

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 8, Issue 8: September, 2014

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

## **Mark your Calendars!**

**September 7:** Sunday;  
Lydia Singer’s 100<sup>th</sup>  
birthday Party; Winona  
Veterans’ Center, 302  
East Sarnia; 12:00 p.m.

**September 7:** Sunday;  
Annual Summer Service;  
First Baptist Church, 140  
Mill Street, Minnesota  
City; 2:00 p.m.

**September 13:**  
Saturday; Monthly  
MCHA Meeting;  
Archives, 140 Mill Street,  
Minnesota City; 9:30 a.m.

**September 25:** Thursday;  
Minnesota City  
Community Readers; 115  
Iowa Street; 6:30 p.m.;  
Selection: *Anna  
Karenina*, Tolstoy.

**September 25:**  
Thursday; Minnesota  
City Book Shelf Open;  
115 Iowa Street; 6:30-  
8:00 p.m.

**October 19:** Sunday;  
Community Wedding  
Celebration; Elks Lodge,  
4540 N. Service Drive,  
Goodview; 3:00-7:30p.m.

**December 13:** Saturday;  
Community Caroling;  
First Baptist Church  
/MCHA Archives; 140  
Mill Street; 6:00 p.m.

### **“Go Green!”**

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

## **Change of Date: First Baptist Ladies Aid Summer Service September 7**

The previously announced date of September 21 for the Annual service at the First Baptist in Minnesota City, 140 Mill Street, has been changed to **September 7 at 2:00 p.m.** Please announce this change to family and friends. Open to the public, the service includes hymn singing, Pastor Hudson’s comments, remarks by First Ladies Organizers and MCHA representatives, and refreshments. The service annually recalls the long history and significance of the church in Minnesota City, and attendees often include persons who were members of the church when it was an active church. This year’s attendees will have the opportunity to view a video in planning stages to be used by the First Baptist Ladies Aid for fundraising for church restoration.

## **Lydia “Pearl” Singer Birthday Gathering September 7**

On September 7, many family members and friends of Pearl Singer will gather at the Winona Veterans’ Center to celebrate her life.

In 2002, Sierra and Jessica Singer, granddaughters of Pearl Singer, were assigned the interview of their grandmother for an oral history project of Riverway Learning Community. As Pearl nears the 100<sup>th</sup> year of her life, the information constitutes a generous helping of wisdom about Minnesota City and her life for her friends and family. Pearl’s attitude about many aspects of her life seems to have been a “make the best of what you have—and you have a lot” approach.

Children “in those days,” according to Pearl, made their own fun. They went sleigh riding at night using a team of horses. Sometimes a bunch of kids would just get together and go walking for as far as four miles or more. They liked to climb the hills. Everyday activities were housework and play. Pearl walked with her sister, went to the creek, and visited friends. They had no car, no TV of course, no radio, really, no source of amusement in the house. “There was a swinging foot bridge with chicken wire on the sides so you wouldn’t fall off,” remembered Pearl. “We used to rock it after school. One kid went and rode his horse across it on a dare. We used to also go horseback riding in the moonlight.” In later years, Pearl raised her children on land near where she grew up herself. “It was nice; the kids got into some mischief, but ordinarily just played around, went up by the hills and down by the river. They did a lot of fishing and had a lot of fun doing it.” Pearl’s grandkids did the same.

Holidays weren’t much different than other days. Christmas was like every other day; you didn’t get anything special, “maybe something small, or somewhat of a nice meal. “Fourth of July was always fun; they had fireworks, people baked pies, and they cooked pig. It was the best day of the year.”

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## **SINGER** Continued from page 1

Asked about clothing styles, Pearl said they wore long underwear and stockings in the winter. They hated them and the way they bunched up under their pants. They didn't have snow pants or boots. "You had two dresses, one that you were wearing and one that you were washing," Pearl said. Many people used flour sacks for their underclothes, sheets, and dresses. After while, they came out with flour sacks with patterns on them, such as flowers. It was more fancy."

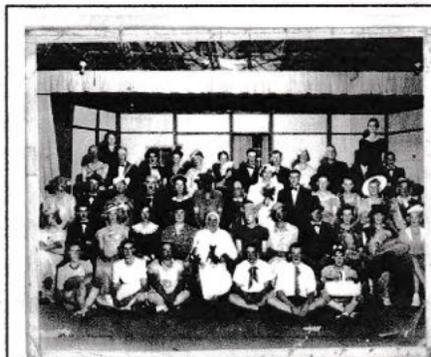
"World War II time was hard," remembers Pearl. "Everyone had a garden, so there was no lack of food. There was plenty to eat. Kids went down in the fields and collected milkweed fluff for school. They planted beans for the army and would spend whole days picking them." Singers had a big strawberry patch from which they picked berries and sold them. There were ration books, which were little stamps used for food, gas, meat, sugar, and other things. "After your stamps were all gone, you were out of luck. If you didn't use the food stamps you gave them to people who didn't have any," said Pearl. "If you had torn or ripped clothing, you patched it up; you did without a lot of things back then." Joe, Pearl's husband, drove a milk route (picked up milk in cans from farmers) and had all the gas he wanted for free. "We were never really out of anything. We did alright," said Pearl. Whatever they did, Pearl has continued to have a practical, energetic attitude toward life. Sierra and Jessica were fortunate to have an assignment that gave them a history that few grandchildren secure for themselves.

## **Minnesota City Post Office Hours Shortened**

On July 31, the seats in City Hall of Minnesota City were filled with persons who were interested in the Postal Service Meeting to confer about new post office hours. It was a civil, if not agreeable engagement with questions and comments from the floor about the current postmaster whose work was lauded, about the possibilities of open window hours. Although presenter Paul Knoll, Manager of Post Offices operations for the Winona area had hoped for unanimity in a vote, that did not occur; Minnesota City hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Saturday. At the meeting, Genevieve O'Grady spoke about personal and community identity related to a city's post office, and in a pre-meeting Letter to the Editor in the *Winona Daily news*, resident Susan Althoff outlined the extensive geographic areas (900 55959 addresses) served by the Minnesota City post office as well as the services of the personnel. The cutting of hours was a "done deal" before the meeting, construed according to presenters to save the USPS dollars, and inasmuch as options presented did not include hours convenient to early or late workday persons, some dissatisfaction was expressed about the meeting. Appreciation of the local post office seemed unanimous.

## **Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund (GBDRF) Adds Details for October 19 Community Wedding**

Susan Althoff, GBDRF secretary, has contributed details for the All Star Wedding Event which will be held at the ELKS Club in Goodview on Sunday, October 19, 3:00-7:30. The dinner menu will offer roast chicken, meatballs, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, vegetable, salads, rolls, beverage and dessert. Door prizes and special prizes for participants in the group community picture will be awarded. **Timely submission of reservations is essential to GBDRF for completion of planning.** Anyone who wishes to be contacted with additional information at this time can email [oldhouse73@hbc.com](mailto:oldhouse73@hbc.com) or [joannz@rconnect.com](mailto:joannz@rconnect.com), or phone Susan Althoff at 689-2281. **The deadline for RSVPs is September 19.**



**1941 All Star Wedding:** One of the funnest nights in Minnesota City History according to participants.

## MCHA Extends Sympathy to

- The family and friends of Butch Kutchara, 58, Minnesota City, who died on Monday, August 11.
- The Cisewski and McCorquodale families and friends of Jesse Cisewski, 17, Winona, who died on August 3.

## Whetstone Family Reunion Offers Food, Games, Information

Fifty-five members of the Henry and Alvina (Denzer) **Whetstone** family held their bi-annual reunion on Saturday, August 2 at La Canne Park in Goodview, MN. Also in attendance were members of Henry's sister, Alda (Whetstone) Sanders family from the Utica, St. Charles and Altura area.

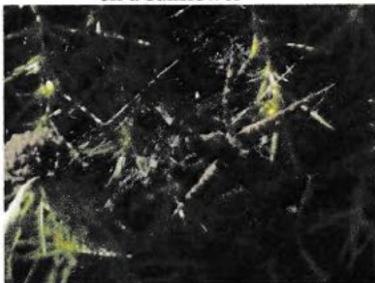
Those traveling the furthest were Roger and Dawn (Whetstone) Burns and sons from Casper, WY and Jacob Edge, son of Larry & Darlene (Whetstone) Edge, of Milwaukee, WI. Both Darlene and Dawn are daughters of Stanley Whetstone. The youngest member in attendance was Piper Shanrock, granddaughter of Pat and Kathy (Whetstone) Theisen. The oldest member in attendance was Audry Whetstone Smith. Nancy Pexa, representative of the Minnesota Daughters of American Revolution, Lake Minnetonka Chapter, Wayzata, MN was in attendance at the reunion and shared information on two members of the family who were in the Revolutionary War, Daniel Wetzstein and Henry Ramer (his daughter, Suzanne, married Daniels son, John Whetstone.) Both served in North Carolina. John's son David brought his family to Lewiston from Indiana and then relocated in Minnesota City.

After the potluck meal, games were played by younger members of the family and the adults participated in the Whetstone Pickers (a version of the American Pickers). Four teams headed out to find a treasure and bring back to be voted on as the best find. A silent auction was also held. Two items on the silent auction were dish towels embroidered with "Whetstone Reunion 2014" and made by a member of the Denzer family. This year's committee members were DeJae Ladewig, Kathy Theisen both of Mazeppa, MN and Susan Althoff of Minnesota City. The next Whetstone Reunion will be held in August of 2016.

### To Wonder at Beauty.....



Gold on gold; finch perched on a sunflower



Wolf spider (we think!) with egg sac (left).

### MCHA Thanks

**Gale Hill** for recent contributions to the archives. These include a copy of the Winona Daily News 1955, Centennial Edition. Although the focus of the edition was Winona, it includes stories that feature Minnesota City. Gale also contributed a number of glass bottles, (Pittman and Watkins) a Cisewski and Wockenfuss mailing envelope from 1943 and a photo of his father and himself in military uniforms. Thank you, Gale.

### MCHA Extends Congratulations to

- Lydia "Pearl" Singer on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Julie Evanson Nagorski, former Denzer Road resident and daughter of Don and Sandra (deceased) Evanson, on her position with Wendland Utz, Ltd. firm in Rochester, MN. Nagorski is a UW-L graduate and a University of Minnesota Law School graduate.
- Minnesota City Ball teams who keep winning!
- Joan Yarolimek who is 103! ( family member of former area residents, Ed and Viola Yarolimek (Ramer), Jim and Shirley Yarolimek Speltz, and Eric and Amy Lee family )

## Jilk Family Reunion Honors the Mothers

This year's Jilk family reunion held at Farmers' Community Park on July 26 invited consideration of women progenitors of the family, especially Sidonia Moravec Jilk, born in Dolni Dobruc, Czechoslovakia and Anna Hammerning Kilian born in St. Louis. Jilks and Kilians attended, enjoyed food, visiting, singing, playing games, and engaged in a storytelling session that invited contribution of memories from different families. Children and some adults especially appreciated the creek in the park. Samuel O'Grady, writing in his own July newsletter commented, "Many kids had fun in the stream at the Jilk family reunion. James, I (Samuel), Jarl and Willem went the farthest upstream. Two other kids—I didn't ask them what their names were—James, I, Jarl and Willem went the farthest downstream. There were four games to play. Volley Ball, Ring Toss, Bean Bag Toss and Foot Ball. They didn't bring croquet." *Samuel's News*, July 2014. Croquet and Horseshoe are two traditional Jilk family games; both had been brought to the park, but remained in car trunks. Available to most attendees for the first time, was *Faith, Farm, and Family*, a recently procured book about the town of St. Michael MN, written by Bob Zahler. The book includes information on the Michael Kilian Patent Medicine Co., which Michael operated in St. Michael after leaving Winona. Michael's nephew John was in attendance at the reunion. To borrow the book, call 689-2440.



Family members surrounding elders Sister Marie Louise Jilk and Agnes Jilk Evanson at family reunion on July 26.

### Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Invites Increased Attendance at Monthly Meetings

At the regular monthly meeting of MCHA on August 9<sup>th</sup>, Board Leader David Eckert suggested that an invitation be extended to all interested persons to attend the next monthly meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month) where Association officers will be elected or reelected at the October 11 meeting. These offices include a board leader, a secretary and a treasurer. Regular attendees are greatly valued for the meetings; according to bylaws, "Any individual who subscribes to the Mission Statement (it will be available at the Sept. 13 meeting), is eligible to be a member.

### Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) Fall Program in the Planning Stages

At the August 9 MCHA meeting, members discussed possible fall public presentations topics. These included historical figure discussions (early settlers Haddock, Samuel and Sarah Cotton, the river music presentation of Author Dean Klinkenberg, and a presentation on the calliope owned by the Winona County Historical Society since 1959. All readers are invited to suggest presentation topics: call 689-4103 or 689-2440. Details on the selected fall presentation will be communicated to readers when finalized.