

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 5: May, 2012

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

## **Mark your calendars!**

**May 12:** MCHA Monthly Meeting; Archives, 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City; 9:30 a.m.

**May 17:** Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30 p.m.; Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street; Selection: Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

**May 19:** Minnesota City Day: 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding. (Schedule on Page 4)

### **Go “Green”!**

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

## **Construction in Streets Causes Scaled Down Minnesota City Day Celebration**

This year is the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Minnesota City in May, 1852, by some truly intrepid individuals who had organized for this purpose in the Western Farm and Village Association in New York City.

This year's marking of the event sponsored by the Minnesota City Historical Association



Construction on Bridge Street (Old Highway 61) on April 25, 2012

(MCHA) and by other groups and individuals, including the Ladies Aid of the Historic First Baptist Church, and Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund has been compromised by the ongoing construction of the Wastewater Treatment Project. Some events will go on as planned on **May 19**; others are being moved to **September 15**, and will replace the usual fall program of MCHA. **PLEASE NOTE EVENT DATES.**

**The Belgian Waffle Breakfast** arranged by GBDRF will take place at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, on **May 19**, and will run from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Adults \$8; Kids 4-12, \$5; Kids 3 & under, Free. Proceeds from this event will benefit Youth Baseball and GBDRF. Carryouts will be available. Last year's attendees found both food and company pleasing.

**Walt Kelly** will be at the Historic First Baptist Church, 120 Mill Street, **May 19**, from 9-12, to listen to **“Oaks Stories”** from anyone who has one. At Walt's presentation for MCHA on February 26, many individuals encouraged Kelly's writing a book about the history of the Oaks, an historic presence in Minnesota City. All newsletter readers are invited to come to tell Walt their stories; invite your family and friends to come with you. There are still many persons in the area who ate at the Oaks, danced at the Oaks, and worked there. If a book is written, it will need these reminiscences.



Elegant kerosene lamps in the Historic First Baptist Church are lit during holiday celebrations.

**Open House at Historic First Baptist Church and Minnesota City Historical Association: From the Grounded to the Elegant.** The First Baptist Ladies Aid will host open house at the Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street on **May 19**. This building, as well as its history, is a Minnesota City treasure. The original organ remains in the church and is used for the annual summer service music found in the hymnals. The baptismal “tank,” usually rug covered, is a fine prototype of a number of newer baptismal structures of area churches. A collection of Jean Gardner photos which are posted include photos of the tank. A future article will discuss baptism of immersion practiced by the Dunkards.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 – SEE “MINNESOTA CITY DAY”**

**MINNESOTA CITY DAY – Continued from page 1**

**MCHA Archives will be open on May 19.** Persons who have agreed to participate in the cemetery walk now scheduled for September 15 are invited to view some of the materials available on “their person.” Any persons wishing to have photos copied to contribute to the archives, or who wish to see archival materials are invited to visit that day. Recent contributions of the Denzer family and some of the “new old glass” will be displayed.

At right: Roger Church and Marvin O’Grady discuss the indoor outhouse (inhouse?) at the Archives.



**Minnesota City Day Remains a Significant Occasion to Celebrate: or, Yes, Virginia, There is a Minnesota City.**

The Minnesota City File at Winona County Historical Society contains the following letter from 1971. The writer’s perception was probably the result of some newspaper researched information and historic perception that because Minnesota City did not become the State Capitol, and significant numbers of first settlers did leave the location or die, the establishment had disappeared.

52 Groveland Terrace  
Apt. 207  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403  
July 23, 1971

Winona County Historical Society  
Winona, Minnesota

Gentlemen:

I am writing to ask if you might possibly give me any information about the “paper town” of Rollingsstone, whose advertising brochures, unfortunately, led a migration of settlers to a stretch of platted, but still undeveloped prairie. The site, I have read, was at the present site of Minnesota City.

I also understand that there are no traces of that enterprise, that no buildings were erected, that the settlers scattered, most of them going home again. But I wondered if in the records of the Winona County Museum you might have any paper records of Rollingsstone--handbills, brochures, pictures--which might be reproduced in an article I hope to write on the early planned towns of Minnesota. I would need only one or two such illustrations.

If you have such items would you let me know? I shall be deeply grateful for any information or leads you may give me.

Sincerely,

*Virginia L. Dustin*

(Miss) Virginia L. Dustin

Letter in Minnesota City File in Winona County Historical Society

The Nov. 2002 mission statement of the Minnesota City Historical Association outlines materials and information collection as well as programming related to the founding and continuation of Minnesota City that has corrected some inaccuracies about the village.

**Congratulations:** To Patrick Knoll, former resident (current Kimber family home) on Whitman-Deering Drive and student in Minnesota City and Winona Schools. Knoll, creative director at DDB Worldwide, has four of the top 11 of “20 most Effective Super Bowl Ads of All Time” in a list compiled by the Daily Beat and Newsweek. His ads are featured in the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art. (Currents: Spring 2012).

### **Riverway Learning Community Moves to Larger, if not Greener, Pastures**

Since its existence in Minnesota City beginning in 1999, whether or not one was directly connected with the charter school, the continuous traffic to and from Riverway Learning Community during the school year, as well as on many summer days, verified the institution's presence. Because building owners, Evanson and Evanson, had included in the lease the use of the building for appropriate community needs, a number of residents are familiar with the very substantial changes made in the building to accommodate the Riverway open space environment needs. Minnesota City Readers have met in the building since their first meetings, and the Minnesota City Historical Association has met there during the months when heating the archives at 140 Mill Street would have been necessary. Additionally, many of the presentations of the Association have been held in the building auditorium. The site seemed an ideal match for many of the original philosophical tenets of the Learning Community, but increased numbers, according to Director Krause, as quoted in local media, prompted the move to the Winona Crossings site. As owners explore possibilities for new tenants at the Minnesota City site, readers are invited to consider the meaning of "community" and how the health of one community member affects the health of all. Reader thoughts on the topic would be of interest for compilation into a newsletter reflection. Email to: [mgogrady@embarqmail.com](mailto:mgogrady@embarqmail.com). Please submit under title of "Community."

### **Minnesota City Connections with the Civil War**

"Christopher Parker, an aged veteran of the civil war, died in this city [Winona] yesterday afternoon. He had been brought here nearly six years ago from his home on the Minnesota City Road for treatment, but the doctors attending him were unable to do much more than alleviate his sufferings. Mr. Parker was born in Indiana and was seventy six years old at the time of this death. He enlisted during the civil war in an Iowa regiment, and at the conclusion of the civil war came to Winona county and made his home here continuously thereafter, part of the time at Minnesota City and part of the time at one of the places on the Minnesota City Road. He is survived by a wife, and a sister, Mrs. David Whetstone of Minnesota City." (*Winona Republican Herald*; September 28, 1905)

### **Community Readers Discuss Dickens' *Great Expectations***

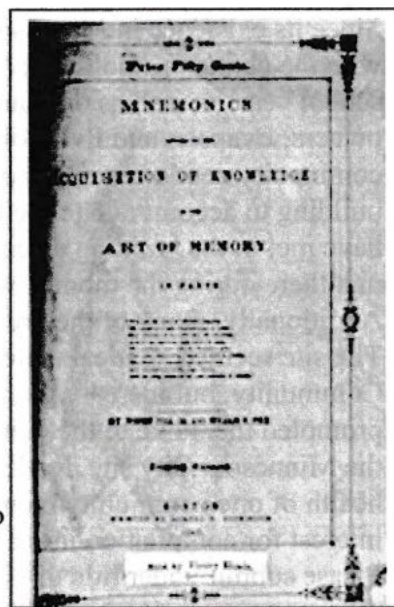
The 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens is good reason for the Minnesota City Community Readers choice of *Great Expectations*. English author Dickens wrote the novel in 1861, and it has been described as "a mystery, a psychodrama, and a tale of thwarted love" (Smithsonian, Feb. 2012). Many readers will have read at least one of Dickens novels—the list is long and includes *The Pickwick Papers*, responsible for the naming of Pickwick, MN, *A Christmas Carol*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and others. The story includes many of the details familiar to Dickens' readers—orphans, urchins, the grit of the Victorian era that was familiar to Dickens himself. Pip, the orphan of the story, is poor, is in love, and like most of Dickens' orphans, matures in the duration of the novel. Dickens own life was complicated by his children (they did not meet his *Great Expectations* for them), his marriage, his "affairs," poor health, but these did not deter other "world class" authors from recognizing his great talent in his lifetime, and this world recognition increased and continues. Celebrations are acknowledging this literary giant and include a Victorian Tea at the Pickwick Mill in Pickwick on June 3. Minnesota City Readers invites all newsletter readers to join them for the discussion of *Great Expectations* on May 17 at Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m., 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City.



Charles Dickens  
1812-1870  
(Wikipedia photo)

**In the Archives: *Mnemonics Applied to the Acquisition of Knowledge: or, The Art of Memory* by Robert Pike Jr. and William C. Pike**

The Pike brothers, Robert Jr. and William C., both Minnesota City residents for a number of the “early years,” authored this book on mnemonics and published it in 1845 just before they left Massachusetts to “come west.” A digitized copy is now in the MCHA archives. These individuals were without doubt, two of the most eccentric persons in the first settlers group, if judged by their interests and rhetoric. Some of us have worked with mnemonic devices—the *roygbiv* of the prism, the **Every Good Boy Does Fine** and **FACE**, the “there are no cats in the cemetery”—in case you still spell cemetery with an “a”. All these are mnemonic devices used by teachers and others to help us to learn by association. The Pikes begin their book with a daunting preface that includes this statement: “It is obvious to the most obtuse perception that some things are remembered more readily than others. Numbers, as they are usually given, are the most difficult things to remember and familiar objects the easiest. Is there any good reason why objects should be used instead of figures as the representatives of numbers? Suppose I use the animal fox as a representative of four, cannot I assign as good a reason for doing so as he who makes his mark in the following manner - 4?” Readers will hear more about Robert Pike Jr. when he is impersonated at the cemetery walk at Oakland on September 15. It was he who designed the glass-domed building intended to house the futuristic utopian community of the first settlers. It was William who murdered a publisher in Chicago and with his medium second wife was judged insane. It is not a far reach to call both of these gentlemen “eccentric.” (Some may quarrel with the “gentleman” descriptor).



(Reproduction of Book Cover)

**May 19 Minnesota City Day Schedule**

**8:00 a.m.-12:00 Dad’s Belgian Waffles:** Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street. Adults \$8; Kids 4-12, \$5; Kids 3 & under, Free. Proceeds for Youth Baseball and GBDRF. Carryouts Available.

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 First Baptist Ladies Aid Host Open House** at Historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street.

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 First Baptist Church. Walt Kelly. Intake of material related to “The Oaks.”**

**9:00 a.m.- 12:00 Open Archives. First Baptist Church. Minnesota City Artifacts and research.**

**September 15 MCHA Program**

**Oakland Cemetery Walk; Civil War Singer/Narrator**

**Thank you:** To St. Paul’s Parish which agreed to assist with space needs for the Minnesota City anniversary celebration. The changed timing of events removed the need for now, but the gracious offer is not forgotten.

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