

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 6, Issue 6: June, 2012

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

## Mark your calendars!

**June 9** Regular MCHA meeting; 9:30 a.m.; Archives, 140 Mill Street

**June 21** Minnesota City Community Readers; 6:30 p.m.; 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City.  
Selection: *deTocqueville: Democracy in America*

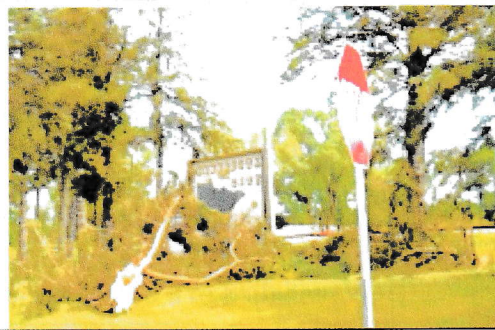
**June 24:** Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Garden Tour (see article, page 2, for locations)

**Coming Events:**  
**July 29:** GBDRF Climatology Round Table: Speaker, Peter Boulay

**September 15**  
**Oakland Cemetery Walk**  
**Civil War Songs:**  
**Bob Welch**

**Go “Green”!**  
If you receive this newsletter in paper form and would prefer to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

## **May 24 High Winds Inflict Tree and Home Damage in Minnesota City**



May 24 Storm Damage (O’Grady photo)

“Moderate damage” is the description applied by local media to the property damage caused by the winds and rain on Thursday, May 24 in Minnesota City. Shingles were blown off some homes and trees were snapped. Homes reported on in the Winona Daily News included Florin, Block, Mrozek, and Cisewski.

By Friday much of the debris had been cleared. Trees were snapped on two sites of historic interest –the house at the corner of Harbor Drive and Wenonah Drive believed to be the site of the first school in Winona County, and at the site of the Minnesota City Historical marker on Bridge Street placed by MCHA recalling the founding of the City in

## **Abbreviated May 19 Minnesota City Day Feeds and Informs Visitors**

Most of the visitors to the 160<sup>th</sup> commemoration of Minnesota City Day’s founding found the site with little difficulty -- less difficulty than the first finding--but the blocked off roads and construction equipment made it clear that usual sites for the celebration, including the city park, were not available. The successful Belgian Waffle breakfast sponsored by Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) will benefit the ball teams and GBDRF according to Chair Bryceson Maus. Maus expressed gratitude to MCHA and Minnesota City Community for supporting the event. 210 tickets were sold. The open house at the historic First Baptist Church hosted by the First Baptist Ladies Aid, conversations with Walt Kelly related to the OAKS, and the open house at the Archives drew a large number of visitors. The Archives used the occasion to display new acquisitions to their holdings, and also to display materials related to the backgrounds of the seven people who will be featured in the cemetery walk in Oakland Cemetery on September 15.

According to City Clerk Lori Donehower, the Wastewater Treatment Plant should be up and running in early July, although it will take some time for enough people to get hooked up so that the plant function can be assessed. Restoration of the park and streets will follow.

**Archival Additions**

- Information on Denzer family history from Claire Denzer;
- An Oaks post card from Gale Hill sent to him from Carl Gegenfurtner, an owner of the Oaks following the death of Chef Kelly;
- Intact Vase/Pottery recovered by Kelvin Penrod

**Thank You to:**

- Donna and Betsy Friesen for keeping the lawn and flowers of the property looking so attractive and for providing refreshments for many meetings.
- All First Baptist Ladies who hosted the recent open house, especially Jean Gardner and Gladys Church.
- Marianne Mastenbrook for the photo of a son of Samuel Loudon.

**MCHA Extends Sympathy:** to the families and friends of Lester and Joan Stewart Denzer. Lester, age 90, died on May 12 in Winona, and Joan, age 80, died on May 18, also at Lake Winona Manor. Joan’s brother David farms the Stewart “home place” off Highway 248. Both Lester and Joan were lifelong area residents. Lester’s parents were Millie Whetstone and Fred Denzer, and Joan’s parents were Jim Stewart and Gertrude Martin. The parents, as well as Lester and Joan, farmed land near Minnesota City. Their son Wayne died in a tractor accident on the farm.

**Civil War Connections in Minnesota City: R.J. Duncan Dies at 78**

The Winona Republican-Herald of March 4, 1919 carried this report. “Robert J. Duncan, pioneer in the milk and cream business in Winona, who operated a large dairy farm on Minnesota City road for thirty four years, and who for the last nine years living a retired life in Winona, died this afternoon (March 4) in Winona.... Robert J. Duncan was born at Stockton, Chautauqua County, New York, October 16, 1840. In the spring of 1858 he came west with his parents and settled on a farm in the township of Fremont, Winona County.... A year later Mr. Duncan returned to New York and at the outbreak of the Civil war was the first man in Stockton to enlist in the Corp. F, Third New York volunteers infantry. Following a severe attack of typhoid, he was discharged from the army on April 19, 1862. In 1862 Mr. Duncan married Mary Kelly, and after her death in 1875 married her sister, Helen C. Kelly, who survives him. In 1869, to better his health by outdoor living, Mr. Duncan returned to Winona County and took possession of the 80 acre farm on the Minnesota City Road. The milk and cream business he built up there proved profitable and he built a comfortable home and modern farm buildings.”

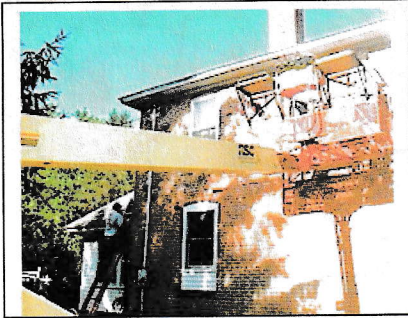
**Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Sponsors June 24 Garden Tour**

Gardens and yards destroyed in the flash flood of 2007 will be featured in a garden tour sponsored by GBDRF on June 24. Included are the Nelson garden located at the Arches, Green Space with native grasses in Stockton, the Greethurst hillside garden, Mertes rock garden, Home and Community Options rain forest in the Saehler/Anderson location, and the Smith family front yard in Minnesota City. Tickets for the tour are \$10.00 and are available from GBDRF Board members, Minnesota City Kwik Trip, and the Stockton Clerk’s Office.

**Readers Group Summer Hiatus**

Minnesota City Community Readers do not meet in the months of July and August. New members are invited to join the group for the September meeting. Lori Donehower, Reading Group member, secures books for the group at no cost. Readers suggest titles. Books selected for the new year include September: Homer-- *The Odyssey*; October: Fuentes-- *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, and November: *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese. There are no dues for the group; discussions are wide ranging, respectful, and dynamic. Anyone with interest in ideas or who just enjoys literature will find the group beneficial and enjoyable. Discussions last approximately an hour and a half.

## Historic Minnesota City Home Undergoes Tuck Pointing Repair



The Althoff Home (Althoff photo)

Most of us have probably never checked the website of the Masonry Advisory Council, but if one is interested in the work being done on Susan Althoff's home on Harbor Drive, the site will answer questions and explain observations about the tuck pointing process being used by the Scharmer Construction Company for the repair work. The process will help preserve this historic Minnesota City Building.

The Whetstone home is on land originally settled in 1856 by Hiram and Mary Campbell who were members of the Western Farm and Village Association. They are credited with having the first apple orchards in Winona County. The home site was purchased by David and Nancy Parker Whetstone in 1882. There are no records of the building of the house, but the Minnesota Historical Society dates it from 1880 to 1890. The outside house walls are fifteen inches thick, and one inside wall facing east and west is 10 inches thick—a design to accommodate two families. Silas Whetstone and Ida (Turner) bought the farm from David Whetstone Jr. in 1910. Henry, son of Silas, and his wife Alvina (Denzer) became the next owners of the homestead in 1924. Glenn, one of three sons (brothers Donald and Allen), and his wife, Eleanor (Stettbacher), purchased the house in 1963. By this time the farm land had been sold; the home now occupies a two acre site. Daughter Susan Althoff and Robert Althoff purchased the home in 1973. The home was designated as the neighborhood fallout shelter during the cold war era. On May 17, 2008, the home was marked with a historical plaque by the Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA).

The work on the house is being completed by Scharmer and Sons, Inc. who specialize in brick and stone masonry work. Masons who still do tuck pointing, except for large projects are scarce. Dan Scharmer "learned masonry from Eischen, a Winona cement worker". Interestingly, three Whetstone brothers, Donald, Glenn and Allen were trained in masonry. It was Donald's career. Dan Scharmer Jr., Gunderson addition, helped with the project. The tuckpointing process, a valuable contribution to historic preservation, is often assisted by architectural reclamation companies. (Information contributed by Susan Althoff).



Daniel Scharmer tuck points on the Althoff Home. (O'Grady photo)

## Train Derailment At Minneiska



Derailed Train Car (O'Grady photo)

"The Winona County Sheriff's Department received a call of a train derailment at about 7:15 p.m. Saturday, May 19, 2012, in Minneiska, Minn. One railcar was completely off the tracks and two others were damaged on the southbound Canadian Pacific train, blocking railroad traffic. No injuries were reported at the scene. Goodview Police, Rollingstone Fire and the state patrol assisted on the call." *Winona Daily News, May 20.* Had the car derailed slightly further south, it appears that fishermen's access from the Minneiska ramp would have been blocked. There were no breaks in the line.

## Riverway Director Retirement Precedes Charter School Move to New Location in Winona

Both the move of Riverway Learning Community to a new location at Winona Crossings in Winona and the announcement of the retirement of Community Director Laurie Director are historical events, the duration of the charter school and of Laurie Krause both having endured at this location since 1999. Many MCHA members will have read the Winona Post edition of May 19 where Laurie referenced the rewarding and challenging nature of the experience. One particularly unique feature of the Community was its effort to grow much of its own food program products. Many nutritionists have long believed that good food for students contributes to all around health – thereby improving behavior as well as learning ability. From its beginning the school has exhibited environmental awareness in its experiences, essential to sponsorship by Audubon Center of the North Woods at Sandstone, Minnesota. Some tenets of the original charter that were challenged by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) included wider ranged multi age classrooms. Most groups now are two year specific. Emphasis on the arts on site declined as space needs augmented with the increased enrollment. Riverway developed partnerships with some local organizations to provide these experiences.



Chickens at Riverway Learning Community contributed eggs and meat to the food program. (O'Grady photo)

## Minnesota City News in 1900 (May 28)

“Dry and Dusty—rain needed badly.

Never was such a slaughter of suckers in the creek here as this season. As many as five hundred are forked out or speared in one day. Catfish are a good crop.

W.R. Stewart has passed his eighty second milestone, and last week he walked ten miles each day and sheared fifty two sheep in three days, and he started Thursday with Alva Burley for the northern part of the State to look for a homestead. He wished to begin life over again.

The church and Sunday School collection for the India famine sufferers was nearly \$6. Minnesota City always responds to calls for the needy.

Grandmother Rowley, eighty five years of age, is visiting her granddaughter, Mrs. C. F Thomas. The old lady is hale and hearty.

Mrs. L.G. Smith and daughter and Miss Gertrude Smith of Tower City who have been visiting Mrs. Chapman have left for an extended Eastern trip.”

*(The Daily Republican)*

*Anyone who wishes to be a member of the Association is invited to send \$15.00 to MCHA, P.O. Box 21, Minnesota City, MN, 55959. All monies will be used to support Association goals.*

*Separate or additional donations may also be sent to the above address.*

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.