

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 10: October, 2012

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

Mark Your Calendar

Sat. October 13:
Regular MCHA Meeting; First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street; 9:30 a.m.

Thurs. October 18:
Minnesota City Community Readers; Former Minnesota City School Building; 6:30 p.m.; Selection: *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese

Sat. December 8:
Caroling Event; First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street; 6:00 p.m.

Go “Green”!

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

News Note:

GBDRF (Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund) is looking for new board members. Contact Bryceson Maus.

Audiences and Participants Enjoy September 15 Oakland Cemetery Walk and Bob Welch Concert

The beautiful weather complimented the beautiful grounds of Oakland Cemetery on September 15; both contributed to a thoughtful history lesson for attendees of the Cemetery Walk and the Bob Welch concert at the former Minnesota City School. Family members and friends who attended shared appreciative comments for many aspects of the events. Guides and interpreters gave performances that impressed with their information, their authenticity, their dramatic performances, and their sensitivity to the individuals they portrayed.



Lynda Brzezinski



Rebecca Weiss



Nora Butenhoff

The three guides, Lynda Brzezinski, Rebecca Weiss, and Nora Butenhoff were responsible for the smooth progress of audience groups from one site to another and with linking information. The fatigue and illnesses of a number of the interred were reflected in voices and information of the actors. A number of MCHA members and friends came from distances—the Oklands from Thief River Falls, Tschumpers from Minneapolis and Racine, and Pam Stansfield Aune from Granger, Indiana—to view and participate. Equally appreciated were the many area attendees. In the short (as history goes) ten year life of the Historical Association, the number of people connections prompted by the sponsored events is impressive. The support of so many encourages future activities. Notebooks of materials on families represented in the recent “walk” are available in the archives for reader perusal or copy. Additional families are encouraged to submit archival information. Having family information archived made this event possible.

Persons who attended the Bob Welch concert on Civil War Songs and Narration were entertained with his knowledgeable and interesting commentary and skilled renditions of the songs. Welch demonstrated reason for his popularity with family, school, and community groups.

Additional photos from the Cemetery Walk can be located on the MCHA website, www.minnesotacity.org.

Minnesota City Historical Association Thanks

The Minnesota City Historical Association thanks the large number of persons involved in preparation and presentation of the September 15 events, the Bob Welch Civil War Musical/Narration presentation and the Oakland Cemetery Walk, "Voicing the Values of Their Lives." Persons preparing sites and materials for the cemetery and the school building included Hollis Donehower, Don Evanson, Marv O'Grady, Leo Jilk, Jenny Ebbinger, and Sarah O'Grady. St. Paul's Church provided chairs for the concert; Debbie LaFee provided decor for the cemetery. Thank you to Janet Seabern and Lori Donehower for serving refreshments, to Clare Denzer for monitoring the artifacts table, to Lyle's for using their marquee to announce the event, to the business places for poster placement and to Samuel O'Grady for program distribution at the event. Thank you to the three walk guides, Rebecca Weiss, Nora Butenhoff, and Lynda Brzezinski and to musicians Jim O'Grady and Kate O'Grady. Thanks to the presenters, Maxine Spaag, Pam Aune, Jack Stansfield, Walt Kelly, Dawn Church Webster, Kay Vanderzee, Brian Tomashek. Their narrations were interesting and replete with the history of Minnesota City. **Others not named here contributed emotionally, physically, and financially to support this presentation.** These motivate future efforts.

Thank you to *Winona Post* for publicity which they continually provide with acceptance of all our submitted announcements. Cemetery walks and music lyrics are two vehicles for transmitting history. On September 15, visitors to Minnesota City accessed both.

MCHA Extends Sympathy to:

- Friends and family of Richard Rolbiecki, Winona, 81, who died in Pickwick on August 30. The Rolbiecki Family was involved in City Nite Club of Minnesota City History.
- Friends and family of Marlys Ziegler, 80, Fountain City, who died at Sauer Home in Winona on August 17. Marlys is the sister of Janet Hill Seabern, and Gale Hill, MCHA members. The Hills once lived on Highway 61; Marlys attended Minnesota City School.
- Friends and family of Donald Kowalewski, 75, Trempealeau, WI, who died on September 8, 2012. Don lived his early life in Minnesota City and attended Minnesota City School.



Bees Interest Cemetery Visitors

A number of Cemetery visitors on September 15 had an added attraction—the busy bees at a tree near the Anderson property on the north side of Oakland Cemetery. Local beekeeper, Howard Volkart, said bees had been there in previous years, had vacated, and now bees have returned.

Volkart believes the bees are wild orchard bees, but he has set a bee trap to capture specimens for positive identification.

"That buzzing noise means something. Now, the only reason for making a buzzing noise that I know of is because you are... a bee! And the only reason for being a bee is to make honey. And the only reason for making honey is so I can eat it."

*Winnie the Pooh
A. A. Milne*

From Evanson and Evanson: Former School Building Available to Community

“Please spread the word that for the immediate future, the building (former Minnesota City School) is available for community use. The gym could be used for volleyball, movies, etc. There should be a responsible adult always in attendance, of course.” Persons wishing to use the building should contact Don Evanson @ devanson@hbc.com or at 689-4240. This information follows the move of Riverway Learning Community to Winona Crossings Mall. Previous to Riverway’s occupation of the building, in 1999, community members in Minnesota City at meetings held at St. Paul’s Parish vocalized several possible community uses for the building. Perhaps these might be communicated to Don at this time. Minnesota City Community Readers meet at the building on the third Thursday of each month.

In the MCHA Archives:

Ropework; Knots, Hitches, Splices, Halters by James M. Drew. Webb Publishing Co., 1936. (contributed by Howard Volkart).

James M. Drew of the agricultural extension division of the University of Minnesota, developed this small volume’s material from books kept from 1849 to 1893, by his father, E.B. Drew. Drew lived on farmland in Rollingstone where he successfully raised wheat. He was also a legislative representative in the 1870s.

James Drew taught rope work to Boy Scouts at Whitewater Camporee in May 1940. Troop 15 of Minnesota City was among the groups. Drew gave the small volume to Howard Volkart, the scoutmaster. The book details many knots: square, surgeons, shoe ties, weaver’s knots, cowboy and many others. Included are illustrations of these knots.

Was D.Q. Burley a Ridge Farmer?

On the Sunday morning following the Oakland Cemetery Walk, several members of the Burley family (Pamela Stansfield Aune, Granger, Indiana, and Jack Stansfield, Winona, interpreted Daniel and his wife Ann in the Walk) went to the top of O’Grady’s Bluff from where the Denzer Bottoms once owned by D.Q. Burley can be viewed. The bluff top, O’Grady’s have been told is one of the highest in Winona County. As the visitors left for the hilltop, I thought for the first time about D.Q. Burley as a “Ridge Farmer,” not knowing if he ever “worked” the land or the ideas of the top of the hill. What about hill roads, horses, equipment? (If others have this information, please share). Burley was a skilled farmer as detailed in the 1884 *History of Wabasha County*. As the child of a ridge farming family (Monahan) and a valley farming family (Jilk), I remember reference to some of the differences from childhood--the wind of the ridges, the large flat expanses of farmland as opposed to smaller uneven valley fields, and I have connected musings about these to contemplations about living next to the Mississippi River most of my life. Our relatives from South Dakota invariably have commented on feeling “hemmed in” when they visited us. In a 1915 *Winona Republican Herald*, a realtor described an “Elegant Ridge Farm, 320 acres ridge farm, two miles from Witoka, soil is of very best being what is called ridge or grub land, black loam, clay subsoil.” (January 2, 1915). Another ad, “Choice Ridge Farm Adjoining Winona,” describes a “very desirable farm on Stockton Hill. The soil is of the very best clay loam, clay subsoil over limestone foundation, the ideal conformation for productive land.” The good soil is the bottom line in these descriptions, but one senses that differences of ridge and valley farms are understood. Going to “the top of the world,” as grandchildren call our bluff, one can hardly escape without consideration of one’s place in the cosmos. The question becomes much larger than “Was D. Q. Burley a Ridge Farmer?” Are lives enriched by the vistas of large spaces that promote open ended thinking and imagining? Is reflection an innate or learned or practiced talent? Is it the product of leisure? (Opinion: G.O’G.)

Interesting Old News in Minnesota City

(Special to the Republican October 9)

"On Friday evening as an old gentleman and two ladies were walking along the track of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad, someone threw a pail of water from the tender of the returning work train and drenched them. As one of the ladies was nearly seventy years old, her escort felt very indignant at the wanton act.

A German some fifty years old coming home from Winona on a load of lumber, on Friday evening, fell from the wagon and the wheel passed over his chest and presumably hit his face as it is badly lacerated. He was taken to Hotel de Ramer and his wounds promptly attended to by Drs. Newberg and Walrath. His injuries do not seem fatal. The cause of the accident was too much lager...It seems as though in this case he got too much of a good thing." *Winona Daily Republican, October 10, 1882.*

Minnesota City, October 6. "Geo. Calbick from Montana dropped off here one day last week to make a call on his brother William, not knowing that William and family left here a year and a half ago for Kalispell, Mont. He was much surprised to learn that he and his brother were living in the same state, although many miles apart. Geo. Calbick operates a large cattle ranch and had just been to Chicago with three carloads of cattle. He spent one winter in the Ellsworth Mill here about fifteen years ago, but he said he had no trouble in finding his way about the place."

"The happy Thresher Frame wedding party came out on the C.&N.W. 2 p.m. train Thursday and went direct to the residence of David Whetstone, where a sumptuous wedding dinner was served to a large company of relatives and friends. May their paths be paths of peace, is the wish of many friends." *Republican Herald, Oct. 6, 1902*

"The proposed enlargement of the electric power plant at Minnesota City, of which mention was made in the news columns of The Republican Herald may open the way for interurban electric railway lines all about Winona. An electric line from Minnesota City to Stockton as a starter, would not only make 'A Greater Winona' possible, but would add to the value of every foot of real estate west of the city. The time is near at hand when the electric railway will invade Minnesota....One of the most notable effects of the extension of trolley lines in suburban districts will be to check the concentration of population in the cities and scatter the inhabitants over a much wider area....The health, the morals and happiness of the people will be promoted to a greater degree than by any other agency of our times.... The time is near at hand, when Minnesota will share this electric railway expansion and if the New Jersey capitalists who own the Minnesota City power plant will start the first line to Winona, they may realize that they builded (sic) better than they knew." *Republican Herald, October 14, 1905.*

DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Member Jean Gardner Presents Proclamation of Constitution Week to City Council

Jean Gardner, Secretary Treasurer of the Wenonah Chapter of DAR, was one of the group's local members who presented the Proclamation of Constitution Week for signing by the Winona City Council to Mayor Jerry Miller. A resolution to mark the signing of the Constitution was enacted in 1956 by President Eisenhower. The threefold purpose of the law is to emphasize citizen responsibility to protect and defend the constitution, to inform the people that it is the basis for the American heritage and way of life, and to encourage the study of history of the Constitution.

*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.