

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 3: March, 2012

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

Mark your calendars!

March 10: Regular MCHA Meeting; 9:30 a.m.; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City

March 15: Minnesota City Community Readers Meeting; 6:30 p.m.; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City. Selection: *Intruder in the Dust*, William Faulkner

May 19 (Saturday)
Minnesota City Day
160 years!

July 29 (Sunday)
GBDRF Climatology
Round Table, Speaker
Pete Boulay

Go “Green”!

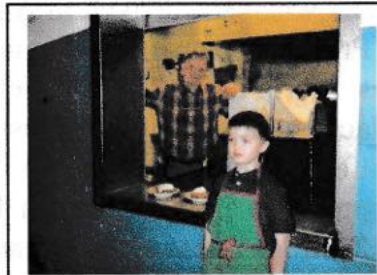
If you receive this newsletter in paper form and would prefer to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

Oaks presentation Draws Large Audience



Walt Kelly stands near a billboard figure of his famed father, Chef Walter Kelly

Speaking to an audience of over one hundred persons, Walt Kelly entertained and informed with anecdotes, photos, and newspaper clippings about the Oaks Restaurant history in Minnesota City. Audience members contributed questions and answers. One individual, Anah Nelson Munson, a former Minnesota City Teacher sent notes from Arizona, detailing her work with children of displaced Polish families that Chef Kelly relocated for work and living in Minnesota City. Another of Munson’s recollections was of her taking her class to see television for the first time on Chef Kelly’s 12 inch black and white TV. In addition to Kelly’s presentation, displays were available of dishware—some from current excavation sites in Minnesota City, and some that had been most recently used by the Srock’s at a café in Stockton—and other items from the MCHA archives and audience members. The fires, the legal/illegal liquor/gambling questions continue to intrigue. Information about the Kellys -- Walter and Charlotte -- reveals a portrait of remarkable community members who broadened many horizons for the population of the entire area. Chef Kelly’s death following an automobile accident cut short an already illustrious life. A question/suggestion was offered that Walt might write a book—the interest displayed on Sunday suggests that it would have many readers.



Refreshments for the Kelly speech were provided by Riverway Learning Community: Brandon Kropuenske assists his grandfather, Fred Krause.

Roger Church Celebrates 90 Years



Roger Church’s license plate at First Congregational Birthday Celebration

Only so much information fits on a license plate, so family photos, post office commission and other visuals couldn’t be added to Roger Church’s license, but his license does reflect his status as a World War II Vet and as a Mason - two significant elements of his life. A reception to celebrate Roger’s 90 years was held at First Congregational Church on Feb. 4, hosted by his children, Tom, Sandy, Andrea, and Jody. Roger and his wife Ruth Hohensee Church (deceased) lived in Minnesota City for most of Roger’s life. Roger was the postmaster for thirty years. Friends and family wish him a continuation of his father’s heritage hundred year life (or more!).

MCHA extends sympathy:

- to the family of Ruth Drussell Brendel, 85, who died in Rochester on February 19 (see following article)

MCHA congratulates:

- Roger Church on his 90th birthday
- Howard and Gladys Church Volkart on their being the longest married couple at the Old Settlers meeting (65 years)
- Ellen Berry on being the oldest woman at the Old Settlers meeting (103)

Ruth Brendel Visit to Minnesota City in 2002

In 2002 in preparation for the celebration of the Minnesota City Sesquicentennial, area residents were invited to contribute photos, stories, for the celebration. One of the persons who came to Riverway was Ruth Drussell Brendel, bringing some photos and stories. In a lengthy visit, she outlined her Minnesota City history. Her mother, Delia Schulz Drussell, was born in Minnesota City in 1890 and died in Winona in 1990. She taught in rural schools of Ridgeway and Witoka from 1910 to 1920 when she married Ben Drussell. She and her son Ross (brother of Ruth) are buried in Oakland. Ruth's grandmother, Minnie Sens was born in 1862 in Hasselbusch, Province, Brandenburg, Prussia, now Niewsporowice, Poland. She was four years old when she arrived in America. The Sens left Prussia because of a plague. A three week sailing ship trip took them to Quebec. They then traveled across New York and westward until they came to Lewiston where Minnie's father earned enough to purchase a plot in Norton Township, one mile past Rollingstone. Minnie married Michael Schultz in 1883. Here they built a sod house and then cleared land and built a frame house and barn. At the time of Ruth's visit, the farm was still in family ownership. Unfortunately, further connections with Ruth did not take place; she was a rich source of historical information, and from the local obituary accounts of her life, had enriched the lives of many.

Minnesota City Connections With the Civil War

(From *Winona Republican Herald*; May 16, 1935)

"Mary Reith, 85, one of Winona County's old settlers, died at her home in Minnesota City



early Wednesday morning. Death came after a lingering illness which culminated in a heart attack. Mary Regina Hohman Reith was born at Shimerhausen, Bavaria, Germany, May 4, 1850. When three years old she moved with her father to the United States and resided for a few years in Pittsburgh, Pa., from where they moved to Louisville, Ky., where they resided during the **Civil War**. She often recalled helping feed Confederate soldiers who were brought into Louisville as prisoners. After the war she moved with her parents to Indianapolis and in 1869 moved to **Minnesota City** where her father bought a farm in what is known as Deering Valley." (now Whitman-Deering Road). Mary was the mother of Minnesota City teacher Emma Reith; both are buried in Oakland Cemetery.

Planning Minnesota City Day

May 19, 2012 marks the 160th year of Minnesota City History. All persons with interest or suggestions for planning for this day are invited to attend the next regular Minnesota City Historical Association meetings which are held at 9:30 on the 2nd Saturday of each month, either at Riverway Learning Community or at the MCHA Archives, 140 Mill Street in Minnesota City. Many ideas and volunteers are needed for observation of this annual celebration of our community's past, present, and future. Calls may also be made to 689-2440 or 689-4103.

Rollingstone Valley Now Known As Stockton Valley (or Stockton Valley Formerly Known as Rollingstone Valley) by Don Evanson

The Years Gone By column of the May 19, 1956 edition of the Winona Republican Herald, includes at One Hundred Years ago (1856), "Stockton, eight miles from Winona, is an up and coming town located in the fertile Rollingstone Valley."

From a December 8, 1864 ad, "A valuable improved farm of 143 acres is offered on reasonable terms, located in the Rollingstone Valley, adjoining the Village of Stockton..."

Another ad, appearing September 8, 1866 edition reads, "40 acres of excellent timber land in Rollingstone Valley, 3 miles from Stockton."

The Years Gone By column of the October 4, 1967 edition includes at One Hundred Years ago (1867), "Hugh Sherry has just completed a flouring mill one mile below Stockton on the Rollingstone Creek. It is a substantial wooden structure, three stories in height. There is a ten foot fall of water, and sufficient power to run all the machinery in the mill, if necessary." A similar column of January 4th in the same year foretold of the establishment of this mill.

An article in the July 31, 1869 edition describing a trip "to visit the fine grain-growing region northwest of St. Charles" reads, in part, "The railroad ride through the beautiful Rollingstone Valley, and up the romantic ascent of the bluffs beyond the Village of Stockton..." This would have been the Winona and St. Peter Railroad. Construction on the Winona and Southwestern Railroad, that served Rollingstone and beyond, did not begin until 1888.

An article in the May 8, 1872 edition describing fruit growing in Winona County reads, in part, "A friend met us by appointment in Stockton, and conveyed us down through the valley of the Rollingstone about two miles, to the nursery and orchard of Mr. John Hart..." Without further research this is believed to be the former Leon Bronk farm, with the farmstead located along what was known as the Hart Hill Road, which crossed over the hill from the subject valley to what is now the Hidden Valley Mobile Home Village area on the Winona/Goodview side.

An article in the March 7, 1873 edition, subtitled "Water Powers and Flouring Mills of Winona County – A Well Watered Land" reads, in part, "The Rollingstone is a fine stream, divided into the South, Middle and North Rollingstone. ... The main branch of the river starts near the head of Bear valley, in the town of Utica, and meets the North branch three miles above Minnesota City. ... The South branch rises near the south-east corner of the town of Warren, and meets another fork of the same branch in the village of Stockton..." This South branch is now known as Garvin Brook.

The "Railway Notes" of the August 31, 1887 edition report that "The engineer corps of the Winona and Southwestern railroad came in from Rollingstone on Saturday, and remained over on Sunday, returning Monday. They have been running lines pretty thoroughly in the North and South Rollingstone valleys. At the rooms of the company over the First National Bank the topographers are engaged in reducing to maps and plats the surveys already made."

It is not entirely clear here what is area is meant by North Rollingstone Valley, but South Rollingstone Valley can mean only the valley through Stockton, following from previous usage of the name. As constructed, the Winona and Southwestern crossed the mouth of South Rollingstone Valley, i.e. today's Stockton Valley, and proceeded up towards Rollingstone, through perhaps what is referred to here as North Rollingstone Valley. From Rollingstone, the railroad continued southwest of Rollingstone, through Bear Creek Valley, to Altura. It did not go through the valley north of the City of Rollingstone.

(continued on page 4)

Rollingstone Valley Now Known As Stockton Valley – continued from page 3

The *Local Brevities* column of the February 18, 1896 edition reports that, “As foreshadowed in *The Republican* some weeks ago, the fine farm of E. B. Drew in the North Rollingstone valley has been sold to John Valentine for \$15,600. The property embraces 680 acres, a portion of which is bluffland.” Here the term North Rollingstone valley is used to name the main valley between Minnesota City and Rollingstone city. The E. B. Drew farm is the present day Leroy and Marie Speltz family farm. John Valentine is the ancestor of Jane Valentine Sherman and County Commissioner Wayne Valentine, well known present day personalities, both with Minnesota City area roots.

An article in the April 29, 1899 edition titled “Winona County Geology”, citing the state geologist’s observations, reads, in part, “The pinnacled cliffs near Homer overlooking the Mississippi River are composed of the upper brecciated, strata of the St. Lawrence limestone. Numerous similar towers of the same rock are to be seen in the county, particularly in the valley of the South Rollingstone creek, above Stockton.”

An article in the May 13, 1899 edition entitled “Trees and Shrubs”, a continuation of the Winona County Geology series, begins by describing the soils of the county. A lengthy paragraph, beginning, “The Rollingstone valley is a fine one...” goes on to describe the valley between Stockton and Minnesota City.

1899 was the last usage that my search revealed of the term Rollingstone valley to describe what is now known as Stockton Valley, so perhaps about the turn of the century was when the name Stockton Valley came into usage. I have not searched for Stockton Valley.

It might be of related interest that what is now known as Middle Valley, between Minnesota City and Rollingstone, was first known as Irish Valley. Perhaps the name change came about to avoid confusion with another Irish Valley, in the area across the Mississippi River from Minnesota City.

The majority of the items cited above were found by searching for the term “North Rollingstone Valley”, which I used at the website The Winona Newspaper Project,

<http://www.winona.edu/library/databases/winonanewspaperproject.htm> .

Presented by the Winona State University Darrell W. Krueger Library with the support of the Minnesota Historical Society and the cooperation of the Winona County Historical Society, the project makes available online, in searchable form, all early Winona newspapers through 1976. I extend a hearty thank you to the University and the others for their efforts.

Readers will note that last month’s article on *Roots* (*Leo Jilk*) and this month’s column on *Rollingstone/Stockton Valley* (*Don Evanson*) are reader contributions. Anyone who has a contribution for the newsletter is most welcome to discuss/submit. Please call 689-2440. These additions add to the interest and variety of the newsletter.

Announcement: Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Plans

As part of the 5th anniversary of the 2007 Flood events, Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund will hold a presentation and round table on Climatology. Speaker will be Pete Boulay, UM Department of Ecology and Water Resources. Time and Place will be announced.

Check Out The Website:

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 Andrea Church, Marv O’Grady and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.