

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 11, Issue 7: September, 2016

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

Mark your Calendars!

September 10: Saturday,
9:30 a.m.; MCHA
Monthly Meeting;
140 Mill Street, Mn
City

September 10: Saturday,
10:30 a.m.; Michael
Maher presents
Sculptures; 140 Mill
Street, Mn City

September 22:
Thursday, 6:30 p.m.;
Minnesota City
Community Readers,
Selection: *We Die
Alone* by Howarth; 149
Mill Street, Mn City

October 28: Thursday,
6:30 p.m.; Minnesota
City Community
Readers, Selection:
*Detours to the Good
Stuff* by Minnesota City
author Vickie McGillis;
149 Mill Street, Mn
City

Note

**Newsletter distribution
in the next months
may be irregular.**

“Go Green!”

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

**Michael Maher Describes Native American Sculptures at MCHA
September 10 Meeting: 140 Mill Street. 10:30 a.m.
Display of Maher Sculptures and Minnesota City
Native American Information and Artifacts.
Public invited. No charge.**

The stories of Native American lives in the Minnesota City area at the time of the 1852 settlement are some of the most interesting narratives of settlers and journalists, and continue to be told as years go by. Minnesota City resident, Michael Maher, has sculpted the likenesses of several of the significant Elders and will discuss them on September 10 at the Historic First Baptist Church on Mill Street. Newspaper accounts of the time and early years after the Native American population had moved out of the area vary from generalizations to very individual accounts. Residents, as revealed in research, retained high interest in the Native populations.



This Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) camp near Minnesota City was photographed around 1838. Ho-Chunks were pushed west and north by settlers in Wisconsin.

This photo taken at the current site of the Minnesota City School, 115 Iowa Street, shows a combination of cultures that occupied the area around the years of early settlement. The Winnebago tribe were

defeated in Wisconsin in a war they initiated in 1827. They ceded all their lands and were removed to Minnesota. Their housing was domed bark or thatched constructions, not the teepee construction most associate with Native Americans. Their chief occupations were hunting and growing maize. Although they had good relations with the French and British beginning in 1634, they resisted the American settlers when they moved into the region in the late eighteenth century and between 1828 and 1840. The Western Farm and Village people came to Minnesota City in 1852. A journal of the notes of University of Minnesota anthropologist Wilford related to his exploration for Native American burial mounds on the Howard Volkart property is in the MCHA archives and will be available for perusal on Sept. 10. Wilford writes: “my surmise, in the memo of May 1951, that the groups listed NW of the town were in reality due west, proved to be correct and they are actually only ½ mile west of the town. ...I did not see the group of 11, which he calls the eastern group... This is on property until recently own by Christian Ludwigson. Continued on p.2: Native Americans

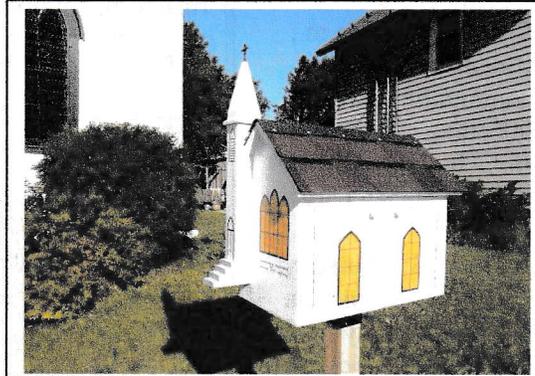
Native Americans (continued from page 1)

It is under cultivation and I presume that the mounds were originally low. Mr. Ludwigson does not remember them but he did know of the group on the SE ¼ of Section 3, Winchell's western group. Most of the mounds of this group have never been under cultivation and are nearly as high as when Leur surveyed them. The mounds are on the old Waterman farm now owned by Albert Volkart. The Ludwigson and Volkart houses may be reached by a road due west of the town along the north edge of the river. There is also a road to the Volkart farm at the north. Both families are very friendly and much interested. A young married man, Howard Volkart, is now living on his father's farm. He would like to have us dig some of the mounds." In a 1953 memo, Wilford wrote "I visited the mounds at the Volkart farm west of town. Though fairly small, some seem undisturbed and I plan to dig some this summer. Note: I did dig two of these mounds in June, 1953, but found them virtually sterile." Ludwigsen died in 1961 and Volkart died in 1977. Both are interred with their wives in Oakland Cemetery. An additional site believed to be a campground, based on numerous artifacts recovered at the site, is the land adjacent to Highway 61 about two miles north of Minnesota City, now owned by Steve Kohner. Ironically, Kohner runs a small herd of bison at this site. On September 10, some artifacts, collected by Jilk family members (previous land owners) will be available for viewing.

(Information from Encyclopedia of American Tribes and Wilford Notes, U. of Mn.)

"Little Free Library" Installed in Minnesota City

Because of the generosity and skills of Hollis and Lori Donehower, Minnesota City now has a "little free library." The structure, matching the church in design, has been installed in front of the Historic First Baptist Church on Mill Street. The goal of the project is to offer free books and exchange of books to the local community. All area readers are invited to check out the library and take home books. Little Libraries have no check outs or required returns.



August 13 MCHA Meeting Addresses Historic Sites

Persons attending the August 13 monthly meeting of MCHA (Minnesota City Historical Association) addressed several aspects of the proposed walking/driving tour being established by the Association. A large number of sites was considered; this list will be narrowed to develop history of the sites which were significant in the village history. Owners of the properties will be approached in advance of sign development and placement. In addition to plaques, a brochure will be developed with additional information about the site. These brochures will be available in several locations.

Minnesota City Assigned New Pastor, Adam McMillan

The "cluster" organization of Holy Trinity Parish, Rollingstone, St. Paul's Parish, Minnesota City, and St. Mary's Parish, Minneiska has been assigned a new pastor, Father Adam McMillan. McMillan, replacing William Kulas who retired earlier this year, most recently worked in the parish of Queen of Angels in Austin. Ordained in 2013, he will begin his assignment here in September. MCHA welcomes the new pastor and is grateful to St. Paul's Congregation for previous uses of the church hall, and hopes this friendly relationship can continue.

MCHA expresses sympathy to

- the friends and family of Donald Mitley, 86, who died at Hillview Healthcare in LaCrosse on August 6.
- the family and friends of David Keller, 61, Minnesota City, who died on August 12. David attended Minnesota City School. His family lived on Old Highway 61.
- the family and friends of Gladys Church Volkart, 92, Minnesota City who died on July 31, at Lake Winona Manor. (See Page 4)
- the friends and family of Kenneth Valentine, Rollingstone, 79, who died on August 20 in Winona.

MCHA Thanks

- Janet Hill Seabern for archival materials including primary school notebooks, historical newspapers, and an interesting collection of buttons of Kate Mastenbrook, Deering Valley resident, for whom Janet worked.
- Hollis Donehower for construction of the Little Free Library.

Whetstone Reunion Engages Participants

Descendants of Henry and Alvina (Denzer) Whetstone met on August 13 at La Canne Park in Goodview MN. Henry was the grandson of David and Nancy (Parker) Whetstone. David and Nancy first settled in Lewiston upon arriving in Minnesota from Indiana. They were members of the Church of the Brethren.

The Whetstones moved their family to Minnesota City in 1882. Their son Silas and his wife Ida (Turner) raised their children on that homestead. Besides farming, the Whetstones grew vegetables and fruit to sell at local grocery stores. They had one son, Henry (Alvina Denzer) and four daughters (Alice Gage-Blanchard); Alda (Rex Sanders); Millie (Fred Denzer); and Susie (Andrew Snyder).

The current members of the family that attend the bi-annual reunions are the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Henry and Alvina Whetstone and members of Alda Sanders' family.

A lunch was served to attendees who engaged in interesting activities. The Winona Amazing Race was a team event that sent reunion attendees around town following clues to pit stops. At each pit stop the teams had a task to perform (or lose points). At each stop one team got an obstacle which could be a U-turn, detour, intersection and so forth. If they chose to forgo this obstacle they would also lose points. Those attending that did not participate in the Amazing Race were challenged to make stained glass pictures by tearing pieces of colored paper and gluing these to poster board. Counting buttons in a jar and Blue Heron Coloring by teams drew participants. The reunion was planned by Susan (Whetstone) Althoff of Minnesota City.

Historic Refurbished First Baptist Church Site of Summer Service



Painters from Al's Construction Company paint the historic First Baptist Church

The August 28 annual summer service at the First Baptist Church in Minnesota City was an opportunity for attendees to appreciate the "new look" of the old building which was constructed in 1875. The Historic First Baptist Church in Minnesota City is being repainted. Al's Construction Company's work was contracted by the First Baptist Ladies Aid for the project. A recent visit to the building included notice of the homemade treats available for the painters; these were contributed by Donna and Betsy Friesen. Following the donation of the refurbished stained glass windows, the church will now have a "restored look." The summer service at the church is an annual event hosted by First Baptist Ladies Aid members. It is a public event reminiscent of

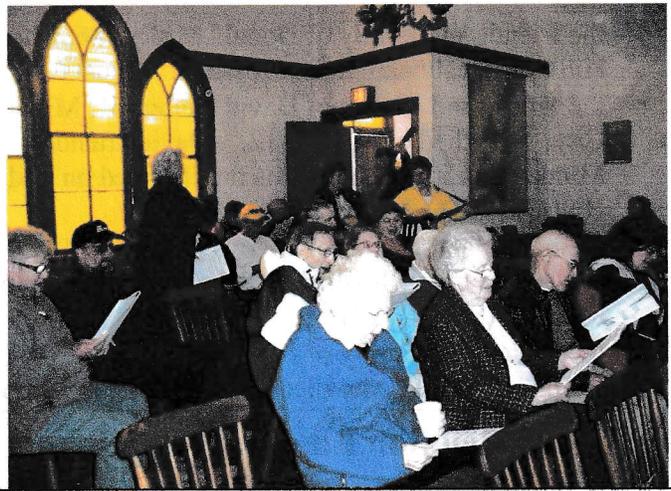
the ecumenical gatherings of people at the church from its beginnings in 1852. Dennis Hudson, pastor of First Baptist Church Winona gives a speech. Reports on the activities of First Baptist Ladies Aid and of MCHA (Minnesota City Historical Association) which has archives in the rear rooms of the building are given, and hymns are sung by the attendees which remind any returning guests "of the way it used to be."

Gladys Church Volkart

Gladys Church was born in Winona on October 18, 1923, the daughter of Raymond and Christiana Sterner Church. She was a Stockton Valley resident and lived out her life at the mouth of Stockton Valley, having married Howard Volkart in 1946. October 19 would have been their 70th wedding anniversary. Jean Gardner, a lifelong friend, remembered that Gladys, Jean's sister Dorothy, and Lucille Pierce celebrated Jean's fourth birthday together. Susan Althoff, a lifelong Minnesota City resident, emailed the day following the funeral. "It was a sad day yesterday. She (Gladys) was the sweetest, kindest lady I knew and I knew her all my life.

Our family (grandparents, Uncle Allen, and Mom/Dad, and Albert/Lizzie and Howard/Gladys) all belonged to the Equitable Reserve Association and once a month they got to play cards and eat sandwiches, cake and drink coffee, let's say around 10 or so in the evening!! Great fun to remember."

So many people who spoke of Gladys Volkart, before her death and after, spoke of her twinkling eyes. Her funeral program remembrance has this line: "Gladys' twinkling brown eyes, sweet smile, and gentle and kind nature will be forever missed by her family, friends, and anyone who was fortunate enough to know her." "Twinkling eyes are not the norm;" Roald Dahl, the children's author wrote: "it's impossible to make your eyes twinkle if you aren't feeling twinkly yourself." Howard asked for some information about Gladys to be shared at the funeral by son-in-law Tim O'Malley: her full partnership in the farm, her engaged life as a housekeeper, wife, and mother, and the manure on her boots, and that there were by her choice more "work clothes" in her closet than dressy garments. This hardworking gentleness is what came through when Gladys took your hand in greeting—warmth of body and spirit and determination to connect. At one of our last visits at Winona Manor, Gladys was quieter, uncertain of what the future was going to be, but softly appreciative and still holding out her hands for welcome and contact. We saw Gladys mostly at MCHA functions which are often held at First Baptist Church. As we remember her she is often singing, song sheet in hand, with the carolers backgrounded by the amber stained glass windows of the church. Perhaps that is why the verse in Proverbs reminds of her. "The light of the eyes rejoices the heart. Good news gives health to the bones." (15:30). We were good when we were with Gladys. We are grateful for her life in our community.



Front row: Jean Gardner, Gladys Volkart, Howard Volkart

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.