

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 12, Issue 7: August, 2017

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

## Mark your Calendars!

August 12: Regular Minnesota City Historical Association Meeting; MCHA Archives, 140 Mill Street; 9:30 a.m.

August 31: Minnesota City Community Readers, Minnesota City City Hall, 149 Mill Street, Selection: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot

### **“Go Green!”**

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

## **Historic Mill Street Site Marked by Owner and Facility Family**

On June 18, several members of MCHA gathered at the site of the historic Church Brothers Store on Mill Street, most recently the business enterprise of Duane Hutton, Agra Advisory Services. The building owner, Linda Hutton, decided on placement for the plaque designed by MCHA which contains a brief history of the building that will be included in the walking/driving tour of Minnesota City. Previous newsletters and MCHA presentations have highlighted the history of this historic spot; this material is available at the MCHA archives. At the plaque presentation were Church family members including Maxine Church Spaag, the daughter of George Church, her son Leland and her niece Andrea



Don Evanson, David Eckert and others watch as Linda Hutton, building owner, locates placement of historical marker on former Church Brothers Store.

Church, daughter of Roger Church (son of George). The Huttons and Church Family members were acknowledged for their support of this marking research and plaque placement. The marking recalls the brothers’ response to the practical needs of the patrons as well as community sustenance during difficult times.

## **CHURCH BROTHERS GENERAL STORE**

Built “when the town was built” in the town center  
1914 Elmer & George purchased from C.C. Smith,  
postmaster and general merchant  
Sold what was needed for farm life  
Sold on credit in 1930’s depression:  
“People would pay us a little when they had money.”  
1951 Church brothers sell building to Arthur Reps  
1956 Post Office relocates  
1961-1972 Herbert & Helen Saehler Witt operate market  
1977 Roger Connaughty converts to apartments  
John Januschka opens Agra Advisory Service, Inc.  
2005 Linda Hutton purchases  
Duane Hutton owns & operates Agra Advisory Service  
  
Other owners: Pike (1854), Allen, E.B. Drew, Southwick,  
Gilbert, E. Chapman, Jacoby, Vill, Milton, Ranney

## **Thank you for Archival Contributions**

- To Delores Maus Felsheim, Judy and Edwin Maus for 1894 Atlas and historical photos (album)
- To Virginia Witt Buck for mementos and photos of Church/ Witt Store and Minnesota City Area
- Janet Hill Seabern for her mother’s scrapbook of newspaper clippings

## **Readers respond to newsletters:**

We are always appreciative of the responses to the newsletter. In the past weeks we have heard from Dawn Church Webster, Janet Hill Seabern, Susan Whetstone Althoff, Jean Gardner, Gale Hill. Some have sent news items in response to newsletter stories. Comments have covered newsletter errors, mental illness, historical artifacts, lady slippers. Some of these are filed in the correspondence file at the archives.

Anyone who wishes to donate to or 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.

MCHA invites readers to submit dates for the newsletter of family reunions, milestone birthdays, and other events about which readers wish to share information. Check [www.minnesotacity.org](http://www.minnesotacity.org) or use the QR code. Submit information to ([mgogradey@embarqmail.com](mailto:mgogradey@embarqmail.com))





## Hometown Harvest “165 Slices of Apple Pie”

Submitted by Susan Althoff

In conjunction with the 165<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Minnesota City, there will be a Hometown Harvest, “165 Slices of Apple Pie” event, on Sunday, October 15, 2017 mid-afternoon at the Historic Church of Minnesota City (Baptist Church) 140 Mill Street.

Possible formats for this program include the following:

- a reading of the 165<sup>th</sup> page of your favorite classic novel, fiction or non-fiction
- an original short story - article -song lyric (165 words or less) of a piece of Minnesota City history
- a seasonal or harvest reading of poetry or prose

We are asking members of MCHA, Minnesota City Community Readers, local writers (including music lyrics), and anyone interested in the history of the community of Minnesota City to join us and lend their talent and/or voices to an afternoon of community togetherness. The program will be held at the Historic Church of Minnesota City (Baptist Church) at 140 Mill St. After the readings, attendees can enjoy a slice of apple pie and visit with neighbors, friends and family. The funds for this event are from the remaining donations made to the Stand Still Parade held in May.

The organizers of this event are Becky Weiss, Kate O’Grady and Susan Althoff. They will meet with the participants to review their selections and set a practice time. To participate, please contact Susan at 507-689-2281 or [oldhouse73@hbc.com](mailto:oldhouse73@hbc.com) no later than Wednesday, August 23.

*Advance information about participants and readings will generate audience and participant interest.*

**Registration date for participation is August 23<sup>th</sup>.** More details will be provided in the September MCHA newsletter.

### MCHA Congratulates

- **Kevin and Dorothy Ferden family** for receiving honors in the horticulture division at the Winona County Fair (as reported in the July 23 bulletin of Holy Trinity, Saint Paul and Saint Mary Parishes).
- **Michael Maher** for placement of three of his carvings of Native Americans, Wapasha I, II, and III, at the Winona Visitors’ Center on Huff Street. Visitors might ask for a more prominent display of the carvings as well as of the information flyer, given the significance of Native American history of the area.

### MCHA expresses sympathy to

The friends and family of **Lowell F. Swanson**, 94, former Rollingstone resident, who died at Winona Manor on July 5.

The friends and family of **Lambert “Doc” Bronk**, 92, who died in Rollingstone on July 12.

The friends and family of **Stanley Whetstone**, 78, Winona, who died on July 14 in Winona. Three years ago, Stanley’s sister, Susan Whetstone Althoff composed an interview of Stan. Copies of this will be available for reading at the archives at the next open hours.

The friends and family of **Agnes Evanson**, 104, who died at St. Anne of Winona on July 29.

### “I’ve Been Lookin’ at the Railroad...”

The on-line information about the Tabular General Bulletin Order (TGBO) of the Canadian Pacific is not easily understood by the railroad lore novice, but the complexity of the rhetoric makes it easy to see why the many different machines may be necessary to do the work on the railroad tracks of the area. This includes the tracks at Minnesota City. It appears that the job at hand is the replacement of the railroad ties.



At right: Canadian Pacific Railroad Tie Replacement two miles North of Minnesota City

## Family Reunions at the Farmers Community Park

The Denzer Family and the Jilk Family, both with long histories in the area, recently held their annual family reunions in Farmers Community Park. The descendants of Christian Denzer celebrated for the 94th year at the Women's Lodge, Farmer's Community Park, located near Stockton, Minn. This year the group, numbering seventy two persons from fifty three families, met on Sunday, June 25. A silent auction raised \$249.00. All officers were returned. There was one death, one marriage and six births recorded. The oldest was Lola Denzer, ninety three; the youngest was Cally Denzer, three months. The farthest travelers were Ken and Esthere Spaar coming from Arizona. The next meeting will be on June 25, 2018. (Information submitted by Clare Denzer, historian). The Denzer family descends from Christian Denzer who was born in Dannerfels, Germany in 1802. He married Barbara Englebercher on 1824. In the early spring of 1836 the couple left their home with their seven children, traveled by wagon to LaHavre, France and sailed to New York. They then went by wagon and canal to Dover, Ohio, arriving on July 11, 1836. In the spring of 1856 their son Christ and wife Margaret traveled by boat down the Ohio River, then up the Mississippi to Minnesota City, then west to Rollingstone and laid claim to several hundred acres by homesteading. There they had five more children. Son Fred married Barbara Amos, traveled to Casselton, North Dakota to homestead land. Later they went back to Rollingstone and resided on a farm in Minnesota City. Their son John was born in Casselton, North Dakota, but came to Minnesota City. He married Esther Whetstone and resided on a farm just north of Minnesota City. Son Neil was born on September 24, 1927 and married Clare Rader on November 18, 1950. The line of descent is Christian, Christ, Fred, John, Neil. (Clare Denzer information).

Descendents of August Jilk and Sophia Kilian Jilk, former Stockton Valley residents, and other relatives and friends, Stockton Valley residents, gathered at the Green Lodge in Farmers Community Park on July 22. Attendees participated in games, a sing along, story telling, and an outstanding potluck meal. The main attraction for the children was the creek. A number of persons hiked in the park. Sister Marielouise, S.Sp.S. (Margaret), the only surviving member of the Jilk family of fourteen, lives at the Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit in Techny Illinois and one sister-in law, Lillian Lewandowski (Albert) lives in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Since last year's reunion, August Verdick, husband of Patricia Butenhoff Verdick has died. The Jilk family origins are in Dolni Dobrouc, Czechoslovakia. The father, a tailor and later a shoemaker, immigrated to the U.S. in 1870. August (Stockton Valley resident), the first son, was born in Chicago in 1875. The family moved to Winona in 1876, and in 1902, August married Sophia Kilian, one of fifteen children of Nicholas and Anna Hammerning Kilian, who farmed in Winona County. The Kilian parents had immigrated from Darmstadt, Germany. August and Sophia Jilk farmed in Stockton Valley and were the parents of fourteen children. Lorraine Redig, married to Arthur Redig (dec. 2013), Kilian descendent, attended the reunion. Both Kilian and Jilk families were active in church, school, and community affairs.

## Courts Used to Settle Violent Neighbor Feuds of Early Years

One of the most notorious feuds of early years of Minnesota City history was that between D.Q. Burley and Samuel Loudon. Loudon had taken in Burley's colt and wanted fees for the keep (three dollars). A fight ensued. Burley was about sixty at the time, Loudon about forty five, Burley engaging the sympathy of the courtroom. (*Winona Republican Herald*, Jan. 9, 1879). Record of a second feud has now surfaced between Fred Stein and Charles Maceman over a well. *The Winona Republican Herald* of July 6, 1923 reports that "Fred Stein, 34 yrs old, of Minnesota City, was ordered to execute a \$50 bond to keep the peace for a period of six months when he pleaded guilty today in municipal court to a charge of using abusive language toward Charles Maceman, a neighbor, on July 4. Stein told the court, through an attorney, that trouble had occurred when he went to the Maceman premises to draw water from the well. He said a contract existed between him and Maceman whereby he was given the right to use the Maceman well in exchange for a gift of two piles of manure. Trouble arose between the two families and Maceman refused to allow him use of the well, he told the court. He said Maceman struck him with a baseball bat and that it was then he used the language cited in the complaint. He declared he intended to bring formal complaint against Maceman. Judge J.J. Fitzpatrick suggested that henceforth Stein stay away from the Maceman premises to avoid further trouble. He pointed out that it was possible for Stein to bring civil action in the courts against Maceman if he felt that he was entitled to the use of the well under terms of the alleged contract. Asked to require Maceman to sign a peace bond also, Judge Fitzpatrick stated that Maceman was not on trial and that the court would not be justified in including him in the sentence imposed on Stein. Stein later died as the result of a train accident when he was crushed between a car and the bridge. He had been a brakeman for ten years and was 46 at the time of his death; he is interred in Woodlawn Cemetery in Winona.

## St. Paul's Parishioners Process for Corpus Christi Feast

In the June 18 bulletin of St. Paul's, Father Adam McMillan described the Corpus Christi Procession activity, a parade through the village: "We celebrate the source and summit of the life and mission of the church: the body and blood of Christ. It is traditional to walk through the town with the Body of Christ in a procession, both as a blessing to the town and a proclamation of what we believe." In many European and other countries, this feast day is a public holiday. On Sunday, June 18, at 11:00 an inspirational, colorful, somber, musical, prayerful group followed Rev. McMillan who carried the monstrance down Iowa Street, to Mill Street, and then continued on past the cemeteries to the church. A stop was made on Mill Street where at the Ferden home marchers participated in a short prayer and musical experience. The faith of this experience is understood by the parishioners. For observers, some historical, cultural aspects of religion emerged and reminded of the historic experience of this event in paintings and media reports.



## Fourth of July in the Good Old Days Maxine Church Spaag

Back in the days of the Depression in the 1930s, celebrations for the summer holiday of the Fourth of July were more locally observed. Traveling far away as many do today or going camping for several days was not on the agenda for most families. Instead, the popular way to mark the holiday was to have a big family picnic. In my family we always went to Uncle Harry and Aunt Lena Saehler's house along Highway 61 where they had a truck farm and raised vegetables to sell to various stores in Winona. My mother and Aunt Lena were sisters and also in the area were their brother Carl and his family and my Grandma and Grandpa Kloetzke, my mother's folks, as well as some of Uncle Harry's relatives. My mother's sister Bertha and her family always drove down from St. Paul for the picnic. Uncle Fritz would bring more sophisticated types of fireworks than what my dad sold in his store. I especially liked the pinwheels and the lady crackers he brought. The tables made from putting boards on wooden horses were soon groaning with all the delicious food that was brought. I don't recall that it ever rained on those long ago holidays. We kids had lots of fun playing games and setting off fireworks.



Maxine Church Spaag

Back in those days fireworks were legal. In my dad's store, the Church Brothers store in Minnesota City, Dad and Elmer would put out the fireworks to sell about a month before the holiday on a long table right at the front of the store so that everyone could see them and maybe be persuaded to buy early. They had a big selection of firecrackers, cherry bombs, rockets, Roman candles and sparklers. One year, after the picnic, my brother Curtis and several of his friends climbed the bluff above the Oaks Night Club across from our house and they set off rockets and sparklers. We watched from below and I'm sure we were awe struck seeing them from a distance. I don't remember if there were big displays of fireworks in Winona as there are now. If there were, we never went to them.

My dad George Church would tell of the Fourth of July picnics held at the church farm where he grew up in Stockton Valley in the 1880s and 1890s. "The Chicago Northwestern Railroad line went right up our valley. We had land on both sides of it. Where our road was there was a little crossing. Our friends and relatives would get on the morning passenger train and arrange with the railroad company to stop at our crossing. There they would get off and spend the day with us. We would have a big party out on the lawn. When the evening passenger train came back about 8:30 or 9:00 that night, it would stop again and our guests would get on to go home. The fourth of July was my parents' wedding anniversary too, so it was some celebration! We had a few fireworks, but we didn't have enough money to buy very many."

All of us should be thankful that we are able to celebrate this holiday, the birth of our great country, thankful that we live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. God Bless America.