

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 7, Issue 12: December, 2013

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

## Mark your Calendars!

December 4  
GBDRF Annual Meeting and Holiday party; 5:30 p.m.  
35 Harbor Drive.

December 7  
MCHA meeting;  
9:30 a.m.  
115 Iowa Street

December 12:  
Thursday. Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30 p.m.;  
115 Iowa Street;  
Selection: Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*

December 14:  
Saturday. MCHA Community Caroling;  
6:00 p.m.;  
140 Mill Street

MAY 17, 2014  
Saturday.  
Minnesota City Day!

### **“Go Green!”**

If you received this in paper form and would like it by email, please call 689-2440.

## **Annual Minnesota City Historical Association Caroling Event: Saturday, Dec. 14 6:00 p.m. 140 Mill Street Invite Friends and Family!**

### **Community Celebration on Saturday, December 14, 6:00 p.m.: Horse Drawn Wagon Rides, Caroling, Entertainment, Food.**

At the November 9 meeting of the MCHA suggestions were made for programming for the December 14 Caroling event. These suggestions need readers' assistance, ASAP.

**1. Photos are requested immediately for use in a slide show.** Photos can depict winter, holiday, Christmas events in Minnesota City and any/all neighboring areas.. These can be home photos, school, community, church scenes. **Photos can be sent to Minnesota City Historical Association, Box 21, Minnesota City, 55959.**

Examples: photos of skating behind the fire dept., of school or church Christmas programs? Family Christmas, winter scenes? **All photos that are submitted will be scanned and returned unless senders indicate that they may be kept for the archives.**

**2. Anyone who wishes is welcome to contribute a plate of “treats” for the refreshment table.** Last year some persons contributed recipes of their contribution and the history of the “treat” in their holiday. Interesting information.

In advance, MCHA expresses gratitude to the Maus family. Without the horse drawn wagon rides, this might be a “routine” kind of holiday celebration. Readers are invited to think of this as a community event; any way you want to participate will be welcome.



Rebecca Weiss distributes gift bags to children: December, 2012 Caroling Event

### **Flood Photos Contributed to Archives**

Tim Fox, East Burns Valley, Winona, has contributed three photos to the MCHA archives. The photos were taken following the 1905 flood. They are photos not currently in the archives files, either copied or original. They depict flood damage at the Mill Pond, at the Power Plant, and the area parallel to Minnesota Street, with a view of several homes and the Methodist Church. These are valuable additions to the files on one of the many floods in Minnesota City, and new photos for consideration of Minnesota City historians. The photos will be available for viewing at all open archives hours, the next being on December 14 following the caroling event. **MCHA is very grateful to Tim Fox** for his initiative in calling about these photos, and for the contribution of them to MCHA.

### MCHA extends Sympathy to

- Family and friends of Alanson "Slim" Hamernik, 87, who died on Wednesday, October 30 in Winona. (brother of Jackie Denzer)
- Family and friends of "Pat" Ellen Rothering (Wise), 75, who died on Wednesday, Oct. 30 at her home in Minnesota City.
- Family and friends of LaVern Rothering, 75, who died on Sunday, November 10 (eleven days following the death of wife Pat).
- Family and friends of Roy Lloyd and Dora Lloyd Loveline, (Former Minnesota City residents who resided near Rolbiecki's farm, in Deering Valley, and Stockton Valley before moving out of the area.) Roy was 85 when he died on Tuesday, November 5 in Big Bend, WI. He was born in Winona, Dora, 89, died on Oct. 16, in Onamia, MN. (Information from Janet Seabern).
- Family and friends of Joyce Buggs, 86, of Minnesota City, who died on Saturday, November 23.
- Family and friends of Neil Denzer, 86, Minnesota City, who died on Monday, November 4. (See Page 3)

### MCHA Thanks

- Tim Fox, East Burns Valley, Winona, for 1905 Flood Photos for the archives. (See Page 1)

### MCHA Congratulates

- Howard and Gladys Volkart on recent birthdays. Howard was 95 on Thanksgiving! Gladys is 90. MCHA wishes them both good health in the years ahead.

### Free Library Movement Increases Reading Opportunities

The *Variety* section of the November 13 *Minneapolis Tribune* carried a lengthy article on the Little Free Library movement started in 2009 by Todd Bol in Hudson, Wisconsin to honor his mother. At this time there are some 12,000 of these little libraries for lending and contribution around the world. Over 1000 of them are in Minnesota. The Minnesota City Book Shelf is now one of these. As described in the November newsletter, its "mission" matches Bol's—to connect people within communities and expand "the literary." **Open hours for the shelves at 115 Iowa Street for the month of December are Saturday, December 7, 9:30-11:00 and Thursday, December 12, 6:30-8:00 p.m.** Remember, no sign ups, no late fees or overdues—just take a book—or several!



Book Give Away Library at 115 Iowa Street

### Calendar Note

If you have anything to post on the Website calendar: meetings, reunions, birthdays, other significant dates, please email them to [mgogrady@embarqmail.com](mailto:mgogrady@embarqmail.com)

### Standing Invitations:

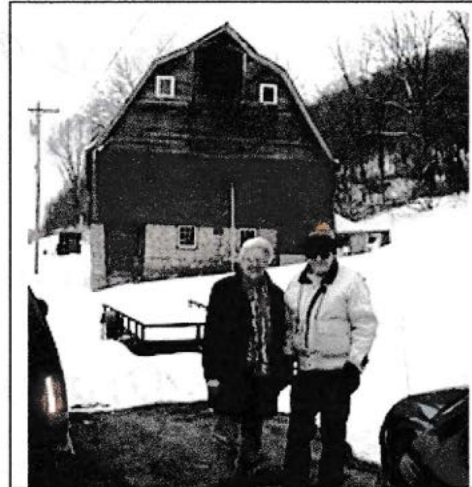
- to attend regular meetings of MCHA. These meetings are held at 140 Mill Street. In cold weather months, generally October to May these are held at the former school building.
- to respond to newsletter content. Please send additions, corrections, suggestions, etc. to [mgogrady@embarqmail.com](mailto:mgogrady@embarqmail.com).
- **Writers of regular columns would be welcomed.** These might include monthly columns on area businesses, churches, schools, organizations or other relevant topics on the area and/or our history.

## Neil Denzer: An Uncommon Historian

When the plan for organizing an historical Association was being discussed following the 2002 sesquicentennial celebration, one of the most enthusiastic, albeit quiet presences of the discussions was Neil Denzer. He supported finding a place—a large space where the history of Minnesota City—his history—could be appreciated through artifacts that represented the area and individuals. A “large space” was not secured (Neil had in mind the former Oaks), but he continued his interest in Association progress and contributed many artifacts. In the display cabinet at 140 Mill Street several of these can currently be viewed--Neil’s hat from the Minnesota City Fire Department, a Native American statue he had purchased at the Cisewski-Wockenfuss Garage auction, a “cat o’ nine tails.” When the renovation of rooms in the Baptist Church was completed for the archives, Neil asked if the Association was interested in his paintings of the Denzer farmsteads (both those of John and Fred) for display. Of course, the answer was yes, and two paintings were immediately hung. The largest, poignantly, of Neil’s home farm, is hung in the room where a cabinet of the Baptist First Ladies Aid carries a sign, *Made by George Denzer*, Neil’s brother. The information about Neil’s paintings had been shared with Riverway students who interviewed him in 2002. Hearing him talk about Diego Rivera was as revelatory about him as it was about the surprised listeners. Will Weaver, Minnesota author, describes the rise and fall of a barn in his short story for the book *Barns of Minnesota*. The main character’s understanding of the role of the barn in a farm and farm family’s life reminds of Neil’s detailed descriptions in words and paint of the barns of the Burley/Denzer land.

Indeed, much history of the Denzer family was lived in the First Baptist Church and on the farm land on both sides of Highway 61, some still called Denzer bottoms. In 2008, Neil accompanied Marv and Gen O’Grady on a walking tour of some of this land. His memory of personal and area history was revealed in his discussion of Native American artifacts, the farmland, the road culverts, the campground of the gypsies who came for short stays, took “things,” and did not mix with the farmers. Neil’s family (seven brothers and one sister) grew cabbage, melons, cucumbers, lots of vegetables, took them to a flatbed truck by the railroad (current location of Canton Mills). They were paid \$3.00 a ton for cabbage—a ton was a box load. Without verbalizing the connections, conversation with Neil flowed easily from land to people to things.

Clare and family and many readers know “the rest of the story” of Neil’s life, with much more detail than we do. The last “discussion” we had with Neil was when he and Clare came to confer on details and stories about his mother Esther’s life, in preparation for the Oakland Cemetery Walk in September, 2012. In these conversations, a respectful attitude to people and land and history of the area emerged from Neil’s comments. We are printing a photo of Neil—many people will remember that when photos were taken, he often disappeared from the site. On this day, he would agree to be photographed only with another in the picture. This is how we will remember Neil, with quiet pride and detailed memory and a wish to share both about the buildings and the life on the home farm; he was certain the barn would be going down soon. When we drove by on Highway 61 on the way to Neil’s funeral, I remarked, “well, he didn’t have to hear or see it fall.” I was glad for that. *Gen O’Grady*



Neil Denzer and Gen O’Grady at one of the barns on former John Denzer farm (February, 2008; photo Marv O’Grady)



**MCHA**

*Annual All Community*

# *Caroling Event*

*December 14, 2013 - 6:00 p.m.*

*First Baptist Church and  
MCHA Archives*

*140 Mill Street*

*Minnesota City, Minnesota*

*Horse Drawn Wagon Rides, Caroling,  
Children's Performance, Winter Photo  
Show, Refreshments*



*Please attend! Bring a friend!*