

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 3, Issue 11: November, 2009

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

## Mark your calendars!

November 14:  
MCHA monthly meeting, *Note change to Saturday morning meetings*, Riverway Learning Community, 9:30 a.m.

November 19:  
Minnesota City Community Readers, Riverway Learning Community, 6:30 p.m., *Gilead* by Marilyn Robinson

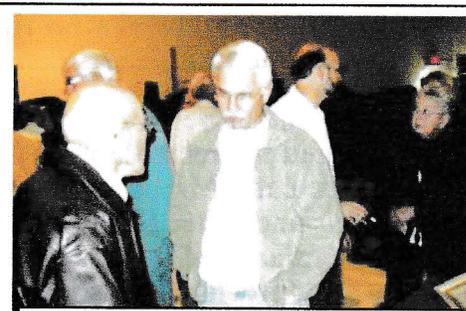
December  
TBA: Annual Holiday Caroling: First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street

### Go “Green”!

If you receive this newsletter in paper form and would prefer to receive it electronically, please call 689-2440.

## **Presentation Details Ownership and Activities of Historic City Nite Club Building**

An especially interested audience listened to Brian Campbell outline the history of a Minnesota City building, a significant place from the 1890s on. Many of those who attended had experienced some aspect of the life of the building. Susan Althoff had worked as a waitress during the time her parents managed the facility. Clare Denzer displayed the large poster of the dance announcement for her wedding to Neil Denzer. Three daughters of Clem Reidemann, a dance group director, showed attendees a picture of Clem in a band at the nite club. These and other attendees engaged in lively conversation during and after the presentation. Campbell began with an historic reminder of the original inhabitants of the village, a photo of one of the Winnebago huts, on a site some believe is the current site of Riverway Learning Community. Many individuals owned or operated the building for short or long periods of time; the longest ownership appears to have been by Leon Rolbiecki, listed as owner from 1921 to 1937. Among the objects Campbell presented for discussion were a board from his home imprinted with the label of the Chippewa Lumber Company (lumber was brought here for the early settlers), a saw like an 1888 Bundy, Montague, and Troost patent (Bundy and Troost were from Minnesota City), and a metal Nite Club Sign. The role of liquor and gambling at the site, among other activities, seemed to be a history that attendees agreed upon. Brian Campbell hopes to attend the next MCHA meeting (November 14, 9:30 a.m., Riverway Learning Community), and will respond to questions or additional commentary.



Howard Volkart and Hollis Donehower, Brian Campbell and Marianne Mastenbrook visit following the Campbell presentation

## **Important Announcements**

- Minnesota City Historical Association (MCHA) has **changed its meeting time** from Second Thursdays to **Second Saturdays of the month** to accommodate more persons. Meetings in fall/winter months will be held at Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street at 9:30 a.m. This month’s meeting is on November 14.
- Minnesota City Readers are now using books from Rochester Public Library for a number of their monthly reading selections. This arrangement, secured through Lori Donehower, eliminates cost and greatly facilitates delivery of books. New members are always welcome. For more information call 689-2440.
- Please watch for announcements of date for Holiday Caroling at First Baptist Church. The date will be established at the November 14 MCHA meeting.

## Old News is Good News: September Service at Minnesota City Historic First Baptist Church



Jean Gardner addresses Baptist Church gathering. Pastor Dennis Hudson seated at her right.

Newsletter writers omitted this account of an important community event in the month of September. A church service was held on September 13th at the Historic First Baptist Church at 140 Mill Street. Although an inactive church since members affiliated with the Winona Baptist Church, this was the continuation of the annual event that is sponsored by the Minnesota City First Baptist Ladies Aid who purchased the church from the Winona County Historical Society in 1988. As in other years, former member families and area residents attended the service. Pastor Dennis Hudson from the Winona First Baptist Church conducted the service and gave a dynamic speech. Jean Gardner commented on the history of the church and its furnishings and Gen O'Grady

spoke about the current relationship of the church with the Historical Association. Both speakers acknowledged the remarkable "fit" of these two groups, given the historical significance of the church in the early Minnesota City community and the efforts of the Historical Association to preserve this and other aspects of the community's history. A special joy for a number of attendees was the attendance of Ray and Lola Denzer. Ray's health has been a concern, and his visit to the service was appreciated. Visitors viewed the archival area in the renovated back rooms of the church. Programs were prepared by Angela Zierfus and refreshments were served.

## GBDRF Honors Pam McNeill At Surprise Gathering

Several board members of Garvin Brook Disaster Relief Fund presented a Humanitarian award to Pamela McNeill in a surprise gathering at Steve's Anchor Inn in Minnesota City on October 18. McNeill has held two benefit concerts for flood victims, one in St. Paul and one in Goodview.

McNeill also composed a song entitled "Waiting for the Tide," the benefits of which aided flood victims. The plaque text commended the performer for generosity to families and communities affected by the 2007 flood. City council members were recognized for outstanding contributions to the flood recovery at the Bridge Dedication in August.



Nancy Beach, GBDRF Board Member from Stockton, presents a surprised Pamela McNeill with a Humanitarian award to recognize her contributions to flood relief.

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 Susan Althoff, Marv O'Grady and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.

## **In Case You Didn't Know--**

Taken from Wikipedia, " according to the United States Census Bureau, Minnesota City has a total area of 0.3 square miles (0.7 km<sup>2</sup>), all of it land.

### Demographics:

As of the census of 2000, there were 235 people, 84 households, and 64 families residing in the city. The population density was 912.0 people per square mile (349.0/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 85 housing units at an average density of 329.9/sq mi (126.2/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the city was 99.57% White, 0.43% from other races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 0.43% of the population.

There were 84 households out of which 34.5% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 65.5% were married couples living together, 7.1% had a female householder with no husband present, and 23.8% were non-families. 16.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 4.8% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.80 and the average family size was 3.05.

In the city the population was spread out with 27.7% under the age of 18, 7.7% from 18 to 24, 29.8% from 25 to 44, 25.1% from 45 to 64, and 9.8% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35 years. For every 100 females there were 113.6 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 104.8 males.

The median income for a household in the city was \$46,458, and the median income for a family was \$47,708. Males had a median income of \$30,000 versus \$22,500 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$18,430. None of the families and 2.5% of the population were living below the poverty line, including no under eighteens and 10.0% of those over 64."

### References:

*American FactFinder*. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved 2008-01-31.

*US Board on Geographic Names*. United States Geological Survey. 2007-10-25. Retrieved 2008-01-31."

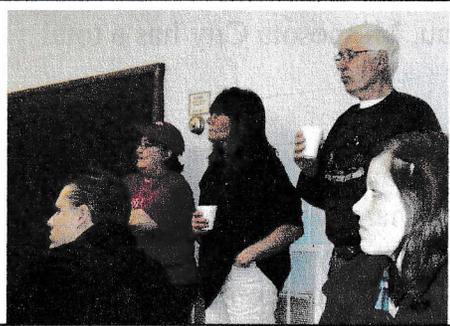
And if you didn't know, the problem with Wikipedia is that anyone can post information, so if we want Minnesota City to appear differently to the world, this would be the place to make it happen.

## **Otto Vill Connects Minnesota City with State Fame and Infamy**

Depending on one's views of conflict with indigenous populations, historians will praise or fault individuals like Otto Vill, Minnesota City early settler. Vill was the founder of what is said to have been the first brewery in the Northwest at Minnesota City in 1863 (Minnesota City was founded in 1852). Vill came to Minnesota City with his wife after the famous Indian massacre at New Ulm where he served as one of the defenders against the Sioux. For several years before his death, Mr. Vill received a pension for this service. During the massacre, two of his children died. Two more children were born; one was Oswald Vill who conducted the brewery in Minnesota City after Otto's death. Otto Vill came to New York from Gilingerberg, Bavaria in 1851 and moved to Cincinnati in 1852. From there he moved in 1854 to New Ulm where he married Kunigunda Magnus in May 1860. (Information from *Winona Republican Herald*, May 4, 1914).

Our attention was called to this information by Gerald Okland, Thief River Falls, a Cotton (early settler) descendent. Okland also sent to MCHA a dream catcher and a description of its history. Coincidentally, this came at the time the Minnesota City Community Readers were reading Thomas Maltman's *The Nightbirds*. The reprint of an ad for Bock beer produced by the Vill Brewery and the information on Otto Vill arrived just previous to Brian Campbell's presentation on the City Nite Club that included mention of Bock Beer.

## Stockton October 20 Community Meal Includes Fritz Tribute



Nancy Beach, Bonnie Oldham, LaVern Fritz, Michaela Burton listen to Fritz tributes

The last GBDRF sponsored community meal in Stockton was held at the Community Center on October 20. Included in the gathering was a tribute to Jaye Fritz, former GBDRF board member and well known community activist who died unexpectedly on March 11. A video tribute was viewed and a number of persons who had benefited from Jaye's friendship and activities spoke in her memory. One audience member summarized their comments with the observation that Jaye's approach was "Just Do It." According to speakers, this was her own approach and her invitation to others when work needed doing. Nancy Beach, who shared a number of recollections, was a lifetime acquaintance; they attended grade school together.

## Buried in Oakland - Charles D. Judy

Jun. 9, 1922 — Nov. 25, 2006

Charles D. Judy, 84, of Minnesota City died Saturday, Nov. 25, 2006, at his home. Charles was born June 9, 1922, in Springfield, S.D., to Joseph and Lucinda (Vander Ploeg) Judy. He married Eleanor Pavlik on Oct. 3, 1946, in Valentine, Nebraska. Charles served his country in the U.S. Navy. He worked at the V.A. Center in Sturgis, S.D., farmed in the Houston and Winona area, developed farmland into subdivisions and worked for Brom Foundry from 1974 until his retirement in 1983. Charles liked to hunt and fish and he loved Minnesota Twins baseball. He was a member of the Whalen American Legion. He enjoyed gardening and his grandchildren.



He was survived at his death by his wife, Eleanor (Minnesota City); three sons, Joseph Judy of Pleasant Valley, John Judy of Claremont, Minn., and Gary Judy of Whitehall, Wisconsin and thirteen grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, Donald William Judy (also buried in Oakland), three brothers, Francis, John and Norman; and three sisters, Bertha, Florence and Laura.

## Minnesota City Historical Association Thanks—

- Brian Campbell for an informative and entertaining presentation on the history of the City Nite Club, his family home at 154 Mill Street.
  - All the individuals who contributed information to the Campbell presentation (October 25) with their own memorabilia and stories. These included Susan Althoff, Richard Rolbiecki, Carol, Rita, and Doreen Reidemann, and Clare Denzer.
  - Riverway Learning Community for providing refreshments for the Campbell presentation event.
  - The Friesens for supplying archival workers with homemade cookies and coffee for Saturday morning sessions.
  - Gerald Okland for items of interest related to Minnesota City history.
- (See article "Otto Vill Connects Minnesota City with State Fame and Infamy", page 3.)

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.