

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 11, Issue 4: May, 2016

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

## Mark your Calendars!

May 14:  
MCHA  
Monthly  
meeting; 9:30  
a.m.; First  
Baptist Church,  
140 Mill Street.

May 21:  
Minnesota City  
Day: 164<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of  
founding of  
Minnesota  
City; 9:00  
a.m. to 12:00  
p.m.; **Schedule  
on Page Four.**

May 26:  
Minnesota City  
Community  
Readers; 6:30  
p.m.; Selection:  
Maria Semple,  
*Where Have  
You Gone,  
Bernadette;*  
City Hall, 149  
Mill Street.

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

## May 21-- Minnesota City Day!

9:a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**History, Viewing materials, and Visiting  
Open Archives**

**Schedule See Page 4**

### **Minnesota City Day Celebrates Reinarts Studio Rebuilding, Restoration of First Baptist Church Windows**

A centerpiece of celebration of this year’s Minnesota City Day on May 21 will be a 10:00 a.m. presentation on the History of Reinarts Glass Studio which will be offered by Bill Reinarts, owner of Reinarts Studio .The First Baptist Church at Minnesota City, the oldest church in Winona County, now has stained glass windows repaired and restored by Reinarts Stained Glass Studio of Winona. This studio has operated in Winona since 1950. A look at the website (<http://www.reinarts.com>) which informs about artists, styles, locations of work and photos of work is impressive. “Our Work is our reference and speaks for itself” is the first statement under Testimonials. At First Baptist in Minnesota City, interested persons were somewhat awed—not too large a descriptor—by the speed and careful work of the restoration project. Releading, reglazing and repairs are not uncommon requirements to maintain stained glass windows. To have this project gifted to the First Baptist Ladies Aid group speaks to the qualities of owners and artisans of this Studio which perhaps inspire their vocation-like involvement with glass. In addition to the First Baptist Ladies Aid members, the Minnesota City Historical Association and many additional history aficionados as well as area residents are grateful for the magnanimous contribution of Reinarts to the continuing history of this building.

### **May 21 Minnesota City Day Celebration Continues Historical Preservation Efforts**

Although the official markers for two historical sites may not be finished by May 21, facsimiles will be available and ceremonial presentations will occur on that day. Previous newsletters have described the plan of the Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) to mark historically significant sites and existing buildings on sites in Minnesota City and area with a plan to construct a brochure/map similar to the booklet used for the bus tour of the 2002 sesquicentennial celebration of the village founding. This year two sites will be marked: the **Ellsworth-Miller Mill Site** (now owned by Canton Mills Dave Bunke) and the **Smith/Witt/Church Store site** (now owned by Linda Hutton). Some owners have contributed to partial costs of marking and the Rollingstone Township donation this year was “marked for markings.” Additionally, membership funds are available to promote this goal of the Association. Minnesota City Day, celebrated annually on the third Saturday in May since the village sesquicentennial in 2002, is intended to commemorate the history of the village founding in 1852, and also to give attendees the opportunity to show appreciation for the role of founders, and of current occupants who foster the value of historical preservation.

## Church Brothers Store/Witt's Market/Hutton Building Marking

Persons who have read *Old Wise Tales*, the biographies of Minnesota City and area residents collected by Riverway Learning Community Students in 2002, will recall that the Church Brothers Store was discussed by many of those interviewed. Its significance in the community was not overlooked in its own time or later. As years passed, while owned by the Witts, the store remained important, but residents were beginning to conduct business and shop in Winona. Also, the move of the post office out of the Market lessened traffic.

On Saturday, May 21, at 9:00 am, the building's significance will be commemorated with the presentation of a plaque to Duane and Linda Hutton. Maxine Church Spaag, the daughter of George Church, one of the Church Brothers owners, will read her history of the store. Maxine wrote: "The history of any little town that was the center of a mainly rural population in the late 1800s and early 1900s wouldn't be complete without mention of the general store. It was the supermarket of its day, with a wide variety of products from groceries to hardware, from meat to kerosene, from cleaning products to coal and a lot in between. A case in point was the Church Brothers General Store in Minnesota City." Come and hear "the rest of the story" on May 21.



Helen Saehler and George Church in front of the General Store c. 1927



The General Store owned from the fifties to the seventies by Herbert and Helen Saehler Witt.



The General Store converted to apartments and Agra Advisory Service Site.

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## Ellsworth Mill/Canton Mills Site History

There were two significant early mills in Minnesota City. The first was known as the Troost Mill, believed to be near the site where the first 1852 settlers came ashore. It was built in 1866 by Otto Troost. The second mill was at the south end of Mill Street at the dam site, where a bridge spanned the creek. The original bridge crossed the dam supported by the dam abutments. Ellsworth's mill was built in 1867. The power was furnished by a dam across the Rollingsstone creek, giving ten feet of fall. The building was a wooden structure upon a strong stone foundation, 54' by 70' in size. The capacity of the mill was 750 barrels of wheat or 150 barrels of flour per day. The site is currently occupied by Canton Mills (<http://www.cantonmills.com/>) producer of natural base sustainable and certified organic fertilizers, owned by Dave Bunke.



Ellsworth Mill built in 1867

## Ellsworth Mill Family Plans Visit to Minnesota City

MCHA had hoped that Minnesota City Day might coincide with a visit from Bill Yake, the great grandson of Amos Ellsworth, founder of the Ellsworth Mill, a significant Minnesota City institution in the late 1800s. Yake's visit will be in October, at which time some MCHA members hope to accompany him to the mill site which will be marked on May 21. Yake, who lives in Washington State, has been an early correspondent with Minnesota City Historical Association.

## New Old Things in the Archives

MCHA has received some significant items for the archives in the recent weeks. Janice Tschumper Drazkowski has contributed a shoehorn labeled C.C. Smith, Minnesota City Minn. The logo reads *Foot Schulz & Co's. Saint Paul Shoes are the Best.*



Shoehorn from Janice Tschumper Drazkowski

Duane and Linda Hutton have contributed copies of portions of the abstract of the property at 150 Mill Street, the site of the Church Brothers Store.

Maxine Church Spaag has contributed a hardcover copy of *The Family History and Life of Maxine Helen Church Spaag*. The introduction reads: "The family History and Life of Maxine Helen Church Spaag is a partial autobiography with information about her life, her family history and the heritage that led to her being. This compilation from 2001 was published by the Curtis Morris Family and friends. This book and its contents are dedicated to Maxine Helen Church Spaag and her family. May all who read find the joy and love in her life in the pages of this book. Compiled in 2001. Published October 2015 in honor of Maxine's birthday."

Kay Kaslo Ellestad has contributed a plaque to the archives, given by Minnesota City to her father, John Kaslo. The plaque reads: "In Recognition for the Many Years of Service to the City by John Kaslo. From the Citizens of Minnesota City. 1983." Kaslo was a city clerk from 1964 until 1983. He served as treasurer since the 1940s. Kaslo lived in Minnesota City since 1941 and was employed in railroad maintenance by the Milwaukee Road.

These items are displayed in the Archives.

## MCHA expresses sympathy to

- the family and friends of Thomas Schoen, 63, Winona, Mn who died on April 6. Tom is the brother of Jim and Kathy Schoen, Mill Street, and the husband of Faye Speltz, former Rollingstone resident.

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](http://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.

## **In the Beginning....**

From *History of Winona County, 1857*. : “With the crowd of passengers brought up the river by the ‘Nominee’ on May 19 (1852) and landed on Wabasha prairie was quite a number of immigrants for the colony. For convenience in discharging freight and livestock, Captain Smith landed them at the lower landing, his favorite claim and special preference for a town site. Among the members of the association who were thus landed were Hiram Campbell, wife and three children; Mrs. Robert Thorp and three sons; H.B. Waterman, wife and son, Asa Waterman, Rufus Waterman; Andrew Petee, D. Q. Burley, H. Shipley and son; Mr. Hunt and others. This party has quite a large herd of cattle—oxen, cows and young stock. The greater part of them belonged to Hiram Campbell. Mrs. Waterman had two yoke of oxen and two cows, and Mr. Hunt two yoke of oxen. All of the arrivals had the greatest difficulty in reaching Minnesota City and still greater difficulty in taking their goods there. Often the passengers landed from boats had to camp on Wabasha Prairie for days before they could get to their destination and goods were sometimes left on the riverbank for a week or longer. The difficulty of transporting livestock from the landings at Winona to the landing at Minnesota City was especially great. The sloughs had to be forded, the usual method being for the men to divest themselves of their clothing and swim or wade alongside of the cattle. A wood-boat, the Macedonian was secured by the members of the colony and put in charge of D. Jackson, and this was used in transporting some passengers and a few goods.” (p. 158)

## **Schedule of Events**

### **Minnesota City Day—May 21, 9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.**

Research display at City Hall, 149 Mill Street.

Refreshments at First Baptist Church: Coffee and Cookies provided by First Baptist Ladies.

9:00: City Hall, 149 Mill Street. Presentation of Church Brothers Store Plaque to Duane and Linda Hutton, 150 Mill Street. Maxine Church Spaag reads personal reflection.

9:30: City Hall, 149 Mill Street. Presentation of Ellsworth Mill Plaque to current owner David Bunke.

10:00 Bill Reinarts presents on History of the Reinarts Glass Studio. First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street. Archives open following Reinarts’ speech.

MCHA thanks First Baptist Ladies Aid Members, Don Evanson, Don O’Neil, Duane and Linda Hutton, Dave Bunke, Minnesota City Fire Department, MCHA members for contributions to research and execution of the 164<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of founding of Minnesota City.