

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 10, Issue 10: November, 2015

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

Mark your Calendars!

November 14:
Saturday; 9:30
a.m.; **MCHA
Monthly
Meeting;**
Former Minnesota
City School; 115
Iowa Street;

November 19:
Thursday; 6:30
p.m.; **Minnesota
City Community
Readers and
Open Bookshelf;**
Former Minnesota
City School; 115
Iowa Street;
Readers Selection:
*The Great Sand
Fracas of Ames
County* (Jerry
Apps).

November 26:
Thanksgiving

December 12:
Saturday;
6:00 p.m.;
**Community
Caroling Event;**
First Baptist
Church;
140 Mill Street

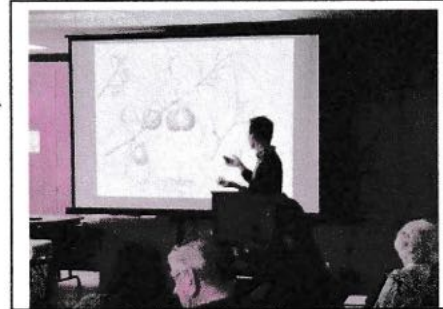
“Go Green!”

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

Indigenous People Learn About Indigenous Foods

by Rebecca O’Grady Weiss

During the years since its inception, MCHA has been committed to the mission of honoring our past, celebrating our present, and building a future together. This commitment seemed to come to life at the October 4th gathering at St. Paul’s Church where guest speaker Jonathan Damery shared his presentation “Unwinding the Plum”-- Orville Lord and the Pursuit of Native Fruits. A graduate student at the University of Minnesota, Jonathan interned in the archival area of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard. His interest in the documentation of early botanists brought him to the Minnesota City area to see if he could find information on what O.M. Lord documented in 1852 as the “Rollingstone plum”.



Jonathan Damery Presents the
Rollingstone Plum

Early transcripts recorded 12 species of plums in North America, with 6 of these in the Mississippi River Basin. The small Canadian and American varieties were the two known species native to Minnesota. It was in 1852 that Lord discovered the “larger, sweeter fruit” of the Rollingstone plum on the land now owned by Susan Althoff and previously held by the Whetstone/Campbell families. Lord registered this information with the Horticultural Society in New York. He served on the Minnesota State Horticultural Society committee of small fruits and later in 1887 on the committee of native fruits. Lord established the Minnesota City Trial Station, one of 16 horticultural experimentation stations in the state, to continue actively propagating plums that a Winona vendor said surpassed the quality of even the California plums. A friend of his wrote that “Lord has about every variety ever heard of in bearing... in all my more than 30 years of search for plums, the things actually seen at his place by far surpassed everything ever before seen.”

By the 1890’s the Pacific Railroad had developed refrigerated and ventilated train cars that enabled the shipping of fruit from the west coast. Continued on page 2 - **Plums**

Participation Invited for Christmas Community Caroling

The monthly meeting attendees of Minnesota City Historical Association on October 10 reviewed the October 4 Jonathan Damery presentation on O.M. Lord and his cultivation of Plums, and then focused on the Annual Community Caroling Event scheduled for December 12. Traditional aspects of the evening will be repeated—horse drawn wagon rides, caroling, burning the Yule Log. New performers have volunteered. Organist Daniel Lewis and Musicians Ed Maus and Steve Schuh will be performing. Other children and adults will participate in the event. All persons who are willing to contribute will be welcomed and are asked to call the Eckerts (689-4103) or the O’Grady’s (689-2440). Contributions of presenter choice will be welcomed. Suggestions have included description of a favorite family ornament, a food, or an activity. Sharing of Christmas memories will be of interest. Everyone is encouraged to bring a friend to share this meaningful evening with neighbors, relatives, and friends.

Plums – (continued from page 1)



Jonathan Damery receives a jar of plums from Don Evanson, preserved by his mother, Agnes Evanson.

Near the time of his death, Lord's daughter Hettie Lord Shoemaker, of Winona wrote that "It is likely father's labor of love will pass away like a dream, for fruit trees must have skilled care to live and thrive, but I doubt if one as faithful in loving service in so many ways of usefulness will soon be forgotten by the host of friends, some of more than fifty years' association." The fruit trees have passed away, but Lord's presence remains vibrant.

Bulletin boards and table displays documented O.M. Lord as a horticulturalist, mail carrier, land owner, legislator, school superintendent, father of a large family, a poet, a traveler and a homesteader. He also brought the first team of horses to Minnesota City. "He was a man having practical knowledge of things worth knowing which are helpful to the world as well as to nearby friends and neighbors." That Sunday afternoon was a gathering of some such folks sharing through questions and answers, the knowledge and wisdom brought from both the research and the lifetimes of those present and presenting. Our young presenter Jonathan shared the plum cookies made from a recipe he had developed himself and

received plums preserved by Agnes Evanson presented by her son Don Evanson (see photo above).

Clearly it was not just plums, but also friendships, interests and the MCHA mission that were propagated and preserved at this event.

Minnesota City Historical Association Congratulates:

- Rev. Roy Literski, Winona, a Rollingsstone native, on his 90th birthday.
- David and Kay Vanderzee on being named Winona County Farm Family of the Year.
- Howard and Gladys Church Volkart, Minnesota City, on their 69th wedding anniversary. Volkarts were married on October 19, 1946.
- Gladys Church Volkart, Minnesota City, on her 92nd birthday.

MCHA Extends sympathy to:

- The family and friends of Christine Marie Springer, 52 of Winona, who died on September 29, 2015 at her home.
- The family and friends of Russell G. "Pete" Whetstone, 67, Winona, Minnesota City native, who died Sunday, October 4, 2015, at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center in LaCrosse, WI. Pete was buried in Oakland Cemetery.

MCHA Extends thanks:

- To Charlene Kowalewski Egge for a 1957 Winona County Atlas for the Archives.
- To Horihan Insurance for agreeing to "marquee" the announcement of the Oct. 4 Presentation
- To all persons who helped with set up and take down for the Indigenous Foods presentation
- To St. Paul's Parish for use of the church hall for the Indigenous Foods Presentation
- To the Winona Post for publication of all material for MCHA

Wenonah Road Resident Carves Native American Leader Likenesses

Photographed with his carvings of Native American Leaders including Chief Decorah, Crazy Horse, the Last Buffalo Hunter and Sitting Bull, Sacagawea and Geronimo, Minnesota City resident Michael Maher was the subject of an article in *The Winona Post*, on September 9, written by Laura Hayes.

Maher began to carve, in his words, as a stress reliever. Inspired by a carved eagle he saw in Nelson, Wisconsin, Maher first carved an eagle. When he became interested in the Winona Natives, he began to research their histories and became interested in their leaders. A recipient of a grant from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council, Maher exhibited his carvings at this year's Great Dakota Gathering. The carvings are realistic in their rendition of facial scars and characteristics.

Mail Delivery Changes Hands

The October 7 *Winona Post* included a Thank You from Patricia Gerdes, written to "55959 people." In it she wrote that she was the "Mail Lady in the Silver Jeep Liberty." Gerdes delivered the mail for 32 years and was now intending to spend her days enjoying being a Grandma.

Winona County Farm Family of the Year

David and Kay Denzer Vanderzee of Dakota, Mn. have been named The University of Minnesota Extension Winona County 2015 Farm Family of the Year. Kay is the daughter of George and Gloria Denzer, now deceased, longtime Minnesota City residents. The Denzer family maintains an abundant presence in the community. Kay and Dallas Denzer presented family history to a MCHA audience in April of 2007, The Vanderzee farming history in Dakota is inspiring. David and Kay lost land to the Interstate 90 Highway project, saved money and purchased back land and cattle. They now have 400 acres. Many years ago, Kay's parents home was home was lost when Highway 61 took property north of Minnesota City. The Vanderzees have been involved in many aspects of community life in the area. In the Minnesota City Historical Association Cemetery Walk in Oakland Cemetery in 2012, Kay impersonated her grandmother, Esther Denzer. Kay's life is reminiscent of Esther's, with focus on family, church, community and land involvement. Congratulations to all the Vanderzee family members. (source of information: *Winona Post*, 9/30/2015)



Kay Denzer Vanderzee presents on Denzer family history.

Standing Invitations:

- To attend meetings of MCHA. These meetings are held at 140 Mill Street or 115 Iowa Street.
- To join Minnesota City Community Readers – meetings on the fourth Thursday of the month.
- **Writers of regular newsletter columns would be welcomed.** These might include monthly columns on area businesses, churches, schools, organizations or any other relevant topics on the area and/or our history.

Rollingstone Township Responds to Solar Garden Farm Variance Petition Denied by Winona County

The Winona County Board of Adjustment met on October 15 at the County Government Center in Winona to consider the petition of Rollingstone Holdco and James and Shirley Speltz of 24444 Highway 248 for a “variance to allow the placement of a solar project to be partially located within the steep slopes, general bluff and the Mississippi River Bluff Natural Feature overlay districts.” The Speltzes property under consideration was one hundred thirty three acres in Rollingstone Township, Section 33. The Rollingstone Township officials had told the County Staff that “they were neither for nor against the project. ...they seemed to raise concerns about the potential for this project to set a precedent for future developments to encroach on the Mississippi River bluff setback. They wrote ‘Rollingstone Township approves the use of solar power, but the question is, what happens if the Board of Adjustments approves (this project) crossing the bluffland preservation line?’ ” *Winona Post, October 18, 2015, p. 5a.* Board member Richard Hunnewell moved to pass the request; the motion died for lack of a second. Three members—Larry Greden, Margaret Walsh, and Phyllis Frisch- gave reasons for not agreeing with the motion. These included preservation of farmland, concern about stray voltage, exceptions to prohibitions, and the Mississippi River Valley Setting. Solar Stone, a Minneapolis based firm proposed the variance and representative Jeff Broberg said they will seek a Conditional Use Permit for a smaller section of land which would not require a variance.

A Timely Connection with Spiders

A hedgeapple was recently placed in the indoor outhouse of the Archives. The use of hedgeapples for insect control, especially spiders, is widespread, although just as widespread are the disagreements about its effectiveness. For \$1.00 (purchased at Bauer’s in LaCrescent), it seemed worth another try. According to information in Wikipedia, the Osage orange tree which produces the apples is commonly used as a tree row windbreak in prairie states, which gives it one of its colloquial names, “hedge apple”. It was one of the primary trees used in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s “Great Plains Shelterbelt” WPA project, which was launched in 1934 as an ambitious plan to modify weather and prevent soil erosion in the Great Plains states, and by 1942 resulted in the planting of 30,233 shelterbelts containing 220 million trees that stretched for 18,600 miles (29,900 km). The sharp-thorned trees were also planted as cattle-detering hedges before the introduction of barbed wire and afterward became an important source of fence posts. In homes, the apple is frequently placed around the foundation or basements to repel insects.



Hedgeapples—not just for spiders!

Community Caroling, December 12. Mark Your Calendars Now! Invite Your Friends Now! Volunteer to participate Now!

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

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 Marv O’Grady for keeping the website updated.