

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 16, Issue 1: July 2021

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

## *Special Edition Newsletter – A Tribute to Jean Gardner*

Regular publication of the MCHA newsletter no longer continues, but this edition highlights a prominent, valued member of the organization and of the community, Jean Gardner, as well as Association updates.

Support welcomed: If interested in Association activities or membership, please attend a regular monthly meeting (second Saturdays of the month). For more information or if interested in taking over the creation of regular newsletters, contact Kate (507-454-4554). Membership dues (\$15) or information can also be sent to P.O. Box 21, Minn. City, MN 55959.

### **A Tribute to Jean Gardner**

#### ***Thank You for Your Dedication to the Minnesota City Community***

By Nancy and Liz O'Malley (Photos supplied by Erik Brom)

Our good friend and neighbor, Jean Gardner, was born on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1926 to Elsie and Blanchard Gardner. She grew up on the Gardner farm in Stockton Valley which was settled in 1869 by her grandparents.

Jean and her older sister Dorothy helped their father on the farm. They did chores such as running the binder, shocking oats, mowing the lawn, and shoveling wheat into bins in the granary. They did all these chores in dresses!



Jean (left) and Dorothy help with threshing

The girls also helped their mother with the household work such as cooking, cleaning, canning, and gardening. In August it was blackberry season and that meant picking blackberries across the creek in the woods on the side hill. Jean remembers that as a sticky, buggy, sweaty endeavor. And how hard it was to carry all the berries home! Many of the berries were for their use, eaten fresh or preserved. Jean recalls that they delivered berries to their relatives in Lewiston for 35 cents a quart.



The Gardner Family

The Gardner girls attended the Maybury School in Minnesota City. The old school was two stories: grades 1-4 on the first floor and grades 4-8 upstairs. Both sisters went on to high school and college in Winona.



Jean became an elementary school teacher, first teaching in Trempealeau and then Galesville. She spent most of her career as a third-grade teacher in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

When Jean retired she moved back to the Winona area, living with her mother on the farm and then in an apartment. Later, Jean bought a house in Goodview. Summers found Jean at the farm, gardening, doing upkeep, and enjoying the beauty all around.

Jean is very involved in the community, her church, and various organizations. **(continued on reverse)**



Jean grew up going to the Minnesota City Baptist Church. Her mother Elsie was the longtime president of the Baptist Ladies Aid. Elsie died in 1997 at age 99. Jean then became the president of the Ladies Aid, now known as the Historic Church Foundation of Minnesota City.



This year she retired from the position. Jean guided the group for 24 years, overseeing renovations and ongoing maintenance. The group safeguards the original furnishings from 1875; this has included a new roof and a rebuilt and stabilized foundation. The entrance has been updated as well to be handicapped accessible; it also has new railings, steps, and sidewalk. The Minnesota City Historical Association has been a welcome addition and shares the

church's space, using the backroom for their archives and displays. For many years, Jean played the organ at annual services held at the old church.

The members of the Historic Church Foundation of Minnesota City thank Jean for her years of service to what we still affectionately call "Ladies Aid." She remains an active member and provides us with her wise advice and warm presence.



## New [Facebook Page!](#)

MCHA is grateful to Andrea Church who has started a new Facebook page, **Minnesota City History and Friends**, which is where all Minnesota Citians young and old can connect, share photos, or just chat. Of particular interest is historical information about our hometown, stories about people or places, and photos from back in the day. The page will also have items from the Minnesota City Historical Association archives and will post news of their upcoming events. There may also be notices of upcoming events of interest in the area.

<https://www.facebook.com/minnesotacityhistoryandfriends>

## July Henrietta Cordelia Ray

*Sunshine and shadow play amid the trees  
In bosky groves, while from the vivid sky  
The sun's gold arrows fleck the fields at  
noon,  
Where weary cattle to their slumber hie.  
How sweet the music of the purling rill,  
Trickling adown the grassy hill!  
While dreamy fancies come to give repose  
When the first star of evening glows.*

## School Bell Updates

Although pandemic issues complicated things, progress is being made on the restoration and display of the Historic 1870 Maybury School Bell. Greystone Concrete and Construction completed the bell structure using the plans developed by Wallace Burley (dec. 2020.) It was set on the site in April, 2021. After a search for conservators who work with bells, KCI Conservation of Minneapolis was contacted to do the conservation work. Due to pandemic restrictions, Greystone moved the bell to Minneapolis to complete the work there instead of the conservators traveling here. The conservation work was completed by the end of June, 2020 and the bell returned and stored, and the new metal framework to support the bell was completed this year. The bell was set into the structure on April 5, 2021. Signage and fencing are yet to be installed. In addition to the



Bell Fund Drive, helping to fund the projects were many donations in honor of Gen O'Grady, Wallie Burley and Howard & Gladys Volkart, who saw the vision, though not the finished bell.



Additional history and photos of the school bell and school history can be found on the [Minnesota City All School Reunion 2011](#) Facebook page, also created by Andrea Church, specifically for the reunion. Updated when new stories or photos are uncovered, you can also find photos from the open house that was held at the Minnesota City school 10 years ago.

<https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaCitySchool>