

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 4: April, 2012

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

Mark your calendars!

April 14: Monthly MCHA Meeting; Archives, 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City; 9:30 a.m. (**Note: summer meeting place**)

April 19: Minnesota City Community Readers; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City; 6:30 p.m.; Selection: Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*

May 19: Minnesota City Day - 160 years!

May 19: GBDRF (Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund) Belgian Waffle Breakfast; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City

Go “Green”!

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

Denzer Family Contributes Holland Heirlooms to MCHA Archives

The Denzer family has contributed two skillfully sewn quilts to the archives, one made by Lillian Holland and one sewn by her mother. George and Gloria Denzer were neighbors of Mrs. Holland in Minnesota City and provided invaluable personal care and help with her home for the last forty years of her life. Mrs. Holland died in 2001. She and her husband Merrill were the parents of one child who was killed by an intoxicated driver. The Denzers also have given the archives the baptismal gown of the Holland baby and coverlet used for him in his buggy. Many readers will remember Mrs. Holland, who was a teacher in the Minnesota City School. Corinne Denzer, who “turned over” these treasured Holland-Denzer pieces, said they have been in the Denzer family for a number of years.



Corinne Denzer holds the baptismal gown and coverlet of Merrill James Holland

Planning Begins for May 19 Minnesota City Day Observance

MCHA members began the planning for this year's May 19 Minnesota City Day observance at their monthly meeting on March 10. This will be the 160th anniversary of the founding of the city. Planning is influenced this year by the upheaval of lands and streets in Minnesota City caused by the Wastewater Treatment Plant construction. **A definite event is the Belgian Waffle Breakfast which is again being sponsored by the Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund. Waffles will be served from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon at Riverway Learning Community. Price will be \$8.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children 4-12; Three and under are free. A beneficiary will be Youth Baseball.**

Jean Gardner announced that the Historic First Baptist Church will be open to visitors and refreshments will be available. Friends should be reminded that this is the oldest church in Winona County. MCHA personnel will hold open hours at the Archives. New additions this year include a moveable panel display rack and horizontal files that will be used for some artifacts. Both of these events are at 140 Mill Street.

The Minnesota City Day observance this year will include a focus on Oakland Cemetery that will feature a “Cemetery Walk” to present some life history of several individuals whose lives in Minnesota City have been detailed in some documents. Among these will be civil war veterans (Loudon and Burley) and man of many talents, Robert Pike and his talented wife, Sarah. Others are being added to the list. Materials will be available and assistance for doing grave rubbings. Times for these events will be announced in the May newsletter and in local media. **(MCHA will be soliciting persons for these impersonators. If you have an interest, for example, in reading, in singing, reciting, please call 689-4103 or 689-2440.)**

Rollingstone Township Holds Elections/Annual Meeting (Submitted by Susan Althoff)

The election of new board officers and Annual meeting of Rollingstone Township was held on Tuesday, March 13 with a higher turnout than past years. Up for election this year was one Supervisor and Town Clerk. Two candidates ran for Supervisor; Bruce Speltz, incumbent, and Sandy Evanson, with Speltz receiving the winning votes. Current Clerk, Chris Dux did not file for re-election. Marcia Anderson ran unopposed and was elected. Serving their remaining terms are: Greg Kuehntopp, Supervisor Chair, Tim Neyers, Supervisor and Susan Althoff, Treasurer.

Residents in attendance heard the road report that included the resurfacing work done over the summer of 2011 on township roads and the town hall parking lot while Highway 248 was being re-done. Donations approved for 2012 were: Minnesota City Historical Association, Winona County Historical Society, Winona Area Human Society, City of Minnesota City-park, City of Rollingstone - park, Hidden Valley - park and Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund - upcoming community event. The 2013 levy was set at \$140,000, the same as the 2012 levy: \$25,000 general fund, \$99,000 road & bridge (including snowplowing) and \$16,000 (fire & ambulance). The Clerk was asked to draft a letter to the State Auditor in regard to keeping residents from gathering in the town hall before the end of the election. Those in attendance felt this hinders grass root government. Also attending was County Recorder, Bob Bambenek, who addressed land/home values and trends in regard to recent sales.

Date and time for next year's Annual meeting will be Tuesday, March 12, 2013 at 8:15 pm.

Voter Lingerin in Rollingstone Township Building Disallowed

Warm spring weather, as our readers know, was early this year in Rollingstone Township, which was fortunate for the lingerers and gatherers who had come to vote in the annual township election and attend the annual meeting on March 13. When this voter-reporter arrived, a number of these individuals huddled in the parking lot in small groups exchanging pleasantries, discussing the weather and health, and more loudly, vocalizing discontent with having been told by the esteemed Township Clerk, Chris Dux, that they could not be present in the township hall until voting was completed. Some of these had voted earlier in the day, and others had come to vote before polls closed—to save gas and time, you know, with the one trip. In addition to being outside, these loyal citizens were also in the dark—some in more ways than one. They had not heard of this “law” and additionally, some did not know the parking lot lights were motion activated. The group was so well behaved and quiet that this newfangled motion detector light had to be activated by intentional movement—calls of “Hey, somebody move!” made it happen. The clerk, we suppose aware of possible challenge to her direction, had placed information about “the law” on the registration desk, and told voters, pleasantly and firmly, a familiar dictum: “It’s the law.” Additionally, when asked, the esteemed clerk informed voters a reason for it-- visiting in the building could distract voters.

When 8:00 came, the voters entered the township building and at some point far into the meeting agenda, esteemed voters, Marvin O’Grady, Gen O’Grady, and Greg Kuehntopp were supported by meeting attendees in their direction to the clerk to write to the state asking for an exception to the statute. Common sense best describes the reasons they gave their neighbor voters: it is our building; there is no need for the government to get involved in telling us what we can and can’t do in it or how to conduct our business. Voting booths should be altered if necessary for voter focus rather than voiding the custom of Rollingstone Township voters to utilize this annual meeting as a time to “meet and greet” their neighbors. The annual meeting is an opportunity to build community. Where else do we meet these neighbors? Meeting attendees resoundingly supported the motion for request for exemption to the state. Hope remains high that because good laws can have exceptions, next year’s annual meeting will again be a “Meet and Greet,” rather than a “No gathering, no lingering” evening.

(To esteemed readers: Although not the same text as provided by the clerk, 2011 Mn. Statute 204C. 06 addresses the “lingering” aspect of voting. Some historical information indicates the statute has continued to evolve as media issues, exit polling, etc. have been problematic at some voting sites. Also, no intention is present to insult the esteemed clerk who enforced and monitored the issue with admirable aplomb). (G.O’G.)

MCHA extends sympathy:

- to the family and friends of Delwin Tschumper who died in Winona on March 7, 2012.
- to the family and friends of Clifford Seabern who died in LaCrosse, WI on March 11, 2012.

Deaths of Longtime Supporters Grieved by MCHA Members

The deaths this month of Delwin Tschumper and Clifford Seabern, merited particular attention for many newsletter readers. They will be long remembered.



Delwin and Sherrie Leininger Tschumper examine materials at a MCHA function. The Church family history notebook Delwin holds includes details of his mother, Grace Church Tschumper.

Delwin was born and raised in Minnesota City (the son of Allen and Grace (Church) Tschumper) and attended Minnesota City School. After college, military services and a business career, he and his family had resided in Winona since 1974. His physical connections with Minnesota City increased in frequency after 2002, when he was interviewed by Riverway Learning Community students for a collection called *Old Wise Tales*. Delwin recalled for students some of his family history, his school experiences and friends, his sighting of German Prisoners of War from Whitewater. He remembered the scrap drive and milkweed collections at the school that were for the war effort. From the time of the organization of the Minnesota City Historical Association following the sesquicentennial, Delwin and Sherrie attended many of the presentations of the Association, the open houses, the caroling events, studied the bulletin boards for these

events, looked at the notebooks of information, and visited enthusiastically. Significant in our memory will be his attendance at the Walt Kelly presentation on the Oaks on February 26, this less than two weeks before his death. He had stories and questions on this day. He told the Riverway students in 2002 "I like the backwaters on the drive from Prairie Island up to Minnesota City, and the hills around here; I missed them when I was away from here."

Cliff Seabern was a loyal member/helper of the MCHA since the 2002 observance of the Minnesota City sesquicentennial. Cliff's wife is Janet Hill Seabern, the "native Minnesota Citian," but Cliff helped with all the work Janet helped with. A first memory of Cliff is helping with the demarcations necessary for the craft fair in the park in the first years of the Association—and for taking down tents, etc. His enjoyment of singing at the caroling events was a contribution to the events. For a number of years, he and Janet monitored the visits at Oakland Cemetery on Minnesota City Days. When the school reunion committee began its work the year before the event, Cliff and Janet were there. They were attendees at most presentations of the Historical Association, and some of the more frequent attendees at monthly meetings. From the discussions of his life since his death, the profile that emerged was impressive: a scholar, a family man, a teacher, a volunteer, a life long learner—all of these at augmented levels. Cliff's bicycle accident some five years ago presented challenges for the rest of his life, but his zest for discussion and his enjoyment of life persisted.



Janet and Cliff Seabern and Marianne Mastenbrook with information for visitors to Oakland Cemetery

MCHA congratulates:

- MCHA member, Kevin Kearney, Mill Street resident, for receiving from the United Way of the Greater Winona Area, "the Thomas F. Stark award for outstanding volunteerism in the community." Kearney was nominated by Gamehaven Boy Scout Council. Criteria include volunteering for nonprofits, coordinating agency projects and programs, and showing exhibited broad-based service to the greater Winona area.

MCHA Thanks:

- Rollingstone Township for its contribution of \$300.00 to MCHA.
- Denzer Family for Holland quilts and other archival materials (See page 1)
- All persons who renewed memberships or became members of MCHA as we changed to the January date for paying the \$15.00 fee. Please notify us if your own or friends' newsletters are not received or if email transmission is not working.

Winona County Historical Society April Events of Local Interest

A number of MCHA members are also members of Winona County Historical Society and will have read of these two free, open to the public events of local interest:

April 11, 2012, 12:05 p.m. Lecture: Stalag Whitewater: Prisoner of War Camp at Whitewater State Park 1944-1945. Dr. Rick Musser will present pictures and stories of the captured German men and boys, Prisoners of War who worked the fields, woods and canning plants of the area. Whitewater Park was one of these POW camps. (Winona County Historical Society Newsletter). Delwin Tschumper remembered seeing these workers come through Minnesota City. A sampling of statements from the Winona Republican Herald during this time period indicates the scope of issues connected with the camp at Whitewater.

--"The German prisoners of war now being employed by the Lakeside Canning Company, Plainview, will be available for harvest work...in groups of ten for shocking and threshing...the rate of pay has been set at 50 cents an hour of which the prisoners receive 80 cents a day." July 12, 1944.

--"60 War Prisoners at Whitewater; Available at Once for Farm Work." "These men are for the most part experienced in farm work and can operate tractors and other equipment...the prisoners will be available in small groups and a system of checking on the groups regularly will be worked out by guards at the camp." April 19, 1945.

--"Kiwansians Told of War Prisoner Camp at Whitewater Park." "The most important thing that people should realize about our German prisoners is that they are ordinary human beings, said Captain McClintock, commanding officer at the Whitewater State Prison camp." August 3, 1944.

--"Nazi POW Who Painted Swastika to be punished." The German prisoner of war who painted the German swastika on the garage of the home owned by Nicholas Meyers at Hilbert and Wabasha streets recently will be properly punished...Under the Geneva Treaty war prisoners can be punished by being placed on a bread and water diet and confined to a cell." June 12, 1945.

--Ernst Keller, a POW who had been returned to Germany corresponded with farmers he had worked for, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Speltz of Altura and Anderson, also of Altura. In these letters he expresses gratitude for both farmers and for the wives. "The days I was working on the farm of Speltz and Anderson, I was very very happy because I had it very good. In the evening already I was happy that the next day I could be on the farm again." Ernst sends a long list of items that his family needs, including clothes. "Today I can say that I am very happy ...I received your CARE package. It has been a god send because all of our family were very hungry. We took all the food out of the package and put it on the table. Then we were praying to God for that wonderful help brought by you. I can say you we had tears in our eyes. You are all in all to us." April 16, 1948.

April 25, 2012, 12:05 p.m. Book Chat: Merit Badges by Kevin Fenton.

Kevin spent part of his childhood in Minnesota City where the Fenton family lived on Denzer Road. The fictional town of the novel, Minnesappa, is a thinly disguised Winona, with landmarks that people will recognize. Fenton traces the experiences of four special friends from junior high to mid career points of their lives.