

MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 12, Issue 1: January, 2017

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

Mark your Calendars!

January 14:
Saturday; 9:30 a.m.; MCHA (Minnesota City Historical Association) regular meeting at City Hall, 149 Mill Street.

January 26:
Thursday; 6:30 p.m.; Community Readers will meet at City Hall, 149 Mill Street. Selection: *All the Light We Cannot See*, Anthony Doerr.

May 20:
Saturday; Minnesota City Day; 165th anniversary of founding of village in 1852.

“Go Green!”

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

The Western Farm and Village Association described in History of Winona County

In an address delivered before the Winona Lyceum, Feb 12, 1858 M. Wheeler Sargeant, Esq. made these comments. “The year 1852 is distinguished in our annals for the bursting of that bubble of fanaticism, the Western Farm and Village Association. Previously inflated in New York City, it was mainly discharged at the mouth of the Rollingsstone River. The socialistic notions vaguely shadowed forth in the Tribune of those days had taken deep root in the morbid imagination of some city mechanics--in the country and associated was their ideal of ‘Paradise regained.’ They were mostly honest and industrious; but pioneering was a branch of industry of which they had no conception. Some, mere visionary idlers, pictured to themselves competence without care, equality without exertion, in this confederated brotherhood. Others, of more practical sense thought that their aggregated courage could better face the untried hardships of the wilderness.

A semi-monthly paper was published in New York City, presenting in exaggerated colors the advantages of membership; noise, novelty, and puffing produced their wanted effects. For many, a modern Elysium was in expectancy; unrequited toil and unassisted individual struggle for knowledge, competence, and social comfort were to be forever barred. A kind of moral, educational, social and economical insurance company was to be formed on a scale as gigantic in imagination as it was silly in conception.”

(In 1855 William Windom moved to Winona, Minnesota and established a legal practice with M. Wheeler Sargeant and Thomas Wilson. *Mn Historical Society Manuscript Collection*).

History and views of it differ greatly in the recall of the settling of Minnesota City. The newsletter will include some of this information in the months leading up to the May 165th founding anniversary.

Rollingstone Township Open Positions

The Winona Post, December 18, carried the announcement of open positions on the Rollingstone Township Board. Filing for these spots is possible from January 3 through January 17. Open positions are for supervisor which is a three year term and for treasurer which is a two year term. Absentee voting is on March 11. The annual meeting will be on March 14 with a bad weather alternative date on March 21. The polls will be open from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. on March 14. Anyone wishing specifics can call Marcia Anderson at 507-454-3849.



Township Hall on Highway 248,
Minnesota City

Carolers Enthusiasm Surpasses Snow and Cold

In spite of predicted snow, a church full of carolers enjoyed the music, drama, and food at the MCHA Community Caroling event on December 10.

Rebecca O'Grady Weiss ably kept audience focused with directions for round singing, names and selections of musical performers, and thank yous to persons who had decorated for the event. Actors presented the typical Christmas Eve

Children and parents listen to David Eckert narrate. Brandon, Melanie, Vanessa Butenhoff, Samuel, James, Kate O'Grady, Scott Jensen



Organist Nancy Edstrom, Violinist Steven Schuh, Accordionist Ed Maus accompany carol singing.



experience in many homes where children retire, but parents remain hard at work for several hours assembling gifts. Directed by David Eckert, the skit was called "Assembly Required" and included performance by Jensen, O'Grady, and Butenhoff families (see photo). Musical performances of organist Nancy Edstrom, violinist Steve Schuh, accordionist, Ed Maus, guitarist Brian Ebbinger and soloist Debbie Berhow were applauded by all as were decorations by Jennie Ebbinger and Debbie Karnath. (For more photos by Mike and Vanessa Butenhoff, see website www.minnesotacity.org.)

MCHA Thanks Community Caroling Participants

MCHA is grateful to all persons who attended the December 10 caroling event and to all those who developed the program of the evening, as well as participating in it. Persons who sent regrets were indeed present in spirit and valued. A number of individuals who are usual attendees at the Caroling Event sent regrets because of weather, travel difficulties, distance, other obligations. Again, the organization is grateful to the First Baptist Ladies Aid for providing the facility for this community building event. Observant village visitors will notice that the building has been reshingled.

MCHA extends sympathy

- to the friends and family of Lorraine Gunner who was born in 1938 in Blair Wisconsin and died in Winona on December 9, 2016.
- to the family and friends of Doris Woodward, 92, Who was born in Winona County in 1924 and died at Callista Court, Winona on December 18.
- to the family and friends of David Reed, 73, Minnesota City who died on December 17. David was born in Winona in 1943 and attended Minnesota City School.

Matthew Grover, St. Paul's Catholic Parish Member, Builds Prairie Island Steps

As part of his Eagle Scout Project, Matthew Grover, along with other scouts, built steps on Prairie Island to remedy safety hazards at three of the river bank landings. Grover spent four months on the project, "writing the proposal, raising money, and seeking assistance from people in the community to help make his project successful and beneficial" (Winona Daily News, Dec. 3). Grover helped organize a fundraiser lunch at St. Paul's Parish to support the project.

Robert Pike Connections Discovered: Music at State Historical Society and Minnesota City Residents

“A Century of Song,” an article in the 1974 Minnesota History Magazine, includes this information: ‘The manuscripts division of the Minnesota Historical Society has a modern manuscript copy of an early song entitled “Minnesota” written by Robert Pike of Minnesota City for a Fourth of July celebration in Minnesota City in 1852. By this time, according to author James Taylor Dunn, the piano which inspired sheet music was already a national fad.’ Pike’s song was used at an early Minnesota City Day celebration. MCHA has long had interest in securing the diary of Robert Pike which includes the record of his adventures at the time of the village settlement. Marvin and Gen O’Grady viewed the diary at the State Society and had copies made of the entries related to settlement. These are available in the archives. The manuscript of this music would be another interesting digitized artifact.

Coincidentally, two visitors to the MCHA archives on December 10 introduced information about Robert Pike. An individual who now lives on Mill Street in the former Rick Martin family home said her family is from the New England town where Pike was from, and another individual who lives in Minnesota City knew that Pike was a landowner named on his abstract. Sometimes history comes alive.

Buried in Oakland: Edward Maxham 1905-1982

Among newspaper articles recently contributed to the archives by Janet Hill Seabern was a detailed account of the career of Edward Maxham who is buried, as is his wife Mildred, in Oakland Cemetery. According to the article (date unknown—Winona Daily News archives) Maxham was 76 at the time and was hoping to pass his glass and stone carving skills on to others. Maxham was 77 when he died. He had carved glass for Princess Grace and Prince Rainier as well as for Hugh Hefner and other Hollywood personalities. The grandson of an artist, Maxham had operated a firm in Chicago. Maxham and his wife Mildred attended school in the Stockton Valley school house. When Edward Maxham went to Chicago, Millie stayed behind, not liking city life. She achieved notoriety as a waitress at the Oaks for 45 Years. Among Maxham’s works were portraits of Christ for a Chicago bishop and illuminated glass bunnies for Hugh Hefner’s firm (he found Hefner to be remarkably creative). An interesting contrast in information is a November 27 1966 item contributed by Andrea Church. It is a photo of and information about two beaver trapped by Maxham who had a special permit for the purpose. The beaver came to his place and cut down trees within his Garvin Brook Riverside yard. The trees were damaged in spite of wire protection Maxham had installed.

Oakland Cemetery Signed Improved

Lori Donehower, Secretary-Treasurer of the Oakland Cemetery Board has reported the Volkart family memorial gift to honor Gladys at the Oakland Cemetery. The gift was designated for the installation of an etched date on the entrance marker, adding “Est. 1852” below Oakland Cemetery on the sign. The addition is attractive and informative and a fitting tribute to Gladys Church Volkart as well as the Volkart family. Gladys’s and Howard’s parents are also interred in the Oakland Cemetery.



“Est. 1852” addition to Oakland Cemetery Entrance

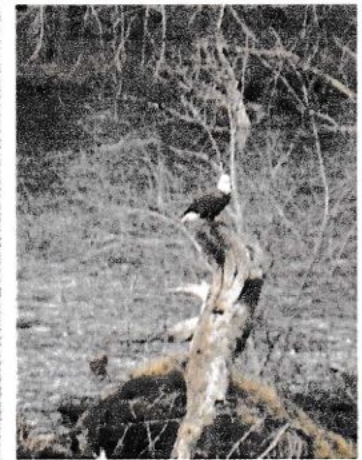
Minnesota City Fire Dept. responds to Iowa Street Fire

(Read details in Winona Daily News December 22).

Minnesota City's Wintering Bald Eagles

According to Mn. Dept of Natural Resources information (info.dnr@state.mn.us), "Each year, the Mississippi River valley is a migration corridor for many species of waterfowl, raptors, and shorebirds moving through from their northern summer homes to warmer southern wintering grounds. During this time, southeastern Minnesota is host to significant numbers of bald eagles making their way south. Hundreds of bald eagles prefer to overwinter in the Red Wing and Wabasha areas near the Mississippi River, where the current of the inflowing Chippewa River maintains open water throughout the winter.

The eagles begin to congregate in early November, with the best viewing opportunities in December through March. Mornings and evenings unmated adult and juvenile eagles can be seen soaring and diving for fish. During the day, they typically perch on tall trees at the river's edge." North of Minnesota City, routine sighting of eagles is possible, with the occasional close to the water perching reminding of the preying facet of the majestic fowl.



This eagle was about three feet from the open river water.

Read and Watch Your World Grow

Minnesota City Community Readers have been meeting monthly since 2006—beginning at Riverway Learning Community, then after the move of the Charter School in a reading room of the former school building, and then and now in the Minnesota City City Hall on Mill Street. The group has about a dozen regular readers and has settled into a routine that includes the work of Lori Donehower to secure and distribute books at no cost in nearly all cases, rotation of book choices through alphabetical order of "regulars," coffee and refreshments provided. This month's selection, *All the Light We Cannot See*, a World War II setting, was selected by Don Evanson. Discussions of the books range widely in focus from historical issues, to geographical issues, to literary genre, and to wherever else readers interests take the group. Discussions are wide ranging. Meetings are held on the 4th Thursdays of the month at 6:30. Persons who need/want rides, especially in winter months, are encouraged to call regulars who come from Winona, Stockton Valley, Rollingstone and who will gladly accommodate requests. Persons wanting any information about books, ride sharing are invited to call Lori Donehower (689-4344). The group welcomes new regular readers or occasional attendees.

A second support of reading for area persons is the Little Library located just off the sidewalk in front of the historic First Baptist Church in Minnesota City at 140 Mill Street. This lovely library was constructed by Hollis Donehower and is FULL of a variety of books. Anyone may take books, keep them, pass them on or return them with no fee, no late dates, no record keeping in any way. Pam Aune, a longtime friend of MCHA drove out to the library from her visit to Winona this fall and left several books for area readers. She had read about the little library in the newsletter. Thanks, Pam.

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 and David Eckert for keeping the website updated.