

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 2, Issue 11: November, 2008

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

Mark your calendars!

November 13: MCHA meeting; 6:30 p.m., Riverway Learning Community; 6:00 meeting for anyone interested in Assn. bylaw revision

November 20: Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30 p.m., Riverway Learning Community; Selection is “The Road” by Cormac McCarthy (see www.minnesotacity.org Community Readers page)

December 13: Saturday, 6:00 p.m., Lighting Contest Winners Announced and Community Caroling Event, First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street.

Please note the change of date and time of Community Caroling event from last month's newsletter. December 13, 6:00 p.m., are the correct time and date.

Roger and Andrea Church Detail Family History for Large Audience

The attendees at the October 26 presentation at Riverway Learning Community of the Church Family History asked questions and offered comments on the presentation of Andrea and Roger Church. A power point presentation and a series of slides were the visual accompaniment for the outline of history given alternately by Andrea and Roger. The Church family move to Minnesota, precipitated by the impending Civil War, was followed by enlistments at Rollingstone of family members in the Union effort. A number of Church family members were in the audience, including Roger's children, his sister, Maxine Church Spaag, his cousins, Russell and Gladys Church Volkart, and several of the Church children and grandchildren. Ronald and Virginia Witt Buck (Virginia's family were subsequent owners of the Church Brothers store) displayed a number of the artifacts from the store including a harmonica stand, a spice cabinet, and others. Roger was questioned about post office changes and both of the Churches and family members discussed changes in appearance and ownership of historic buildings including the City Nite Club and the churches. The house of Roger's grandparents and his parents both are occupied in Minnesota City, (132 Mill Street and 109 Front Street) as is the building that housed the store and the post office.



Andrea Church explains Church family migration from England to Stockton Valley and Minnesota City.



Roger Church (R) explains certificates and photos to Don Evanson, (L) and Agnes Jilk Evanson (center). Agnes Evanson, 95 years old was raised in Stockton Valley near the Church Family homesteaded land.

City Council Members of Minnesota City Considering Options for Use of Minnesota Public Facilities Authority Dollars

Discussions by the City Council of Minnesota City are continuing on Minnesota's Public Facilities Authority offer of \$1.27 million to upgrade septic units. Sheila Craig, Southeastern Minnesota Wastewater Initiative, is handling the process of grant money and septic/sewer planning. A Technical Assistance grant of \$40,000.00 from the University of Minnesota for planning and surveying has been approved and a survey was conducted on October 30 and 31. At this time, the rate of approvals and the duration of time necessary for completion of the survey and feasibility study to consider all septic/sewer options are undetermined. The option of Minnesota City sewer hookup with Goodview was precluded by the need to consolidate, not an acceptable solution for either entity.

Eddie Verdick, Lifetime Minnesota City Resident, Dies at age 96.

The memorial card read Edward A. Verdick, but the reader hardly registered that. Always he was “Ed” or “Eddie” to the people who knew him. He was like an infrastructure element of Minnesota City. He had been the constable for twenty six years. Father Donald Lovas remarked in his funeral eulogy that it was many years since he had seen a constable badge like the one attached to the lining of Eddie’s coffin. Ed died in the Winona Hospital on October 9.

Ed was born on September 6, 1912 in Minnesota City, the son of August and Mary Bilicki Verdick. The Verdick family, who farmed at a site three miles south of Minnesota City toward Stockton, was well known, apparently world wide, for their raising of Brown Swiss cattle. In 1938, according to one news release, seven head of purebred Brown Swiss sires from the Verdick farm were to be shipped to Cuba. The Verdicks at this time had the largest herd of registered Brown Swiss cattle in the United States, the herd numbering as high as 140 head. This article states “Mrs. August Verdick operates the smaller of the two farms with two children, Josephine and Eddie in active charge of the property” (Winona Republican Herald). The Verdick farms, over four hundred acres of property, were sold in 1941. Charles Choate purchased part of the land; Reid and Arlas Johnson currently live and farm on another part of the Verdick estate.

Ed married Evelyn Schell in 1936 at St. Casimir’s Church in Winona. According to the Winona Republican Herald account, it was “an attractive wedding.” Listed as dinner guests for the bridal party were familiar family names—Schells, Verdicks, Daniels, Posanz, Brown. The story concludes: “The couple will reside in the bank building in the village which has been recently remodeled into a residence.” Evelyn died on June 16 (their wedding anniversary) in 2001. When Riverway Learning students asked to interview Ed in 2002 for *Old Wise Tales*, he declined, saying it was too hard for him still to talk about things since Evelyn had died.

Ed worked as an over the road semi driver and a crane operator in addition to his duties as City Constable. He hunted, fished and gardened. He was a member of St. Paul’s Catholic Church in Minnesota City where he served as a trustee and an usher. He was a member of the Minnesota City Boat Club, the Minnesota City Fire Department and the Eagle’s club. His sister, Annie Brand of Lewiston survives as well as do numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by four brothers and four sisters. Ed was buried in Holy Trinity Catholic Cemetery in Rollingstone. on Saturday, October 11.



Ed and Evelyn Schell Verdick
(St. Paul’s Parish Photo)

Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Sponsors Community Meal

An October “Hoedown” no-charge meal provided by GBDRF was served at Riverway Learning Community on October 14 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. The fall festival atmosphere of haybales and pumpkins, combined with the fall menu including pumpkin and apple breads produced a warm atmosphere for the event. Children enjoyed crafts with provided materials. The next community meal will be in early Spring. These food events have provided opportunities for all area residents to visit with their neighbors.

Minnesota City Archival Site needs the following items at the 140 Mill Street location:

- A) a desktop printer/copier for use in copying newspaper clippings.
 - b) a DVD player for tape and disc viewing by researchers at the site.
- Please call 507-689-4103 or 507-689-2440 if you or someone you know has either of these items and is willing to donate them to the Historical Association. Thank you.

Minnesota Territorial Pioneers (mnterritorialpioneers.org) Promotes Minnesota History

Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc. is an organization to encourage the study of Minnesota history. Any descendant and/or spouse and children whose ancestors settled in Minnesota prior to Statehood on May 11, 1858, is invited to join. This group will include those persons honored by the Winona County Fair Committee as part of the Centennial Celebration in the summer of 2008. This organization built the first log cabin on State Fair Grounds in St. Paul in 1900. This cabin was demolished in 1957 and replaced with the current log cabin. The group remembers and preserves the memories of territorial ancestors. Readers can contact the group through the given website or through email at mnterritorialpioneers @yahoo.com.

City Council Visits Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Site on October 7

Preceding their regular monthly meeting on October 7, the members of the City Council, Don O'Neil, Richard Hohensee, Kelvin Penrod, David Kleinbach, Brian Ebbinger and Clerk Lori Donehower viewed the renovated archival rooms of the MCHA. Genevieve and Marvin O'Grady hosted the visit, pointing out the new wiring, newly shingled roof, replaced floors and walls, plastering and installation of Association historical information, and preservation of the indoor outhouse. They indicated the variety of materials being collected at this time—newspaper clippings, researched scrapbooks of various topics, videotapes, books, flags, photographs, and items of historical interest. Members were given an outline for the planned use of the archival site.

The archival site will be open on Saturday afternoons from May through October with staffing to provide opportunities for area residents to communicate shared historical interests. The site will offer opportunities to research for programs and events, the heritage of the community from first habitation through settlement and pioneer days to the present, and with consideration of the future. It will receive items (archeological materials, papers relevant to the genealogical, biographical, civil, political, military, transportation, religious and general history of the area) which are of historical interest and will help to interpret the history of the area. Site workers will store, protect, preserve, and display materials. The site will be a work space for the Association, a lending library for books, a review area for books, tapes and films, and a place to view exhibits.

Road and Bridge Conditions Complicate Everyday and Holiday Traffic in Minnesota City

The anticipated completion of the Minnesota City Bridge being rebuilt after the August 2007 flood now has been moved to November. Such delays in completion dates have long historical precedent. A November, 1926 *Winona Republican Herald* article included this story about Thanksgiving traffic: "Pavement on Minnesota Trunk Highway No. 3 is being formally opened tomorrow (Nov. 17). While it is not a completed road... enough has been done to assure good going at all times. Rainy weather the last week has made a quagmire of the short detour around the bridges being put in between Minnesota City and Minneiska and scores of cars were mired down here over the weekend. Scenes of days before the advent of concrete and graveled roads were recalled as a farmer with a team of horses reaped a late but profitable harvest pulling cars through the quarter mile detour at a price said to be \$5 a pull. This detour will be avoided for the formal opening Wednesday by temporarily bridging the gap in the concrete with planking which may stay in use through the winter, as little hope is now held that the concrete bridge will be completed this fall... The new section between Minnesota City and Minneiska above the river bottoms, with a clear view of the Wisconsin bluffs in the distance ranks with the best America has to offer from the scenic viewpoint. Then too, the roads seem to make those towering Minnesota Bluffs stand out more strikingly and more attractively. It is hard to realize that less than ten years ago, it was hard to get over this Minnesota City-Minneiska trail along the river with a horse and buggy, and most of the time it was impossible for an auto."

Holiday Lighting Contest and Christmas Caroling Events Planned by MCHA and GBDRF

MCHA and GBDRF are combining energies and ideas for a community building event in Minnesota City. A Holiday Lighting Contest is being planned for the Minnesota City area. Categories for entrants will include Residential Novelty, Residential Religious, and Commercial Décor. There will be a first place winner in each category and one honorable mention overall. Each winner will receive \$25.00 and a certificate. The winners of the lighting contest will be announced at the third annual Community Caroling event scheduled for December 13, Saturday, 6:00 pm. at the Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street.

The caroling event will begin with refreshments in the church and practice of carols, historical information on holiday lighting customs, and then carolers will proceed to the streets to carol. An exciting addition to this years program may be the use of the Maus family horses and wagon to carry carolers to area locations. Details of both community events will be further outlined in the December newsletter and in local newspapers.

Traditional Minnesota City Thanksgivings Included Food and Visiting

A quick check of the "society" pages or Neighborhood News columns of early Winona newspapers reveals the abundance of neighborhood visiting and dining at the heart of Thanksgiving celebrations in Minnesota City. A sampling: "Mrs. Mary Verdick and Miss Josephine Verdick entertained as Thanksgiving dinner and supper guests, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Verdick and Family... Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Pierce and family were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Allen Tschumper for Thanksgiving, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Saehler had Thanksgiving dinner with Mr. and Mrs. George Church... Mr. and Mrs. James Stewart and children had Thanksgiving dinner with Mrs. Stewart's mother, Mrs. Martin of Winona... Miss Alice Valentine, who is attending Teachers College in Winona and Mr. and Mrs. Donald Valentine and children spent Thanksgiving Day at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Valentine... Mr. and Mrs. Mark Donehower entertained at a Thanksgiving dinner for their children and their families Thursday..." (*Winona Republican Herald*). Area newspapers have changed the format of reporting on Thanksgiving observances. Community meals and restaurants now draw large crowds on Thanksgiving, but many families still go "over the river and through the woods" to the homes of their relatives to observe this holiday.

MCHA extends sympathy to:

Friends and family of Ed Verdick.

Walt Kelly and sons and family members on the death of Janice who died in Rochester on Saturday, October 25.

Donald and Jane Malin Anderson Family on the death of Jane's father, Fritz Malin, who died at age 91.

Duane and Linda Hutton and family. Duane's brother, Darrell, 57, died unexpectedly the weekend of October 25.

Andring Families of Minnesota City and all family members of Clara Andring, who died at age 91.

**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.**