

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 8, Issue 5: May, 2014

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

Mark your Calendars!

May 10: Oakland Cemetery Work Day; 8:00 a.m.

May 10: MCHA Minnesota City Day Planning at Archives; 140 Mill Street, Mn. City; 9:30 a.m.

May 17:
Minnesota City Day, 162nd Anniversary of Founding (See Page 1, 2 and 4)

May 22:
Minnesota City Community Readers; 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City School Building; 6:30 p.m.; Selection: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

May 22: Open Book Shelf; 6:30-8:00 p.m.; Minnesota City School Building, 115 Iowa Street

“Go Green!”

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

Sat., May 17, 2014 Minnesota City Day Focuses on Food, Family History and Founders' Contributions : Waffles, Quilts, Genealogy, Railroads, and Founders' Photos

GBDRF (Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund) has again organized the food event for Minnesota City Day with their sponsorship, together with the Minnesota City First Responders, of the **Dad's Belgian Waffle Breakfast**. The breakfast will again be held at St. Paul's Catholic Church Hall from 8:30-11:30. **Tickets can be purchased from anyone on the GBDRF Board, Mn. City First Responders, or at the door the day of the event.** Tickets are \$8.00 for adults, \$5.00 for age 4-12, and 3 and under are free. First Responders, existing in Minnesota City from around the mid 1980s, according to Kelvin Penrod, includes individuals who receive extensive pre-service training with 160 hours of training for certification. These individuals respond to emergencies of all kinds—health, accident, fire and others. First responders are often associated with Fire Departments, as is the case in Minnesota City, but operate independently in villages without fire departments, as is the case in Stockton.



One section of the Minnesota City Heritage Quilt

The women of **St. Paul's Parish Quilting Group** will display their quilts in the church hall during the Waffle Breakfast. The quilts will be for sale. According to Riverway student interviews in 2002, notable Minnesota City quilters are Clare Denzer, Judith Hohensee and Jackie Denzer. When Judy Hohensee's mother, Irene Merchlewitz, died this past spring, her quilting at St. Paul's was listed as one of her pastimes. These women have quilted from thirty five to fifty five years. The women told students that they enjoyed visiting with each other while quilting, giving quilts to the poor, to persons who have had fires or floods, seeing the finished quilts, and the

anticipation of not knowing what the quilts will look like when completed. The women enjoy working with the material, the beauty of the quilts and the time with friends. MCHA remains impressed with the Heritage Quilt constructed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Minnesota City. This quilt will be displayed on May 17, and squares will again be available for persons to submit portraits or handwork representing their own homes for use in a second Heritage Quilt. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 – See Minnesota City Day**

MCHA Extends Gratitude to St. Paul's Parish for use of the Hall and for participation in the Minnesota City Day events. Thank you!

Minnesota City Day (continued from page 2)



A Previous Andrea Church Genealogy Session

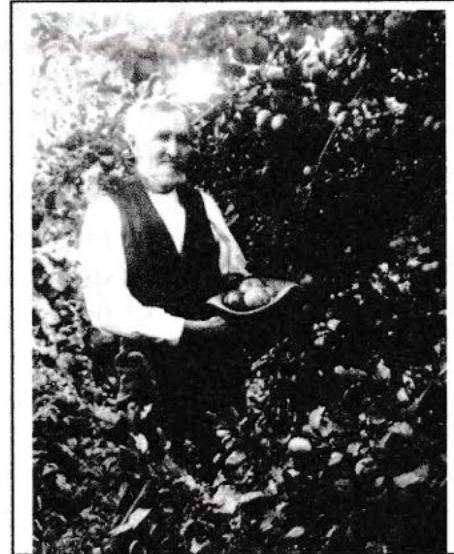
Andrea Church, Genealogy Researcher, will be at **The Archives** from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to assist persons in their own heritage pursuits. **Researchers are invited to bring their own laptops. WiFi and some laptops will be available.** Andrea, with the help of her father, Roger, and other family members has researched the Church family history from its origins in the USA. Andrea has presented research materials and search skills at previous MCHA events.

A visit to **The Archives, 140 Mill Street**, will provide the opportunity

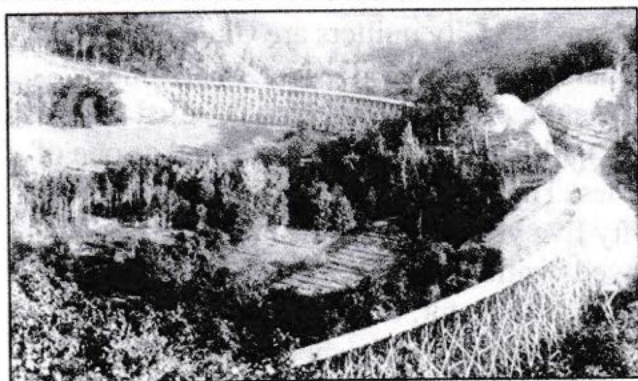
to view the **original photos of a number of the First Founders of Minnesota City, members of the Western Farm and Village Association.** MCHA thanks Bob Bambenek, president of the Old Settlers Association, Opal Fitch and Vic Gardner, Pickwick Mill Association personnel, for making this showing possible. The mill is administered as an historic site by Pickwick Mill Inc., a privately funded, non-profit organization.

The Archives will be open for viewing materials and for researching from materials available. Research results related to some of the original Western Farm and Village settlers will be available.

Don Evanson, following in the footsteps of Erik Brom and his father Leo, has recently spearheaded a group of **railroad aficionados in research and experience of the Winona and Southwestern Railroad.** He has been in discussion with some of the landowners of the abandoned R.O.W. of the



Legislator, Farmer, blacksmith, O.M. Lord in his orchard at Minnesota City.



The two Bear Creek bridges formed a near perfect horseshoe as they framed the valley between Rollingstone and Altura. (St. Charles Press photo)

Winona & Southwestern in Bear Creek Valley, and secured some of the permission necessary to hike the R.O.W. which is about a one and a half mile hike from the end of P and M Drive in the valley up to Skunk Hollow Road east of Altura. The Bear Creek Quarry was just east of Skunk Hollow Road. The interest group has viewed the R.O.W. location down through the lower valley, including Rupprecht's Valley that Bear Creek ties into, and was the location of the RR's "Piedmont Station." Persons interested in their findings are invited to join in this conversation with Don Evanson at the school building at 9:30 through 11:00 on Minnesota City Day.

Addition: Sharon Anderson Nako, and family members of William Streng have contributed additional information about the ancestry of William Streng who was an orphan train rider to Winona. Streng, born in 1897 in New York (according to Winona Daily News obituary) died in 1993. Streng farmed in Stockton Valley until 1950 at which time he moved to Winona. His son Duane Streng resides at the Sharon Nako home. This contributed information will be filed in the MCHA archives.

Correction: The April newsletter carried biographical information about Stanley Whetstone, misstating his middle name as George. Stan's middle name is Charles.

MCHA Congratulates --

Rev. William Kulas, pastor of St. Paul's Parish, on the 40th anniversary of his ordination. A Mass to celebrate the occasion will be said at 10:30 a.m. on May 18 in the Holy Trinity Church in Rollingstone with a reception to follow.

MCHA Thanks --

- **Rollingstone Township** for \$300.00 donation to MCHA authorized at the annual meeting on March 11, 2014. These funds will be added to the General Fund Balance of the Association which is used for archival purchases (equipment, books) and for newsletter production including mailing costs.
- **Howard Volkart and Barbara Pierce** for copies of the mock wedding photo taken at the 1941 community event in Minnesota City.
- **The family of Mabel Spaag Nagle** for the TV which has been placed at the archives for use in presentations (Mabel died at Winona Manor on March 15).

MCHA extends sympathy --

- To the family and friends of Jerome Daniel, 71, Stockton, Mn, who died on April 10 at his home.
- To the family and friends of Milton Weimer, 89, long time Rollingstone Township Farmer. Milton died on Sunday, April 27 in Winona.

Maxine Church Spaag Details Minnesota City Childhood in the 1930s and 1940s: *Memories* by Maxine Church Spaag

Growing up in Minnesota City during the 1930's and early 1940's was far different from the way the youngsters of today are raised. Back then there were no tvs, or cell phones [heck, most people didn't even have a telephone in their homes] or iPads or Kindles or computers. So what did we do to occupy our time when we weren't in school? Well, lots of activities that would no doubt have young people of today saying "Boring!" But to those of us of the Greatest Generation they were fun and entertaining.

If one of the teenagers had a birthday, we would all go to that person's house in the evening and play cards, 500 mostly. Those who didn't know how to play cards would play bunco, a dice game, in the kitchen. We'd all bring food – sandwiches, cake, chips, to eat at the end of the evening. The host family would provide coffee and lemonade. Sometimes a group would get together and decide to put on a play. Mrs. Elsie [Roy] Tschumper could usually be persuaded to direct the production. I remember that in one of the plays, I had the part of a black maid who was always worrying about the arrival of the 11:38 train. I'm sure that my attempt at a southern accent was very amusing to the audience. Shirley and Janice Tschumper, Argene Tschumper, and some of the Sandsteads could always be counted on to be in the plays. One time there was a square dance as part of the play, and Lester Spaag was my partner. Little did we know that we would later be partners in life!

One year several of my cousins, Argene Tschumper and Bill Saehler and my brother Curtis and I decided to form a band so that we could play at various functions in the community. Our first gig was for the December PTA. It didn't go over very well, as the rest of us couldn't hear Argene tapping his foot to get us started on the first song. I'm sure the audience found it amusing, but we were very embarrassed. That was our first and last gig.

In the winter the Fire Department would flood a rink below the firehouse that we kids could skate on at night. It was lighted and we could warm up in the basement of the firehouse if we got cold. The boys would play hockey for a while and then we would have free skating.

Going to the movies on Saturday afternoons was a weekly outing for a lot of us. There was always a newsreel, a cartoon and a serial story that kept us on the edges of our seats as it left us wanting to see the next week's episode. The main movie was almost always a western – Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers were favorites – and it only cost 10 cents to see the movie.

We were a very active group of kids, as we played softball, running games like Andy Over, and went swimming in the creek in the summer, as well as roller skating and playing hopscotch and jumping rope. In the winter we went ice skating and sliding down the schoolhouse hill on our sleds, plus WALKING. We walked everywhere – not realizing the benefit of exercising but just to get where we wanted to go. We all had chores to do to help out at home as well so we never had time to whine to our parents "I'm bored". That word was not in our vocabulary back in our childhood days in Minnesota City in the 1930's and 40's .



Maxine, Curtis, and Roger Church

Minnesota City Day:

May 17, 2014

At St. Paul's Parish Hall:

8:30-11:30 Dad's Belgian Waffle Breakfast (GBDRF)

9:00-11:30 Quilting Exhibit

At MCHA Archives, 140 Mill Street

9:00-11:00 Genealogy Research Assistance; Andrea Church

9:00: 11:30 Founders Photo Display

9:00: 11:30 First Baptist Historic Church Open House

At Minnesota City School Building:

*9:30-11:00 Conversation: Winona and Southwestern Railroad
in Bear Creek; Don Evanson et al*

9:00-11:00 Book Give Away

9:00-11:00 Tape: "Minnesota City Walking Tour" (A. Cisewski)