

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 8: August, 2012

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

Mark your calendars!

August 4: Monthly
MCHA meeting;
140 Mill Street; 9:30 a.m.

SEPTEMBER

September 15: Cemetery
Walk; Oakland Cemetery;
2:00 p.m.

September 15: Bob
Welch, Singer/Narrator;
First Baptist Church,
1:00 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.

September 20: Minnesota
City Community Readers;
115 Iowa Street; 6:30p.m.;
Selection: *The Odyssey*

Go “Green”!

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

Oakland Cemetery Walk and Bob Welch, Civil War Musician, Highlight September 15 Minnesota City Day Celebration

Seven individuals with significant Minnesota City history who are buried in Oakland Cemetery will be “interpreted” in the Cemetery Walk on September 15 (See Photos Page 5): Esther Denzer, Sarah Pike, Robert Pike, Lucy Isobel Church, Daniel Burley, Jane Burley, and Samuel Loudon. Four of the seven lives will be narrated by descendants. The three additional persons will be featured in the September newsletter. Also marked for visitors will be the graves of civil war veterans.

In cooperation with the Oakland Cemetery Association, the Minnesota City Historical Association will sponsor the walk in the cemetery, which is itself, an historical location for the city. Deaths were frequent in the first years of Minnesota City settlement (post 1852). In 1926, an article in the Winona Republican Herald carried an account of the Minnesota City settlement written by a St. Paul Dispatch correspondent. He outlines three reasons for the decline of Minnesota City: cholera epidemic, drinking surface water, and exposure to a winter rigor that settlers were prepared for with neither adequate supplies nor shelter. “The tragedy that really marked the failure of the pioneer town” according to the reporter, “is told more graphically still in a cemetery plot a mile and more outside the present limits of the town...There are the usual monuments that mark the resting place of a city’s dead, marked with the granite and marble slabs that bear the burial date from 1860 to the present time. These headstones occupy only half the space perhaps reserved for cemetery use. Within the other half are row on row of older stones, crumbling, some of them with names almost effaced by time and in between are unmarked mounds that tell the

tale of dead abandoned there because no kin remained to place a slab on their resting place....In that one winter season, more than a third of the Western Farm and Village colonists died.” (*Winona Republican Herald. October 25, 1926*).

A cemetery association was founded. Sarah Pike, one of the incorporators of the cemetery, is one of the featured walk personalities. Oakland Cemetery is one of the oldest “organizations” of Minnesota City. The incorporating papers read “Made this second day of October, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and eighty four between Sarah G. Pike of the town of Rollingstone, County of Winona and the State of Minnesota of the first part and James H. Adams, C. G Chapman, James Kennedy, and James M. Stewart, Trustees of Oakland Cemetery Association and their successors of the second part, amount of seven dollars. Justice of the Peace S. E. Cotton”.

Although few websites provide the same information about civil war veterans, using the local veterans association markings of veterans graves, and based on other cemetery and death records, Oakland graves of civil war veterans will be marked on September 15. Materials will be available and assistance for those interested in doing grave rubbings on that day. Cemetery walks are a valuable way to connect communities with their history.

Bob Welch has been contracted by MCHA to perform on September 15. Welch sings and talks about the Civil War. His goal is to educate and entertain, and his songs and stories are his vehicles to do that. He began to perform in 2005, and since then has appeared in many venues including Gettysburg, Springfield, Illinois, and museums, libraries, and schools. Welch's programs include original and traditional civil war songs. He has performed in uniforms of Union and Confederate armies, using music from both sides. His narration includes stories of Lincoln, Grant, Lee and Jackson. Some songs of the Civil War Era are familiar to many. "Follow the Drinking Gourd", one of the songs Welch uses with young audiences, will be informative to many who know the melody, but perhaps not its significance as a freedom song of Slaves who were encouraged to look to the north, the gourd being the Big Dipper. **The Welch programs have been reviewed as very entertaining for audiences of all ages.**

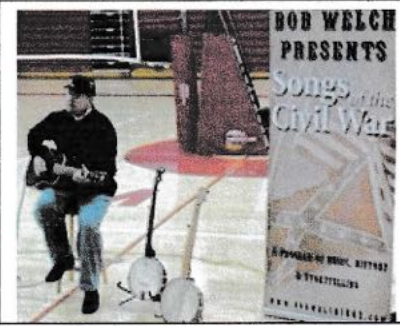


Photo: <http://www.bobwelch1863.com>

Peter Boulay Addresses Climatology Issues at Stockton Forum

As part of their 5th Anniversary commemoration of the 2007 flooding events, Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund presented a timely public forum at Stockton Community Center related to Climatology Issues on **Sunday, July 29**. Peter Boulay, a State Climatologist presented a power point discussion of flash flood history in Winona County. He included information about the State Climatology office, the Minnesota area Volunteer Climate Observing Program, and the participation of Winona County volunteers. Also speaking was Daryl Buck, Winona SWCD. Buck discussed projects accomplished since the flood. Information tables included those of the American Red Cross (how to make disaster clean up kits) and Winona County Code Red (how to sign up for alerts of weather). The presentation focus on rainfall was particularly interesting at this time of drought of some magnitude in the area. A website presentation of Boulay's speech can be found at <http://climate.umn.edu/Pete1.ppt>. The graphics are particularly informative.

Hemecht: An Examination of Rollingstone and Luxembourg Culture

Many MCHA newsletter readers and readers of local media recall the exhibits and programs orchestrated in recent years by Rollingstone native and Historian Mary Nilles, and others, related to "The Homes They Left Behind" and Rollingstone. A new film entitled "Hemecht: Luxembourgers Making a New Home in Winona County," was premiered in Winona on June 18. Using film footage from Luxembourg and Rollingstone, the film considers the similarities of cultural aspects of the two locations. The Luxembourgers came to the Rollingstone area in the 1850s. The film features extensive commentary of Brother Paul Grass, a St. Mary's University Faculty member, of Shirley Rock Speltz, Rollingstone resident, Connie Rader, Rollingstone artist, and other active Rollingstone Luxembourgers: many of them have visited the European location. Particularly interesting footage is of the making of the treipen at Ledebuhr's Meat market for use at the annual Rollingstone fest. Jean Ensch, Luxembourg historian and Mary Nilles provide commentary for the film. A copy of the film is in the MCHA archives and may be used by visitors.

MCHA Extends Sympathy:

to the family of Stockton resident, Kathryn Ledebuhr, 89, who died in Winona on July 7. Kathryn is the mother of Rolland (Andrea) Ledebuhr of Minnesota City, grandmother of Lori (Kelvin) of Minnesota City.

Minnesota Citian John Martinson Honored at Winona County Fair

One of this year's Winona County Fair's Hall of Fame honorees, John Martinson, has lived on Harbor Drive in Minnesota City since the 1980s. He and his wife Jan are the owners of Martinson's Dairy Equipment in Winona; the company services and repairs dairy equipment. At the County Fair John has serviced the fair dairy barn and has been involved with 4-H and FFA students. Jan works in the Winona Office and is also known to area persons as a township election judge. The Martinson home on Harbor Drive was moved to the location by Ed Jeresek, (Minnesota City resident, now deceased) when Highway 61 became four lane. It was empty for a number of years. According to Howard Volkart, the house had been on the Chris Ludwigsen land and had to be moved. Wednesday, July 11 was John Martinson Day at the fair. (Info. From Susan Althoff and Howard Volkart)

Historical Tree on Harbor Drive and Wenonah Road Damaged



An old friend on Harbor and Wenonah Drive (O'Grady photo)

On July 10, Susan Althoff sent this information to MCHA.

"Anything over 50 years is considered historical, right?"

Last night at the township meeting it was voted to remove the cottonwood tree at the corner of Harbor Drive and Wenonah Road. It was damaged during the wind storm that came through earlier this summer and it now considered a safety hazard.

My family has knowledge or records of that tree being here at least 70 years, and last night there was speculation that it might be close to 100 years old from Emil Sulla and others.

To some it is a tree that needs attention. To others it is an old friend. For years before paved roads and street signs, people would say "look for the big cottonwood" or "turn at the big cottonwood". It is a landmark that has been part of many peoples lives for a long time. It stands tall and proud showing the way to the Mississippi River, the Minnesota City Boat Club and Winona Prairie Island Road."

For readers familiar with Kathleen Norris' writing, Susan's comments will remind of her essay, "Dreaming of Trees." In it Norris writes "My husband and I had to take down a lovely cottonwood a few years ago—it was crowding a basement wall—and a neighbor came by to mourn with us. He was five years old when that tree was planted; he's now in his seventies. It was strange to think that we were erasing a part of his childhood. My husband says that destroying that tree still makes him sad, that he imagined it to be like killing an elephant, something larger, wiser, and more mysterious than himself. (Norris, *The Cloister Walk*, 288). Many of us have had tree connections. One still is stopped momentarily by the large maple and elm tree stumps at the back of the First Baptist Church, reminding of the huge trees that stood until stormy weather in June 2009. . Early settler, D. Q. Burley, talked about the seven kinds of wood he used in the rocking chairs he built, all taken from trees on his land. Burley planted maples that still mark a land line on the ridge of Denzer-O'Grady land. And individual trees mark the events of our lives: birthdays, deaths, events that have connections with the land. These are the spiritual connections that Norris allots to trees. Many of us relate to Susan's sentiments about losing the tree on Harbor Drive and Winona Road, even without seeing it or having history at this site.

Denzer Family Reunion

Christian Denzer, the patriarch of the Denzer family, and his wife, Margaret Feigert (var.) were both born in Germany. Over seventy members of the family of Christian Denzer held their 89th family reunion at Farmer's Park on June 24 of this year. Lola Denzer, Winona, longtime Minnesota City resident, was the oldest member in attendance, and Bella Kerley was the youngest.

Minnesota City Connections with Civil War

A website titled *Vermont in the Civil War*, <http://vermontcivilwar.org/index.php>, lists Vermonters who enlisted from other locations, but were originally from Vermont. The list includes:

Burley, Daniel Quimby, Co. B, 7th MN INF Born: 09/28/1821, Lyndonville, VT; Died: 01/05/1915, Buried: Oakland Cemetery, Minnesota City, MN

Burley, David Q., enl 3 Mar 1864, Pvt, Co. B, 7th MN INF Born: abt 1822, VT; Died: unknown, Buried: Unknown

Campbell, Hiram, enl 21 Nov 1861, Pvt, 1st Btry MN LARTY Born: abt 1817, VT; Died: unknown, Buried: Unknown

Hiram Campbell and D. Q. Burley are buried in Oakland Cemetery. The "David" name is a confusion that Daniel had to correct again and again throughout his life, often requiring witnesses to "verify his own veracity". "David" was a mistaken naming of him from the time of his enlistment.

Other Oakland Civil War burials include C.C. Chapman, Sam'l Loudon, Jacob Schaffner, Rufus Waterman, Frank Frame, S. Cotton, Emil Dannies. These did not all enter the Civil War from Winona County, but they are buried in Oakland. Burley and Loudon will be commemorated by interpreters at the cemetery walk on September 15, and the graves of the others will be marked. Anyone with information on these individuals is invited to send it to mgogradey@embarqmail.com. Information can also be sent by surface mail to G. O'Grady, 15149 Highway 61, Minnesota City, Mn 55959.

MCHA thanks: James Stansfield, Ontario, Canada for the photo of Daniel Q. Burley and a copy of Daniel's commission in the Civil War. Burley and wife Jane Rowney are featured in the Sept. 15 cemetery walk.

MCHA congratulates: Minnesota City baseball players and their coaches on their many recent victories.

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.

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 Andrea Church, Marv O'Grady and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.