

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 11, Issue 3: April, 2016

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

Mark your Calendars!

April 9: MCHA Regular Meeting;
Minnesota City City Hall, 149 Mill Street; 9:30 a.m.

April 28: Minnesota City Community Readers;
Minnesota City City Hall, 149 Mill Street; 6:30 p.m.; Selection: *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, Flannery O’Connor;
All are welcome even if you have not read the book

May 21: Minnesota City Day (164th anniversary of founding).

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

Planning for May 21 Minnesota City Day Begins

At the April MCHA meeting, plans for the celebration of 2016 Minnesota City Day on May 21 were initiated. These include a possible presentation at the First Baptist Church related to the Reinart restoration of the building’s stained glass windows. Additionally, focus will be given to the history of the building, the first church in Winona County. Depending on results of research in the next weeks, MCHA hopes to continue the marking of historical sites in the village, ultimately developing a walking or driving tour of the area. To date, the Association has participated in marking the Whetstone Homestead, the Swinging Bridge site, the Post Office, the City Nite Club, The Oaks, the village entrance (Rollingstone Colony Sign). The Baptist Church is also marked. Because of the Mill Street focus on the First Baptist Church, the Association is pursuing the marking of the Schoen home which has a rich history including its use as the first St. Paul’s Catholic Church, and the site of the Ellsworth Mill. Persons with artifacts or information about either of these sites is invited to call 689-4103 (Eckerts) or 450-0201(O’Grady).

March 8 Township Meeting Efficient and Productive

Citizens of Rollingstone Township who attended the March 8 Annual Meeting participated in an orderly execution of business. Tom Tibor once again was approved as chair of the meeting. Bill payment was approved. The extensive road improvement tour listing acquaints attendees with the geography of the township, listing locations that include old and newer road repairs, and details the needed repairs with a specificity that assures voters of the close attention of supervisors. “Make sure we check a sinkhole in the blacktop on Hoffman Hill road during the 2016 Spring road tour; Fill potholes on Wenonah Rd, Mar-Val, Sharal, and Judy” are typical of the reportorial detail. Approval was given for requested donations to Rollingstone Park, Minnesota City Park, and Minnesota City Historical Association. Treasurer Susan Althoff gave the financial report. Voting having preceded the annual meeting, Mark Clark was announced as a reelected supervisor and Marcia Anderson the reelected clerk. Respectful, orderly, interesting conduction of business.

Vi Benicke, Stockton Historian, Dies

Viola Loth Benicke, 90, Stockton, Mn. died on March 5 in Winona. Vi operated an antique shop in Stockton; she was generous with her time with customers, and contributed a several page document to MCHA archives written by Florence Dambach whose father was a Stockton blacksmith. The document included Stockton historical data.



Samuel and James O’Grady in front of Vi’s shop (Spring, 2014).

A “Keeper” March 6 Sunday Afternoon

The afternoon of March 6 will be a “keeper day” for a number of the persons who participated in the afternoon’s storytelling. Each speaker contributed memorable pieces of the area’s history to be entered into the annals of our memories and historical records. Attendees learned about Jean Gardner’s authorship of classroom textbooks, as well as about her oil burning Studebaker later purchased by Marvin O’Grady. Maxine Church Spaag enlarged audience understanding of the role of the Church Brothers Market in Minnesota City (and their realization that ‘you can cut pork chops if you have to!).



Janice Tschumper Drazkowski, Jean Gardner, David Stewart, and Janet Seabern enjoy a story.



Maxine Church Spaag

Lester Spaag who had trained some lively horses in his younger years has lived to tell the stories. Janet Seabern remembered time without electricity or commercial entertainment, of hard work and neighborly connections. She recalled her help at the Mastenbrook home in Whitman Deering Valley. Howard and Gladys Volkart described the work of daily living as well as of some township history of roads and mail routes. His

comments were enlarged by Marvin O’Grady’s presentation of rattles that he had maintained since Howard had paid the snake bounties sometime in the sixties. Gladys recalled that her early school classmate, James Bronk, (deceased) pursued a vocation to the Catholic priesthood and his photo now hangs on the wall of St. Paul’s Parish Hall. The Volkarts’ humor and quiet daily lives continue to inspire acquaintances.



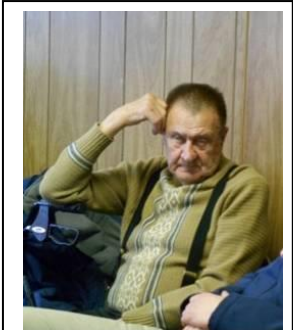
Lester Spaag talks about breaking horses.



Howard and Gladys Volkart

The S curve area on Harbor Drive described by Emil Sulla engendered recall of territorial struggles as well as flood and river changes. A number of family connections as well as location questions raised by audience members indicated interest in the railroads and the mills of the earlier years that will be pursued. Janet Tschumper Drazkowski’s emailed words that express the feelings shared by a number of attendees:

“Just a note to tell you how much I enjoyed the Sunday afternoon story hour. It was great to hear from others and realize they remembered the very same things that came to my mind when thinking back. Also learned some new things. What a great idea. Thanks again.”



Emil Sulla

Sunday’s event recalled the contribution to the archives since 2002 of a number of area persons including Neil Denzer, Russell Church, Allen Whetstone, Roger Church, Delwin Tschumper, and Dorothy Brom. Their spirits live. Abundant smiles, nods, and chuckles of audience members verified the enjoyment and gratitude for these storytellers’ reminiscences. (Note: An announcement was omitted at the March 6 meeting that Barbara Pierce was unable to join the conversation because of a travel opportunity with friends. We missed you, Barb!)

Carl Mastenbrook Story Correction

Donna and Betsy Friesen sent this notice about the Mastenbrook story. “We noticed that the March 2016 newsletter needs an update. At the top of page 1634 about Carl Mastenbrook. Leonard Sr. (Red) Mastenbrook & his wife, Estelle lived on Denzer Road for many years. They attended First Baptist Church in Winona with their two children, Leonard Jr. (Lenny) and Nancy. Nancy lives in Minneapolis. Leonard Jr. (Lenny) married Pam & lives at 1875 W. 4th, Winona. Lenny & Pam have two children-twins-named Carl & Claire. They were named after grandparents. Carl is in the Navy. Just a reminder that Carl's grandpa Leonard, Sr. was a brother of William (Bill) Mastenbrook who was married to Beverly Stewart Mastenbrook. Bill & Bev had 3 children -Kathy, Ellen & Bill Jr. (Billy). So--the short story is--Carl is the grandson of Leonard Sr. & Estelle Mastenbrook.”

Thanks for that information, Donna and Betsy, and Janet Seabern, who also telephoned correct information.

Kevin Fenton Memorialization of a Rollingsone Bar

On February 20, the *Legends Sports Bar* in Rollingsone burned to the ground. Although no one was injured, expressions of loss emerged from the community for several days, attesting to the value of the building /business. For non Rollingsone persons, trying to determine WHICH bar this was historically was not an easy task. This account came from Jean Kalmes: “The bar that burned was Schmitty's years ago, then at one time it was bought by Bob and Bill Klinger and called Klingers Rollin Inn. Bill and Betty Klinger's parents owned the bar east of there called Klingers-which is now apartments.” Unable to find an email for Kevin Fenton, it was not possible to verify which of these bars he was describing in *Leaving Rollingsone*. Fenton wrote: “Dad would visit his friend Bill Klinger who owned Klinger’s Bar. I loved Klinger’s: the metal sash that advertised Squirt pop or some other antique brand on the screen door; the malty smell that hit you as you stepped inside; the way the light entering the windows mimicked the color of beer; the jukebox perky as a robot; the dark wood bar; the sand-weighted tartan ashtrays; the Minnesota Twin’s schedules; the gleaming, mantis shaped, miraculously abundant taps. The brightness of neon beer logos and beer logo mirrors and the Hamms clock that featured a relentlessly full color photograph of a stream rushing over rocks. Happiness condensed in things. I loved Klingers.” *Leaving Rollingsone, p. 30-31*. Although, this description does not appear to be the recently burned bar, Fenton’s description presents an alternative view of bar décor from most that helps explain a community’s attachment to its businesses.



Once again Spring trees the Earth

1852 Settlers Welcome Spring

“Mr. Drew, a member of the original Minnesota colony group was a native of Indiana. Driving four oxen hitched to a covered wagon bearing the legend “To Minnesota” on its side, Mr. Drew started from his Indiana home April 15, 1852 and traveled overland to Galena, Ill. in 17 days, something of a record for the times...Glowing are the descriptions Mr. Drew wrote regarding the beauty and fertility of the Rollingsone Valley when he first saw the place in May 1852. He recalls the paying by the company to the Indians of a barrel of flour for each house for privilege of tilling the soil which still belonged to them, tells of lakes and brooks that teemed so thickly with fish that pitchforks were the favorite weapon of the angler and catches might be had by the load....He wrote of the little joys in the frontier venturing, a cabin raised, a new field plowed and the plans for coming spring...” (*Winona Republican Herald*, October 25, 1926).

MCHA Thanks

- Rollingsstone Township for the \$300.00 contribution to MCHA budget to be used for marking historical sites.
- All individuals who contributed to the March 6 story telling event and persons who helped with event set up, especially Don Evanson, Clare Denzer, and O’Grady family members. Thank you to St. Paul’s Parish for the use of the hall.
- All persons who communicate appreciation for the newsletter. Recently these have included Bob Bambenek, Jean Gardner, Sister Therese Jilk, Janice Tschumper Drazkowski, Donna and Betsy Friesen, and a number of regular thank yous. We value your input.
- All persons who patronized the Community Readers Book Giveaway on March 20, the St. Paul’s Church Bulletin, and the local media for publicity about the giveaway. The event was a huge success.

MCHA Congratulates

- **Jake Pellowski**, son of Joseph and Jenna Pellowski, Minnesota City, a Grade 2 student at Bluffview Montessori School, who won first place in the PTA Reflections Program for film in primary grades at the state level. Jake’s film was called “Tunnel to Imagination.” His entry will be judged at the national level in Washington D.C.
- **Kevin Kearney**, Mill Street Resident and Winona Police Sergeant, who has been nominated for a State Red Cross First Responder Hero award according to news in the Winona Daily News and Winona Post. Kearney was nominated for his reaction to a downtown fire at the Mason Jar Bar. Kearney spotted the fire and ran into the building calling to everyone to leave the site. The entire building caught fire. Judged for the award as an extraordinary individual, Kevin is described as a person “who has made a personal commitment to creating safer and strong communities.” Kevin acknowledged the role of his entire department.

Standing Invitations:

- to attend regular meetings of MCHA. These meetings are usually held at 140 Mill Street.
- to respond to newsletter content. Please send additions, corrections, suggestions, calendar information (meetings, reunions, birthdays, other significant dates) etc. to mgogrady@embarqmail.com. or phone 507-689-2440.
- **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.

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