

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 1, Issue 5: September, 2007

## Historical Flood Experiences Repeated

With and for our readers and all Minnesota City and area residents,  
we mourn the loss of life and property.

The damaging flash flood on August 18-19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 is unfortunately not the first for Minnesota City. On June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1914 a flood raged through the village producing similar results, leaving a number of homes on the edge of newly cut sharp embankments. Another flood in 1947 had damaging results. That flood removed the Swinging Bridge which was later rebuilt. Ironically, the 2007 flood has severely damaged the pier site of the bridge where the Historical Association had planned to place the commemorative sign for the Swinging Bridge.



Minnesota City, 1914



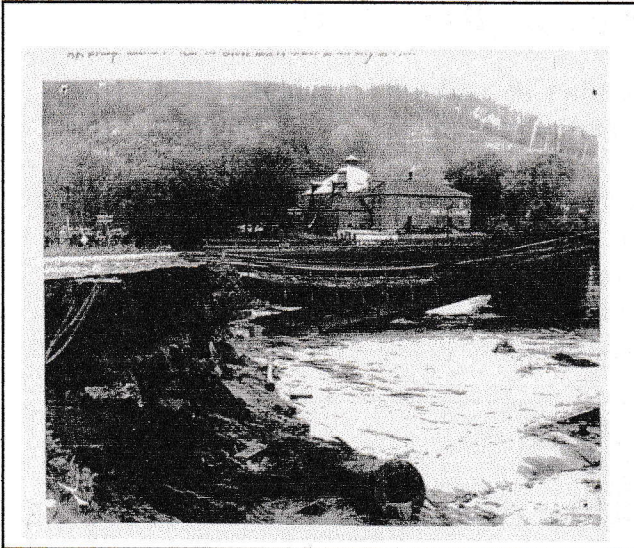
Minnesota City, 2007

When the Western Farm and Village members who settled the city came to the area, they specifically looked for land that would not be subject to flooding from spring thaws. This was an interesting astuteness on their part, inasmuch as many of them lacked other practical skills for settlement. In “Letter from Minnesota” in *The Puritan Recorder* dated Wabasha, Minnesota, November 4, 1859, the author writes “ The bluffs along the Mississippi River are from four to six miles apart, and all the intervening surface constitutes the ancient river bed, worn down in its present depth by the attrition of the waters in some past geologic period. The high prairie of the whole back country is on a level with the tops of these bluffs. The present space which the waters between them occupy is not more than 1/8 to 1/16 the distance which separates them. Occasionally on one side or the other, there will be an old diluvial formation, sufficiently high or a least thought to be beyond the possible reach of the highest rise of the annual river floods....” In Erik Brom’s research in 1974, “A History of Minnesota City,” he describes the exploration: “ The next day they came upon Wabasha Prairie (later to be called Winona) and decided that, although it had a good landing, it was not a good site for settlement since it was subject to flooding. How right they were, as over a hundred years later, Winona was almost wiped out by a series of disastrous floods ” (Brom).

The land they chose was behind the mouth of the Stockton Valley Creek (name later changed to Garvin Brook). At the side of the creek, A.D. Ellsworth built his mill. The water from this “creek” that powered the Ellsworth Mill, had a fall of ten feet obtained by damming the creek . The capacity of the mill was 750 bushels of wheat or 150 barrels of flour a day.



The Minnesota City land choice would be safe from flooding of the Mississippi River, but not safe from the settlers' chosen creek when swollen and raging from torrential rains. Like many of the settlers, some of us have remained unfamiliar with the paths of the creek and have been amazed at the realities of "flash" floods, and of the power of the water. Our current archival materials reveal no loss of life in previous floods following settlement in 1852 .



Minnesota City, 1914



Minnesota City, 2007

**Mark Your Calendars!**

September 13: Minnesota City Historical Association monthly meeting at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City; 6:30-8:00 p.m.

September 20: Minnesota City Community Readers. The selections for this meeting are *Amish Society* by J. Hostetler and *Plain and Simple*, by Sue Bender. Please notify Gen O'Grady if you want books ordered; persons are invited to the discussions, whether or not they have read the books.

February 24: UW-L archeologists' presentation on Native American History and artifacts of the area. Please begin locating yours for evaluation of authenticity and value by these individuals.

New memberships

-James O'Grady

-Kathy Streng Twite in memory of her parents, Phillip and Cecilia Jilk Streng, who grew up in Minnesota City area and attended Minnesota City School.

Thank you to Dawn Church Webster for donation of several substantial mailing tubes which are used for storage of large archival pieces-- maps, charts, etc.

Check Out the Website  
[www.minnesotacity.org](http://www.minnesotacity.org)

Since David Eckert and Marvin O'Grady have begun to work with the website, new information is constantly being added. Remind family and friends and former Minnesota City residents to check it often.

The Association extends its sympathy to the family of Myrtle Rahn who died on August 18. "Myrt" was employed at the Oaks Night Club for many years. She attended the Walt Kelly presentation on the Oaks for the Minnesota City sesquicentennial in 2002, verifying some of Walt's information and adding some of her own. She was 90 years of age at that time.

Anyone who wishes to be a member of the Association is invited to send \$15.00 to MCHA, P.O. Box 41, MN City, MN, 55959. All monies will be used to support Association goals.