

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 7, Issue 11: November, 2013

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

Mark your Calendars!

Saturday, November 9: Regular MCHA meeting; 9:30 a.m.; Former Minnesota City School, 115 Iowa Street

Thursday, November 21: Minnesota City Community Readers: Selection: *Sand County Almanac*, Leopold.; 6:30 p.m.; Former Minnesota City School, 115 Iowa Street

Thursday, November 28: Thanksgiving Day

Saturday, December 14: Annual Caroling/Holiday event; 6:00 p.m.; First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street.

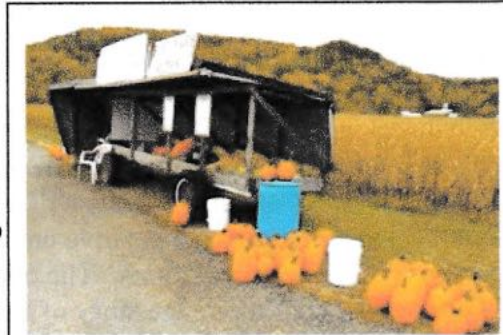
“Go Green!”

If you receive this letter in paper “hardcopy” and would like to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

Honor System “Farm Stands” Reflect Owners’ Values

Many readers will have noticed the produce stands of the area that are often unattended, and seeing or using several of them in a season, we are motivated to consider the values of a time and of people that have been altered dramatically by the commercial practices of the age. It is with some kind of relief that one concludes

“All is not lost.” At these unattended “markets,” prices are listed on boards or are marked on the vegetables themselves. Some pay vessels are locked containers; others are open jars or ones with removable covers. The board at the unattended stand pictured reads “Honor System: Put money in the box.” Some stands are visible through most of the year, changing wares from food products to décor including Christmas trees and bittersweet. The stands contribute a “feel good” backdrop for our daily lives.



Honor system roadside stand on Highway 61 north of Minneiska.

Spreading the Word

All books on these shelves are “giveaway” or for exchange. No money, no cards, no due dates, no names, no returns. Please take any books you want for yourself or friends. If you have books for “giveaway,” you may place them on these shelves. Open shop at all MCHA sponsored events or meetings in this building.

Spreading the Word: Books Available at Former Minnesota City School Building

Across the country, individuals and groups are making their “excess” of printed material available to others by building simple kiosks to protect them from weather and asking people to “just take the books.” Sharing the books has connected ideas and people. In Minnesota City, this sharing will now be possible at the former Minnesota City School, 115 Iowa Street. Currently, the books will be available only on the days when other events are occurring at the site. (Minnesota City Community Readers meet regularly at 6:30 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of the month, and the monthly MCHA meeting is on the second Saturday of the month from 9:30 to 11:00). If the book trade is swift, consideration will be given to an open hour an additional day of the week.. Readers are asked to spread the word about the availability of books. **In November the open days are November 9, 9:30-11:00 a.m. and November 21, 6:30-8:00 p.m.** Just come into the front door: books available on the shelf on the right.

Kevin Fenton Memoir *Leaving Rollingstone* Applauded by Critics

Many readers will have seen the news of the release of Rollingstone-Minnesota City Denzer Road resident Kevin Fenton's new memoir, *Leaving Rollingstone*. Kevin's first novel, *Merit Badges*, was read by a number of Minnesota City readers. Memoir readers sometimes experience difficulty being objective about literary merit of books, especially when the location and experiences are shared by the readers. Finding the use of street names in Winona for family names of key characters—Carimona, Sarnia, Sanborn—was one of Fenton's distracting techniques in *Merit Badges* for some "locals". Many of his details do amuse or/and connect with readers who gave a "merit badge" to Fenton, for his ability to portray the aspects of small town living in the '70s.

Fenton's current memoir received an outstanding accolade from Patricia Hampl, another Minnesota memoir writer: "*Leaving Rollingstone* is the most important memoir to come out of the Midwest (or anywhere) in years, an indispensable work of American autobiography." This is high praise. In Fenton's current novel/memoir *Leaving Rollingstone*, he tells truths, if not all the truths. The naming of many families and individuals will assure a large audience of area readers. On the surface, Rollingstone emerges as a positive environment for the Fenton family. Under the surface, other persons will have other stories. The church—the nuns, the priests, the students are all detailed by Fenton. This coming of age story of Kevin's is also a coming of age story of the Rollingstone community, recognizing what a community is and is not and what it can and cannot do. Minnesota City is described by Fenton as some kind of generalized degenerate dysfunctional environment—unrecognizable to many of us. The young Fenton is friendly with a small number of Denzer Road children and he sings the praises of a number of Winona teachers. Many positive individuals are named; most negative experience descriptions omit names. Thus, he will be able "to go home again"—to Rollingstone and Winona, if not to Minnesota City. (Gen O'Grady)

Civil War Enactors Acknowledge MCHA Event with History Interest

Speaking at the Hiawatha Valley Civil War Round Table discussion at the Winona County History Center on October 10, Bruce Arnoldy mentioned his attendance at the Minnesota City Historical Association reenactors' appearance at Oakland Cemetery in 2002. Bruce, his wife Mardell, and his grandson Briar spoke about reenactments on the 150th anniversary of Gettysburg. The Oakland appearance was part of the Minnesota City Sesquicentennial celebration.



Bruce Arnoldy (6 from left) observes reenactors at 2002 Sesquicentennial in Oakland Cemetery.

Jerry Apps *A Farm Story* Engages Audience

For some viewers, there were not many new ideas in the *Farm Story*, but perhaps it was that fact that invited nearly everyone of the audience at the First Baptist Church on Sunday, October 20, to offer their own reminiscences about the topics of home, work, school, fields, and change. The discussion led by David Eckert, MCHA leader, was long and energetic with nearly all viewers participating at one discussion break or another. Topics that evoked differences of experience included gender division of rural work, differences in farm practices including haying methods, differences in dates of various practices. Many agreed with Apps that a single most significant event in their lives was the date of electric power connections. The values of country living and work seemed to be shared; how these values transition into today's commercial, technological practices was left for another discussion.

THANK YOU:

- to Susan Althoff for **photographs** of a number of MCHA events for the archives.
- to all persons who attended the **Farm Story** viewing. The engaged audience was refreshing.
- to David Eckert, Marv O'Grady, and especially Don Evanson for the hours of work in **selecting and preparing equipment** to present our own "shows." Thank you to other MCHA members who approved the purchases and to member contributions which fund the expenses.
- To Lori Donehower and others for contribution of refreshments and to Sarah O'Grady for refreshment table décor at the Apps film event.
- To Evanson and Evanson for continued use of the school building for MCHA purposes.

Birth and Death Register: November Deaths with Burials in Oakland

Herman Rieth, white married male. Born March 14, 1836 in Germany. Occupation: Blacksmith. Father, Carl Rieth, Austria. Mother, Mary Giffein, Germany. Died on November 14, 1916 of Heart Failure.



Informant: Miss Emma Rieth . W. S. Milton, Registrar, J.E. Burke, Undertaker, E. M. McLaughlin, Coroner.

Minnie Schultz, Female, white, widowed, death from chronic myocarditis. Born in Germany March 27, 1862, died November 3, 1933. Names of parents unknown. Houseworker. Informant; Mrs. Delia Drussell. M. L. Donehower, Registrar. P. A. Mattison, attending M.D.. Carl Breitlow, undertaker.



Older than Minnesota City (1852), Thanksgiving Song (1844) Endures

"**Over the River and Through the Wood**" is a Thanksgiving song by Lydia Maria Child. Written originally as a poem, it appeared in her *Flowers for Children*, in 1844. The original title of the poem is, "A Boy's Thanksgiving Day". It celebrates her childhood memories of visiting her Grandfather's House. Lydia Maria Child was a novelist, journalist, teacher, and wrote extensively about the need to eliminate slavery.

It is sometimes presented with lines about Christmas, rather than Thanksgiving. For instance, the line "Hurrah for Thanksgiving Day!" becomes "Hurrah for Christmas Day!". Although the modern Thanksgiving holiday is not always associated with snow, New England in the early 19th century was enduring the Little Ice Age, a colder era with earlier winters. (Wikipedia)

The song continues to be adapted as the years pass, but most versions still include mention of both grandparents, anticipation, cold weather, and good food.

Over the river, and through the wood,
To Grandfather's house we go;
the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh
through the white and drifted snow...

Over the river, and through the wood—
oh, how the wind does blow!
It stings the toes and bites the nose
as over the ground we go.
Over the river, and through the wood—
and straight through the barnyard gate,
We seem to go extremely slow,
it is so hard to wait!

Over the river, and through the wood
now Grandmother's cap I spy!
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!



Area Hunter Enhances Minnesota Deer Hunting Rituals and Regulations with Stories

A *USA Today* October 25 article by Larry Anderson featured Deer Hunting in Minnesota. Nearly all Minnesotans, hunters or not, know the basic information related to the hunt. Anderson reminds about the familiarity of cultural practices to some that are still unknown to others of our own nation. These he said are the basics: A license is required, one buck may be shot, (more in managed areas), only portable stands may be used on public lands, register shot deer, blaze orange must be worn. These are the basics, but the enthusiasm and experience of the hunt was and is still delivered in the stories of the hunters to—well, to anyone who will listen. One of these great story tellers was August Jilk (dec. 2005), Stockton Valley, interviewed in 2002 by Riverway Learning Community Students for *Old Wise Tales*.

“And then came the deer hunting stories. The mounts on the walls in the Jilk home served as memory provokers. ‘The first deer I ever saw--there weren’t always deer around here. Father Tibesar had deer in a pen--we thought some of those deer got out, and that’s where deer got started here. I was on the home farm. (Stockton Valley). I went around the bluff to get the cows in to milk in the morning. Our land ran around the hill toward Steinbauers--where the old Brick School House used to be--here I found the cows. There was a deer laying next to them. First deer I saw in my life. And we heard later--we figured someone cut the fence at the priest’s, and they got out. And then later, they brought some from up north. I don’t know how they really got started in this area’....”

“This one here, that was shot with a shotgun. I always tell everyone I cheated on getting that deer. That particular morning it was blowing, pretty much straight from the west. I went around the hill over here. I thought, I’m going to walk right up this point, because it was pretty cold you know. They’ll be coming down to get out of the wind. And I got up there, pretty well on top of the hill. I couldn’t figure out which of the hills to stand on. Finally I got way up on top. Here I see this buck. The thing of it was, the sun was on my back, but it was shining in his eyes; that’s why I say I cheated him. I shot and he went right down.”

“Asked whether he preferred bow hunting or shot gun hunting, Augie said, ‘Well, I don’t know. I really used to love bow hunting. My boys all hunt with guns here now and that’s how I got going. I’m thinking about going bow and arrow again this fall because I like to get in on the best part of the mating season, or the so-called ‘rut’. That’s when I used to like to hunt. I shot a lot of deer with bow and arrow, more than with guns, but with a bow you got to be close. With me, 20 yards was my favorite shot. But the best shot I ever made was over in Wisconsin. I was hunting both states that year, and I went out early in the morning and there was fresh snow on the ground. And there were two deer tracks going up the valley and I started following them, and I thought ‘this is no good to follow them--it’s going to scare em’. So anyway, I thought, I’m going to take a chance and walk up the hill here. Walked up the hill, got about halfway up the hill and I don’t know what it was, must have been a dog, I heard a farmer’s dog--scared em, and there they came toward me and the buck was quite away up the hill. He was out of range. But the doe was--I stepped it off later--fifty yards away and running. I up and shot and I couldn’t believe it. She ran about half a block I guess. It was across a ditch. I thought she acted kind of funny you know. I waited awhile and walked up the ditch and she lay dead--shot through the heart--a running shot at fifty yards through the heart is luck.”

“There are a lot of stories--I goofed up--did the wrong thing. When the deer is there, you make one slip, forget it. I could write a book on all the deer hunts I had.” (*Old Wise Tales*, pp.39-44)