

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 8, Issue 6: June, 2014

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

Mark your Calendars!

June 14:
Minnesota City Historical Society (MCHA) Monthly Meeting; 9:30 a.m.; 140 Mill Street.

June 26:
Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30-8:00 p.m.; Minnesota City School Building; 115 Iowa Street. Selection: John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*.

June 26:
Minnesota City Book Shelf; 6:30-8:00 p.m.; Minnesota City School Building, 115 Iowa Street.

“Go Green!”

If you receive this letter in paper “hardcopy” and would like to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

Minnesota City Day 2014 in the Record Books (Archives Panels!)



Belgian Waffle Breakfast at St. Paul’s Parish Hall

The 162nd Anniversary of the founding of Minnesota City didn’t ring a bell of invitation in many people’s minds, but Saturday, May 17, witnessed a large influx of visitors to the village, numbers largely drawn by the Garvin Brook Disaster Fund (GBDRF) **Belgian Waffle Breakfast** at St. Paul’s Parish Hall. According to GBDRF chairperson Bryceson Maus, “The waffle breakfast was very successful; there were nearly 250

breakfasts served. We’re very appreciative for the help of the Minnesota City First Responders and the support of the Minnesota City area residents which lead to this year’s great turn out.” Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund was started in December of 2007 in response to the flooding of August 18-19 in SE Minnesota. Minnesota City First Responders and GBDRF will benefit from event proceeds.

The beautiful handwork of the **St. Paul’s quilters and the Heritage Quilt of MCHA** which these women had constructed in 2002 were on display in St. Paul’s Hall.

A number of visitors took advantage of the **Minnesota City Book Shelf Giveaway** at the Minnesota City School Building. This room is opened for the public at any events at the building. Many more books remain on the shelves. Some classifications have been made, including classic literature, biographies, children’s books, Native American material. Visitors are welcomed to browse and withdraw any books—no sign in or out, no returns necessary, no fines. All books are contributed for free distribution.

Historical information, photos, and narrative were presented to persons who attended the conversation about **Southwestern Minnesota Railroad**. Some persons missed this event because of time complications of presenters, but those who participated were enriched with many photos, articles, and detail of recent experiences of those who walked the area. Thanks to Don Evanson, John Kalmes and any others involved in this event.



Don Evanson, John Kalmes and attendees examine railroad materials.

There will be no newsletter in July. Next issue: August 6

Minnesota City Day – continued from page 2

Highlights of the display of materials at the **MCHA and First Baptist Church Open House** included First Settlers' photos, D.Q. Burley's enlistment certificate for the Civil War, a copy of Robert Thorp's certificate of membership in the Western Farm and Village association, photos of William Haddock and the Cotton Family (relatives of current MCHA members), digitized copy of text on Mnemonics by Robert and William Pike, photo of O.M. Lord's home, and other notebooks of family/early settler research.



Materials, including first settler photos, displayed at MCHA Archives, 140 Mill Street.

Congratulations to Lola Woodard Denzer who celebrated her 90th birthday at an open house on May 18, hosted by her children at the home of Dallas and Corinne Denzer in Minnesota City. This was the former home of Lola and her husband Ray. Lola currently lives in Winona.

Thank You to Lori Donehower for the smooth operation of Minnesota City Community Readers. Lori writes the monthly communiqués to the Winona Post and the Winona Daily News to announce selections and meeting times. She locates books from the area libraries and other sources to provide no cost participation to group readers. All of this detail work makes member participation uncomplicated.

Thank You to all involved in the Oakland Cemetery clean-up on May 10.

Thank You to the silent, unseen "gifter" of the beautiful blue hydrangeas left on the steps of the First Baptist Church on Minnesota City Day.

Thank You to Vic Gardner for time at Pickwick Mill to facilitate MCHA use of the Old Settlers photos for Minnesota City Day; thank you also to Bob Bambenek and Winona County Old Settlers for loan of the photos which have now been returned to their storage site at the Mill.

Thank You to Evanson and Evanson for the use of the Minnesota City School Building for various MCHA functions.

Readers are invited to send photos and/or stories from family reunions to mgogrady@embarqmail.com. We can all be writers of history.

Anyone who wishes to become a member is invited to send \$15.00 to *MCHA, P.O. Box 21, Minnesota City, MN 55959*

Standing Invitations:

- to attend meetings of MCHA. These meetings are held at 140 Mill Street.
- to respond to newsletter content. Please send additions, corrections, suggestions, etc. to mgogrady@embarqmail.com.
- **Writers of regular columns would be welcomed.** These might include monthly columns on area businesses, churches, schools, organizations or other relevant topics on the area and/or our history.

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

Daytrippers' Getaway

Maxine Church Spaag

(In a phone conversation several weeks ago with Maxine Church Spaag, she mentioned that she was going to Chanhassen (Shakopee) for a Merchants Bank event. In response to our question about what these "day trips" are, Maxine provided this information. For anyone interested in this particular event, *The Little Mermaid* production runs through July at the Chanhassen).

Sometimes it is nice to break the monotony of daily life by taking a daytrip somewhere. The Merchants Bank of Winona has provided this service to its patrons for many years through their Events and Adventures program [formerly the Premier Club]. A recent outing was to the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre to see "The Little Mermaid" based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale. The production was as entertaining to the adults present as it was to the many children there. The costumes were dazzling and fantastic, the singing and acting superb by a stellar cast. This dinner theatre is the largest professional dinner complex in the nation and the largest privately owned restaurant in Minnesota. It is truly a wonderful day trip destination.

Other venues for plays and concerts include the Plymouth Playhouse which has staged the Church Basement Ladies plays, the famous Guthrie Theater which has several stages and puts on a variety of productions, as well as the Old Log Theater, the Ordway, and the Orpheum, all in and around the Twin Cities. Another favorite destination for Day Trippers is the Fireside Dinner Theater in Fort Atkinson, WI. which also has fine dining and little shops to browse in while there. Anyone who wants to "getaway" for a day will find entertainment at these and other locations.

Minnesota City Garners Headliners' Stories

Made in the River Valley: Minnesota City Machining was the title of the River Valley Business Report for May. The story reports that Minnesota City Machining operated by Jeff Brust and Carmen Wilson has grown to twenty times its original size. The two founded the company in 1997; it moved four times before locating in the Oaks. The loading dock of this building was significant to the business. The company "makes machined parts and does finishing or modification work for a number of customers in the Southeast Minnesota region out of its 10,000 square foot facilities in the former Oaks night club building in Minnesota City." Brust and Wilson attribute their success to good customer service and word of mouth advertising. The company employs ten fulltime workers.

A *Rochester Post Bulletin* Story of May 7, 2014, in an article entitled "From Minnesota City to the World," highlighted the person and music of Pamela Althoff McNeill. Pamela is the daughter of Susan Althoff, Minnesota City. Following a medical condition in 2004 that silenced McNeill for a year, she has now returned to recording and performing. Some shows are "Tribute Shows," to Fleetwood Mac and Linda Ronstadt (readers may know that Ronstadt is no longer able to sing because of Parkinson's disease). McNeill's fame also includes lyrics she composed for Yanni. McNeill talks about the foundation for her success in Minnesota City, singing in church plays, playing the piano and the trombone. McNeill has gained, according to Post writer Tom Weber, international success as a singer and songwriter.

Congratulations to Minnesota City Machining and to Pamela Althoff McNeill.

May 17 Minnesota City Day Commemorates Early Settlers Experiences in Minnesota City G. O'Grady

A recent invitation to a family reunion included poetic treatment of the questions of how immigrant and distant ancestors “carried us” over time and seas and rivers to this land of promises and dreams. In 1852, Western Farm and Village settler Robert Pike composed music and lyrics for a Fourth of July celebration in Minnesota City, a song called simply “Minnesota.” Pike wrote: “We’ve left the homes our childhood loved and friends we never can forget...tho our homes are all unrequited and labor in our pathway lies....We’ve come to make us other homes on Minnesota’s garden lands...Labor is pleasure when tis cheered by helping hands and loving eyes.” New settlement accounts present both inspiring and daunting details of landscapes, occupations, and physical endurance.

The history of Minnesota City as a potential capital of the state of Minnesota is known to many historians and a number of area residents. When this political effort failed, and as the history was passed on, the significance of the members of the Western Farm and Village Association, whose founding group originated in New York, diminished for many, but resources continue to interest those persons who value the ancestral threads that remain in our lives. An opportunity to put faces to the names of some of these dreamers was available at the MCHA archives on May 17 when photos loaned from the Winona County Old Settlers were on display for the day. The names of Lord, Thorp, Dillworth, Houck, Cotton, Chapman, Waterman, Burley, Whetstone, Bannon were household names by now to some archival visitors.

Other visitors on Minnesota Day came for other reasons. One gentleman spent the morning reviewing the panels that have been constructed for MCHA events, as well as artifacts of Minnesota City. He was a former Minnesota City resident. One Minnesota City resident was in the First Baptist Church Building and the Archives for the first time. Some individuals were interested in the history of the Oaks—the music, the possible crime connected visitors. And others were historic connections to the First Baptist Church or the village—Church, Seabern, Hill, Spaag among them.

As the day ended, the comfortable feeling of being with friends and neighbors—in both materials and people was an assurance that we have carried “them” in some fashion with us to this day of dreams and promises, with, in Pike’s words, “helping hands and loving eyes”.

Minnesota City Community Readers Engage with Great River Shakespeare Community Outreach

The May meeting of the Minnesota City Community Readers was energized and entertained with the lively presence and participation of Catie Osborn, intern from the Winona Great River Shakespeare Festival Company. Catie, in her own words, does a little bit of everything connected with the Winona festival, “from graphic design to teaching stage combat.” A reviewer of an earlier Osborn performance in *Titus and Andronicus*, wrote that “the performer (Catie Osborn) was so heartfelt, so seemingly sincere, that I was moved to tears. Osborn manages to express an uncontainable inner joy, bubbling forth as she speaks of her love, and the emotion is beautiful in its believability” (*Thom White, River Cities Reader, 17 November 2010*). Minnesota City Community readers observed these qualities in Osborn’s delivery of interpretation for the reader group. There were no audience tears, but the joy, the sincerity, the experience and the confidence that Osborn holds for the bard helps transfer the challenges and the appreciation of rhetoric and thought to listeners. Catie plans to pursue an MFA in *Shakespeare in Performance*.



Catie Osborn, Shakespearean Festival intern, visits with Minnesota City Community Readers on May 22.