

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 2, Issue 7: July, 2008

### Mark your calendars!

July 24: Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Monthly Meeting; Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street, Minn. City; 6:30 p.m.

**Note:**

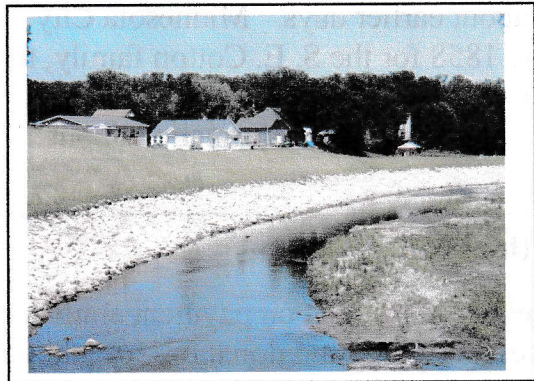
**This is the fourth Thursday.**

August 23: Elks Club GBDRF Music Fundraiser

August 24: GBDRF One Year Post Flood Anniversary Celebration at LaCanne Memorial Park, Goodview

September 18: Community Readers Meeting; 6:30 p.m. at Riverway Learning Community; the selection is *Winter Roads, Summer Fields* by Marge Dornier. Open to the Public.

Note - there will be no "Readers" meetings in July or August.



Garvin Brook Streambed, June 2008

### Improvements Continue at Historic First Baptist Church



Jim Schoen plasters at the Historic First Baptist Church.

Jim Schoen has completed the plaster work in the sanctuary side room of the Historic First Baptist Church, which will be used for storage and display purposes of MCHA and First Baptist Ladies Aid. The chimney external repair as well as relining by Kevin Kearney is in progress. Painting of the archive site has been started. Fire extinguishers and a fireproof file are being purchased. The monthly meetings of the Association are now being held in the Historic Church, and attendees have the opportunity to view progress of the renovated area.

### NRCS Official Names Mayor Don O'Neil "Minnesota City's Paul Bunyan"

On Wednesday, June 18, at a meeting to recognize the collaborative efforts of government agencies in the repair of the emergency bank-stabilization project along Garvin Brook, Don O'Neil, Minnesota City mayor, was praised for his work to stabilize the community following the August 18-19 flood. NCRS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) State Conservationist William Hunt said that "The community suffered a lot of misery and damage and Mayor Don O'Neil did a 'Paul Bunyan like' job." All eleven families whose homes were affected remained and improved their properties, according to O'Neil. \*3000 dump trucks of rock and dirt were used to reshape the streambed. The flood cut a 30 foot canyon and carried away an estimated 40,000 cubic yards of soil.\* A drive around the area most affected by the flood reveals the huge amount of recovery work that has been accomplished. Thank you to Mayor O'Neil, the Council members of Minnesota City, and to all persons who have worked for the recovery of physical safety, convenience, and beauty of Minnesota City.

\*\*Winona Daily News Information



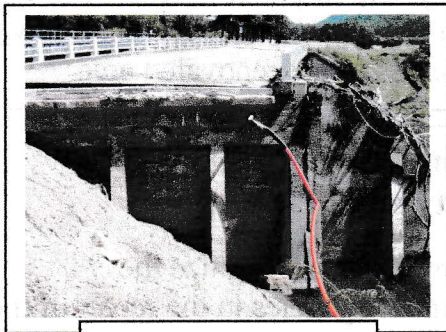
## **Old Highway 61 Minnesota City Bridge Construction To Begin**

Although there was no visible activity at the Minnesota City Bridge site on June 25, this was the date indicated by Mn/DOT for beginning the construction project to address the damage to the bridge in the August 2007 flood.

Residents have been using alternate routes since that time. \*The project is expected to take some ninety days to complete at a cost of \$1, 912, 023.

Approaches to the bridge as well as the bridge itself will be replaced.\* On June 26, a lone crane had arrived at the bridge site, signaling the beginning of project activity; on June 27 additional equipment arrived and work began.

\*\*Winona Daily News Information



Old Highway 61 Bridge

## **Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Sponsors Events**

On Sunday, June 8, GBDRF sponsored a red, white, and blue themed free community meal for some fifty persons. St. Paul's Catholic Church provided use of their kitchen and parish hall for the event. A Hawaiian Themed free community meal will be served on Sunday, July 13 at St. Paul's Church from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. On Saturday, June 14, GBDRF participated in a landscaping event at the Stockton Pavilion, distributing shrubs, plants and garden implements and lawn ornaments for flood victims.

Upcoming events include a musical fundraiser event at the Elks Club on August 23, followed by an anniversary celebration event in LaCanne Park on August 24. Watch local media for details. At its recent board meeting on June 16, Susan Althoff, Board Chairperson, announced that the Winona Foundation has committed an additional \$1000 matching grant to GBDRF for the DVD flood history production.

## **Minnesota Sesquicentennial Celebration Continues**

Although Sesquicentennial Celebrations in the area have diminished in number following Capital Day and Minnesota City Day on May 17, readers are encouraged to visit the state website <http://www.mn150years.org>. Content of the site has also diminished. Readers will find most new information on the Native American Blog site.

## **Early Minnesota City History Included in County Fair Recognition**

County Recorder Bob Bambenek has requested names of families, businesses, public entities, and residences with connections to Winona County that are as old as the state. These will be acknowledged at the Winona County Fair on July 10 at 1:30 at the Entertainment tent. Recognition certificates will be presented and comments will be shared about earlier days. Minnesota City Historical Association has established connections predating 1858 for the S. E. Cotton family, the Burley family, Oakland Cemetery, and the First Baptist Church. Because of their record holdings (deeds, abstracts), the recorder's office may be able to provide us with new information about founding individuals and properties.

## **Membership Renewal/New Membership Letters in the Mail**

Beginning this month, letters requesting membership monies are being sent on payment anniversaries to persons who have previously contributed membership fees, building fund donations, or additional monies to the Minnesota City Historical Association. These funds will be used for administrative costs and programming efforts. Phone 689-4103 or 689-2440 to request membership letter mailings to any friends or relatives.



### Thank you to:

- Mayor Don O'Neil and City Council Members for all time and effort required for the flood recovery projects in Minnesota City.
- all persons who respond to the newsletter. Comments are always appreciated.
- Clare Denzer who has given to the archives an 1897 Library roster from the First Baptist Sunday Church and photos.

### Minnesota Citizens Occupy Front Page Local Media Coverage

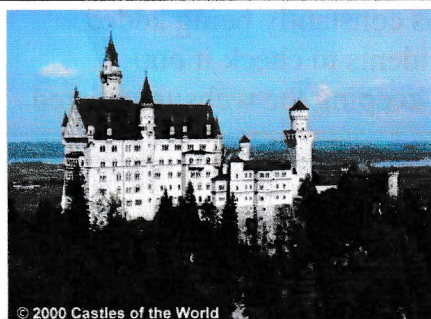
Tim O'Brien, Minnesota City, son of Association member, Marianne Mastenbrook, was recently featured in local newspapers as one of two Winona County Sheriff's Department employees who participated in an exchange with the German-American Police Program in Bersenbruck, Germany. O'Brien had participated in an earlier exchange in 2004. Police active shooter training experience was part of the program as well as comparisons of similar law enforcement issues in both countries—domestic abuse, traffic accidents, and drugs. In 2010, families in America will host the German group.

Kevin Kearney who recently moved to Mill Street in Minnesota City conducted a bicycle safety class for Community Education at Winona Middle School on June 14. A feature article in the Winona Daily News reported that bikers learned about safe equipment, road and bicycling safety rules. "Taking charge of their own safety" was the workshop goal. Kearney is the Winona Police Community Liaison Officer.

### Castle Builders in Bavaria and Minneiska Regarded as Deranged

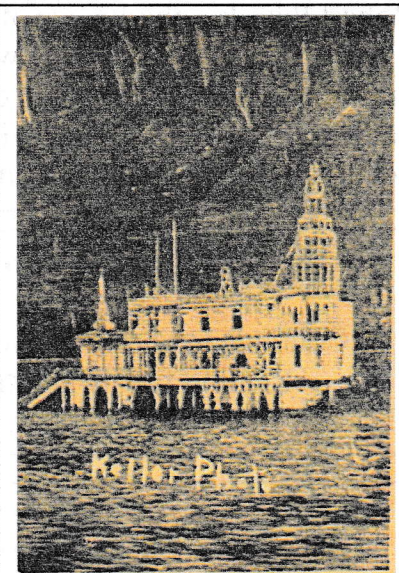
One of the sites Tim O'Brien, Minnesota City, saw on his recent travels was the palace at Neuschwanstein (New Swan Stone) on a mountain top in Germany. The castle was built in 1869 by Ludwig II of Bavaria as a retreat and as homage to Richard Wagner. It was designed by Architect Christian Jank. The castle was near completion in 1886 when Ludwig was declared insane, arrested at the building and later drowned. If the German Police visit the Mississippi River area near Minneiska in 2010 on their exchange visit, they may hear the stories and see photos of the ten-room castle built of driftwood by Putnam Gray. The building was called Gray's Castle or The Crazy Man's Castle. Unfortunately, this castle did not survive; lore says it burned. Some stories also link Gray with the invention of the Ferris wheel, saying that Gray had already set up a wheel in Winona and that George Ferris saw it before

designing his own wheel. Stories of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 do not include this connection. If anyone has additional information on Putnam Gray, the Driftwood Castle, or the Ferris wheel connection, please call 689-2440.



© 2000 Castles of the World

Neuschwanstein Castle – Germany



Just before the turn of the century this magnificent, three-story, 10-room castle made of driftwood stood on the banks of the Mississippi River at Minneiska, Minn. It was known as Put Gray's Castle or the Crazy Man's Castle.

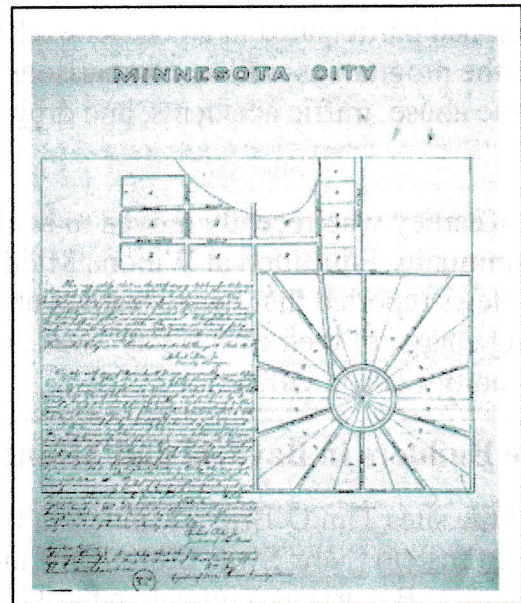


## Fire Department Locates Badge for English Counterparts

The June newsletter contained the request MCHA received from the Whitfords of West Yorkshire, England via the website for a Minnesota City fire department patch to add to their collection of U. S. Patches. Kelvin Penrod, Minnesota City Fire Department member, located patches in the basement of the fire station. Because there were several of them, the Historical Association has also been given one of the memorabilia. Currently, the logo is hand sewn onto any shirt or jacket. The patch was mailed to England and the Whitfords have already emailed their appreciation and good wishes.

## 1854 Map of Minnesota City Reveals Creative Plans for the Village

Roger Church, longtime Minnesota City resident and former postman, has contributed to MCHA a map which shows designs in 1854 that configure a remarkably different plan for the layout of the town of Minnesota City. When and why these plans changed is a topic worthy of exploring with the help of other plat books and maps in the Association archives and of persons including Roger Church who are knowledgeable about this history. The 1854 information has two sections: description and drawing of square lots which are five acres each, with boundary streets with American names—Franklin Street, Adams Street, Washington Street and Mount Vernon Road. Current names of streets reflect more local interests—Bridge Street, Mill Street, Iowa Street, Dakota Street. The second section is a most interesting circular design which is described by Robert Pike Jr., the Justice of the Peace in 1854.



1854 City Plat Design Submitted  
by Robert Pike

“ Any person selecting a lot within the circular avenue must build of fireproof materials and in a uniform manner, it being the design to enclose under glass the area within the circle for a winter garden.” Persons familiar with Robert Pike history will recognize his creative, if eccentric genius. This map will be archived at the Historic Baptist Church.

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 Susan Althoff, Marv O'Grady and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.

Anyone who wishes to be a member of the Association is invited to send \$15.00 to MCHA, P.O. Box 41, 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.