farm in the area represent a legacy of continued agricultural involvement with repercussions far beyond the farm. The farm has represented a legacy of the Church family in the area; it is a landmark of Stockton Valley.

On July 30, my father's family, the Jilks, will hold their seventh annual reunion in Farmer's Community Park. As we drive through Stockton Valley, I could tell my family—"That is where Russell Church lived—the man who just died," and across the road I could point out the new home of my cousin's son, Mike Butenhoff, now on a Century farm owned by his ancestors, and on the ridge, the land of my Evanson cousins. These, just after we pass the childhood home of Jean Gardner and Dorothy Gardner Brom. We think about the elders; part of their legacy is of people identified with land. Russell Church was one of these.



Russell Church visits with friends at an MCHA presentation.