

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 5, Issue 5: May, 2011

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

Mark your calendars!

May 14: Monthly MCHA Meeting; MCHA Archives, 140 Mill St.; 9:30 a.m.

May 19: Minnesota City Community Readers; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street; 6:30 p.m.; Selection: Kent Kruger’s *Iron Lake*

May 21: Minnesota City Day See Page 4 for Events, Times, and Locations

May 21 Minnesota City Day Observance See Page 4 for Schedule of Events, Activities, and Times Invite Family and Friends to this Community Building Annual Celebration

MCHA Membership Policy Altered: January Due Date

To simplify bookkeeping for our small organization, the April MCHA meeting attendees agreed that a **January date for all memberships** be used, as opposed to all the month by month dates that have been the practice to date. Those who know when their membership was due are asked to judge whether months before or after are close to January to “suffer the loss” if that is the case—or to renew in January to make tasks simpler. A number of other organizations we are aware of (e.g. Pickwick Mill) introduced this simpler procedure in the last years. Membership dues for MCHA contribute to regular Association expenses: newsletter publication and mailing, chemical toilet and computer costs in summer months, among others. A number of members have purchased additional memberships for friends and/or have contributed additional monies for additional projects and costs.

St. Mary’s University Students Spruce Up First Baptist Grounds

As part of Saint Mary’s University Volunteer Mentors “Spruce Up Winona” Day on April 14, three volunteers came to the Historic First Baptist Church at Minnesota City to assist with Spring Cleanup. Using tools and implements of the O’Gradys and Friesens, a docent’s tour by Jean Gardner of the history of the building, and with some direction and ample refreshments supplied by Donna Friesen, the students worked to rake and prepare the lawn for summer care. This opportunity for intergenerational conversation and



Andrew Carlson, Donna Friesen (mentor), Shauna Stephens, and Samantha Dahlstrom at First Baptist Church Cleanup

practical assistance was a great aid to the First Baptist Ladies Aid Group which has maintained the church at Minnesota City since it was purchased back from the Winona County Historical Association in 1985. The back rooms of the church now house the archives of the Minnesota City Historical Association.

Who Tell’s the Crocuses It’s Spring?



**Who tells the crocuses it’s spring?
What calendar informs the
daffodils to bloom...And yet they
know. They know. It is the hour
When spring takes over.**

Mae Winkler Goodman

Claim Jumping not a Quiet or Covert Venture in Minnesota City Area Settlement Days

The subject of claim jumping relating to land claims and ownership was included in the recent lecture of Bob Bambenek related to early settlement history. An account of one of these claims and the blood spilled to settle it is the following: "An old gentleman, who had made a claim of a quarter section of land, situated in Saratoga, and was a bona fide settler on the same and entitled to bid it off: another person bid \$1.25 per acre, and cried 'Settle.' The old gentleman then raised the bid five cents and cried "Settle." Upon which one of the Club society told him if he did not withdraw his bid he would put him into the river. The old gentleman refused to do so. The ruffians seized him and were dragging him toward the river, when he drew a revolver and shot at one of the ruffians, wounding him in the thigh. Another man was wounded in the fleshy part of the loin. In the affray, the old gentleman had his thumb shot off. He was trodden down by the gang and severely injured in the breast. He finally succeeded in getting up and taking refuge in the land office, where the mob tried to get hold of him again, but was prevented by the officers (this was at the Winona government land sales). In about two weeks he died. (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mnwinona/History.htm>)

Wastewater Collection and Treatment information from City Council on the Minnesota City website, www.minnesotacity.org.

Persons who check the Website will find information about the progress of the Wastewater Treatment Process, related meetings, and other information under the City Council Link. The City Council has funded the website since its origin. Many of the links have become important vehicles of information for readers from Minnesota City and elsewhere, particularly related to the current improvement projects. Marvin O'Grady, Susan Althoff, and David Eckert share responsibility for website updates; City Council and others routinely supply information for posting. If readers have information to include on any of the links, please inform one of the listed persons.

Sandhill Cranes Fascinate River Watchers Near Minnesota City Boat Club

In the 1940s, Aldo Leopold, author of *Sand County Almanac*, appreciated the sandhill cranes, perhaps with a more comprehensive understanding of their history than many of the drivers/river watchers/bird watchers on the Prairie Island Dike Road during the recent high water rise of the Mississippi. Leopold begins his *Marshland Elegy* with this statement: "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words." He speaks of his outlasting other fauna from the Eocene Era (possibly 56 million years ago). According to Leopold, "When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men. Their annual return is the ticking of the geological clock. Upon the place of their return they confer a peculiar distinction. Amid the endless mediocrity of the commonplace, a crane marsh holds a paleontological patent of nobility, won in the march of aeons, and revocable only by shotgun." It will surprise some to learn that there is a hunting season for cranes in Northern Minnesota—and that would surprise Leopold, who during his lifetime believed that cranes were well on the path to extinction. Local observers of the cranes, watching them fly, listening to their unique sounds share the author's admiration for this species. (Leopold, *Marshland Elegy*, 1948).



MCHA Members Attend Oral History Presentation

On April 15, MCHA members Dixie Brown, Gayle Goetzman, Marv and Gen O'Grady attended a presentation on Oral Histories of Country Schools, given at Ridgeway School by Tom Melchoir, author and retired Minnesota 1971 Teacher of the Year. Melchoir's presentations at the school were funded by a Selco grant and co-sponsored by Friends of the Ridgeway Community Library. Melchoir believes that our stories are an important contribution of our lives and should be recorded with authenticity in all respects. Included in his photos were one of Pearl Steenberg who taught at Minnesota City from 1933 to 1936. Minnesota City Archives has a number of Steenberg's teaching records copied from files at the Minnesota State Historical Society, the depository of Minnesota City School Records at the time of the Winona District consolidation. Emerging in Melchoir's descriptions of the Country School teachers were qualities of physical and emotional strength and often humor. Gender differences were more pronounced in teacher situations in early histories—few men, according to Melchoir, taught, because of low pay. Some very interesting anecdotes were related including some schools interweaving church and state, unruly students, and a mixture of support and non support from parents, related to their understanding of school/teacher procedures. The Minnesota City School Reunion, July 16 and 17 will be an opportunity for individuals to share their authentic stories. Those persons familiar with *Old Wise Tales*, the collection of interviews conducted by Riverway Students in 2002, revealed the willingness of interviewees to discuss their Minnesota City classroom histories. Both *Old Wise Tales* and Melchoir's *Both Sides of the Desk* are available in the MCHA Mill Street Archives.

MCHA Extends Sympathy:

- to the family and friends of Jeanette Cisewski who died in Winona on March 29, 2011. Jeanette was married to Edward Shaw in 1951 and resided in Minnesota City. Ed died in 1992. Jeanette married Gerald Cisewski in 1996. Gerald died in 2006. Jeanette retired from work at Brock Candy in 1992. She is survived by a son, Ronald and his family.
- the family and friends of Wayne Buswell, Fountain City, who died at Winona Health on March 29, 2011. Wayne was the nephew of Gladys and Howard Volkart and the son of Warner and Violet Buswell. He attended Minnesota City Schools through eighth grade.
- To Fred and Jean Brust on the death of Fred's sister, Helen Kwosek-Table, Winona, who died on April 2 at age 80.

MCHA Congratulates:

- James Sulla on his 80th birthday, April 18. Jim and Betty (Sandstede) live on Harbor Drive in Minnesota City.
- Carothers County Farm for the selection of llama sire, Marcel, for the Cover of Camelid Quarterly. The farm is located north of Minnesota City in Whitman Deering Valley; Carothers raises and sells Argentine llamas.

MCHA thanks:

- Rollingstone Township for the \$300 donation to support MCHA goals.
- St. Mary's University students for spring cleanup of the grounds at the Historic First Baptist Church,
- Donna Friesen for direction and refreshments, and Jean Gardner for narration of the building history.
- Darlene Decker for the photo (March newsletter) of the 1938 and Maybury school building.

Minnesota City School Reunion July 16-July 17, 2011
Socialization, Food, Entertainment
All persons connected with Minnesota City Schools Invited—
Teachers, Students, Parents, Friends.

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 DAY SCHEDULE
SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2011**

**At Riverway Learning Community
115 Iowa Street**

8 a.m. - 12 p.m. – Sponsored by Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund
Dad's Belgian Waffles – Benefit for Minnesota City Youth Baseball program
Meet with LaVern Fritz for **All Minnesota City Schools Reunion information**

**At the Historic First Baptist Church
140 Mill Street**

10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Open House – Sponsored by the Minnesota City Historical Association
and the First Baptist Church Ladies Aid

Informational tours of the church and MCHA archives

Viewing of new acquisitions, photos, and displays

11 a.m.-11:30 a.m.—Community Singing led by Carla Burton

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Hardwoods Home Companion! A variety show featuring music, skits, special
guests and poetry, interwoven with dialog/information on historical aspects of the area

1 p.m.-2 p.m.—“Take Note!” Rushford Area Society of the Arts sponsored show tune choir
with songs of the 50s and 60's

Throughout the Day

Children's Games – Various sites

**At the Green Space across from the Post Office
End of Mill Street**

Sponsored by the Minnesota City Historical Association

10:30 a.m.—City Nite Club plaque presentation

Post Office plaque presentation

Roger Church **Post Office commission and history**

Sponsored by Riverway Learning Community

10:30 a.m.-1:30 a.m.—MN GreenCorp “Living Green Outreach” demonstrations
displays/activities on waste reduction and food growing

**At the City Hall/Fire Station
149 Mill Street**

12 p.m.-1 p.m.—Minnesota City Volunteer Fire Department equipment display

12 p.m.-1 p.m.—Rivertown Gallery Antiques display with Hank Vogel

12:30 p.m.-1 p.m.—Personal Safety: All ages with Officer Kevin Kearney

At the Pavilion by Garvin Brook

Sponsored by Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund

1 p.m.—Dedication of the Fritz/Denzer Pavilion

At Oakland Cemetery

1 p.m. - 2 p.m. – Hosted by Cliff and Janet Seabern

Family history gathering

Viewing of family information books/Biographical information collection