

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 13, Issue 3: May 2018

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

Mark your Calendars!

May 12th: MCHA meeting; 9:30 a.m.; City Hall, 149 Mill Street

May 24th: Community Readers; 6:30 p.m.;
Selection: *A Long Way Home: A Memoir* by Saroo Brierley; City Hall, 149 Mill Street

Important Notice: Minnesota City Day which is celebrated annually on the third Saturday of May is being postponed because of the construction at the Historic First Baptist Church. See Susan Althoff article on construction. Watch for updates in future newsletters and local media on rescheduled Minnesota City Day date.

New Entrance to First Baptist Church by Susan Althoff

The Baptist Church at 140 Mill St. in Minnesota City is having some much needed attention given to its front steps. The years of service to the entrance of the building had taken its toll. The steps were in need of replacing for safety issues and aesthetic appeal. Bids were put out and the job was given to Greystone Concrete & Construction LLC of Winona. Work was scheduled to start in June but due to the unusual spring, the company requested that they start now because the frost was not out of the ground enough to do other jobs ahead of this one. New railings will also be added to the steps under the creation of Greg Volkart of Volkart Welding and Fabrication. Along with the steps a new handicap ramp will be placed on the left side of the steps winding its way to the landing and front door. It will be a welcome addition for a number of the local attendees of events and our visitors.

A fun side note to this project was the email that Susan received from Greystone about calling Gopher State One to mark the gas and cable lines. They (Greystone) were at the site and couldn't see where these lines might be. She informed them that there were no gas, cable or phone lines; we don't even have water pipes to worry about. They replied back that was a first for them.

Overseeing this project is Susan Althoff, Vice President of the group. A number of loyal supporters have promised funding for this project. The final phase of this project will be landscaping around the



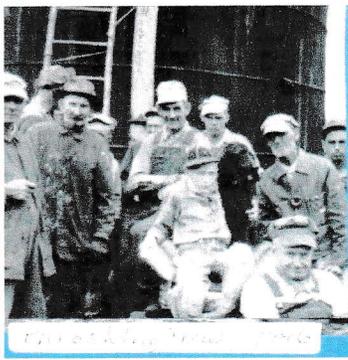
(O'Grady photo) Historic First Baptist Church step replacement



(Christina Ferden Photo)

new steps and ramp along with repositioning of the signage that our facility use partner, MCHA, has posted on the property. There is a need for funding of the landscaping. Anyone interested in helping with this should contact Lori Donehower, Treasurer, at 507-689-4344.

Don O'Neil Shares Minnesota City Interests



The Sunday afternoon sharing of photos by Don O'Neil, Minnesota City, was enjoyed by an audience with interest and familiarity in much of the material. As time goes by, many of the individuals as well as the spots of the photos have disappeared or changed. A photo of a threshing crew has prompted interest in a threshing machine that Jean Gardner said was her dad's. David Stewart said his dad bought it and David still has it, which prompted a plan to visit the machine.



Don O'Neil shares a photo with attendees at April 8 presentation

MCHA wishes to thank the following for assistance with the presentation: Don O'Neil, Becky O'Grady Weiss, Kate O'Grady, Scott Jensen, St. Paul's Church (especially Clare Denzer, Don Evanson), Marvin O'Grady and Meghan Booth.

Church Family Store Convenience Remembered by Gale Hill

Gale Hill, a native of the area and MCHA member, communicated this interesting memory of the Church Brothers Store, one of the marked historic sites of Minnesota City. "Do you remember when Mahlke's Bakery Truck stopped at Church Brothers? On the bottom of the bread paper, they put one mark - either white or yellow for Monday or two marks for Tuesday. This way they could tell how old the bread was. Do you remember the Brothers buying a large stalk of bananas? They had a rope tied to the ceiling with a large hook. The bananas hung down so you could break off as many as you wanted." Gale also mentioned that the Reed's Landing School Museum (Wabasha County) where he is active, has a wooden banana box.

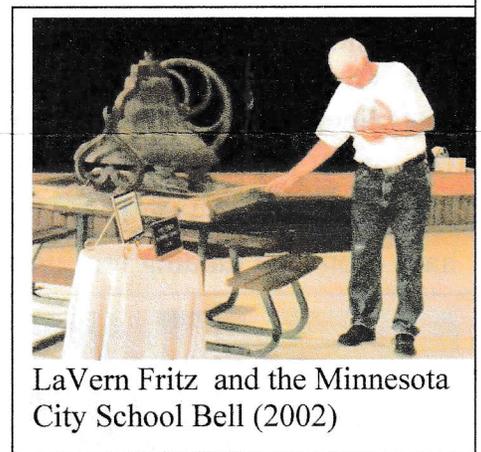
Rollingstone School Closed with Winona Area Public School Board Vote

For many newsletter readers, the vote by the Winona Area School Board to close the Rollingstone School was learned without surprise but with no less upset. As was the school in Minnesota City, the significance of the institution cannot be overstated.

Recognizing declining enrollment, a position has been taken by some that precisely because of that, the role of the school for families as community is increasingly vital.

School bell given to Winona County Historical Society in 1960

On-going efforts of MCHA to reclaim the school bell have been "reenergized" because of the energy and interest of Wallace Burley and the Minnesota City Historical Association. The bell was given to the Winona County Historical Society Museum in 1960. The bell weighed 350 pounds and was made at Seneca Falls, New York. (WDN March 7 1960) At a school reunion in 1971 Roger Church said the bell that had hung in the belfry tower was at the little red schoolhouse on the fairgrounds in St. Charles. (WDN June 28, 1971) MCHA secured display of the bell from Winona County Historical Society for the school reunion at Minnesota City in 2002.

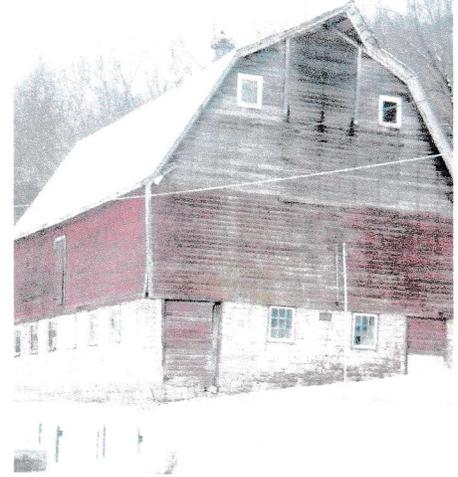


LaVern Fritz and the Minnesota City School Bell (2002)

An Agricultural Historical Rural Icon's Presence Ends



Denzer Barn after collapse in April, 2018



Denzer Barn in February 2008

In February of 2008 Neil Denzer (Dec. 2013), a Minnesota City history enthusiast, accompanied Marv and Gen O'Grady on a "tour" of the immediate area of the former John Denzer (Neil's father) farm just north of Highway 248. This land area formerly owned by Daniel Q. Burley, a Minnesota City early settler, is now owned by Christine Roberton. Neil conveyed his strong connection with the land and its history, discussing the land below current Highway 61, the Native Americans, the vegetable growing of the Denzers and other residents. Neil has memorialized the farm buildings in paintings donated to Minnesota City Historical Association; these can be seen at the Archives on Mill Street.

A book that supports the impact of the demise of the "barn structure" in Minnesota is *Barns in Minnesota*, with photographs of Doug Ohman and a story written by Will Weaver, of a falling barn. Weaver likens old barns to gravestones. "We admire their design, their strength in the face of wind and rain and time, but we're left to wonder about the people whose lives they represent." We are fortunate to know the history of the Denzer and Burley people. "The old wooden barns that once anchored family farms across Minnesota are slowly vanishing... Old wooden barns should be remembered. They are a tribute to the people who laid the foundation for much that is good and solid in our society...." (Minnesota Public Radio, June 2005) These include the barns of friends and neighbors. These include the Burleys and Denzers.

Walleye Growing Project at Minnesota City

Readers of *Minnesota Volunteer* (May/June 2018) may find information they have wondered about when passing the installation of equipment off Highway 61 across from St. Paul's Church near Highway 248. According to *Volunteer* author Joe Albert, walleye stocking is an activity dating back over 100 years. Albert says fisheries managers have increased focus on a consistent walleye stocking approach. Perhaps local media will provide information on this nearby effort. Another rich source of information on walleye stocking is the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on Walleye Management.

“The Spirits” are a movin...



Side Tracks Bar and Grill replaced Whalen’s Cove on Bridge Street

Rollingstone Township Gifts MCHA

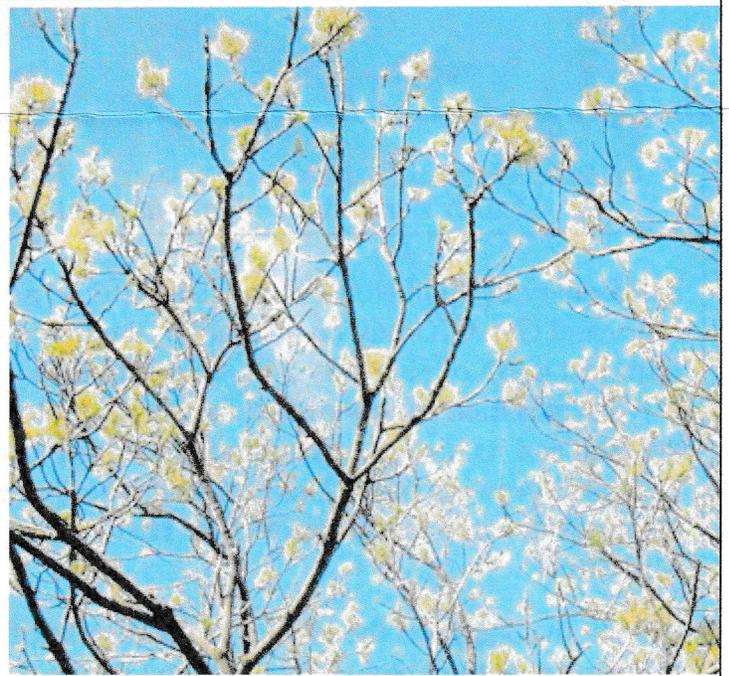
At its annual meeting in March, Rollingstone Township Directors awarded \$300.00 to MCHA. The funds had been solicited for use in the village/area walking/driving tour site markings. MCHA is grateful for this substantial bequest.

The Trees by Phillip Larkin

*The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.*

*Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too,
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.*

*Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.*



Firefighters sponsor Chicken Barbecue

Judging by crowd numbers and taste of food, the Minnesota City Fire Department held a successful fundraising event on April 28.



MCHA Extends Sympathy:

To the family and friends of Gary Beardsley, 64, of Minnesota City who died Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at his son’s home in Ridgeway.

To the family and friends of Alan R. Nelson of Palm Desert, Calif. and Winona and former Minnesota City resident who died April 30, 2018 at Good Shepard Health Center in Mason City, Iowa.

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 or use the QR code. Submit information to (mgogrady@embarqmail.com)

