

# MINNESOTA CITY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSLETTER – Volume 4, Issue 9: September, 2010

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

## **Mark your calendars!**

September 11: Regular MCHA meeting, 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City, 9:30 a.m.

September 16: 6:30 p.m. Minnesota City Community Readers, Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, Minnesota City, Selection: *Saphirra and the Slave Girl*--Cather

October 24: Dean Klinkenberger book signing and slide show at Minnesota City Historical Association Archives, First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City, 2:00 p.m.

Dec. 12: Horse Drawn Wagon: Holiday Caroling at the Church

### **Go “Green”!**

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

## **Minnesota City School Reunion Planning Meeting September 18**

A number of individuals who indicated at the 2010 Minnesota City Day their interest in a Minnesota City School reunion will hold an organizational meeting at Riverway Learning Community on September 18 at 9:30 a.m. All persons who are interested in such a reunion are asked to attend. LaVern Fritz, Minnesota City, has agreed to act as moderator of this meeting; Fritz worked on organization for the Stockton School Reunion which was held in 2009.

As newspaper accounts illustrate, school reunions are as brief as afternoons of storytelling, or as complex as weekends of several scheduled events. The September meeting attendees will consider possibilities for the Minnesota City event and decide on a date. Many volunteers will be needed for the contact of former students and teachers who number in the thousands, as well as for other tasks.

Minnesota City settlers in 1853 opened the first school in Winona County. The structures of it evolved from home school to a subscription school to a County school. Riverway Learning Community, 115 Iowa Street, is at the site of at least two previous school buildings; the 1938 structure is the oldest remaining of the several schools.

## **October 24 River Travelogue Author Book Signing, Slide Show**

Dean Klinkenberg, the author of two published travelogues featuring the Mississippi River environs, *Lansing to LeClair* and *Quad Cities*, will hold a book signing and slide show at the historic First Baptist Church, 140 Mill Street, Minnesota City, on October 24 at 2:00 p.m. Klinkenberg’s new book includes a section on Minnesota City. Additional information for this event will be included in the October MCHA newsletter and in local papers. Klinkenberg’s website is [www.travelpassages.com](http://www.travelpassages.com); it demonstrates his familiarity with and affection for the river cities he visits.

## **August Newsletter Notes:**

The August newsletter incorrectly stated that GBDRF was placing memorials for Jaye Fritz in both Minnesota City and Stockton. The group is placing a memorial for Jaye in Minnesota City along Garvin Brook.

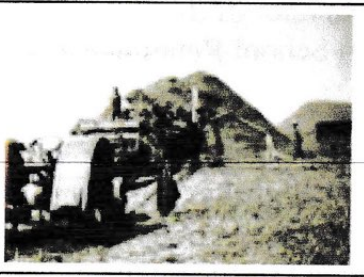
Several people responded to the Jim Stewart “Buried in Oakland” article, remembering Jim themselves. Jean Gardner wrote: “I knew Jim Stewart and my grandfather and Jim used to love to talk politics. So did my grandfather and John Evanson. They would sit on our front porch and talk for hours, Sometimes the creek would be too high for John to get home and he would stay overnight at our house.”

## Harvest Time—a Ritual of Rural Americans

The photo at right was posted at a recent Jilk Family reunion. The persons identified on it were Blanchard Gardner, Richard Gardner, Russell Church, Ray Church, Leonard Spaag, Fred Spaag, and Edwin Butenhoff. All other photos shown were taken in Stockton Valley in about 1928, at the Ray Reps farm, and sent to us by Darlene Decker, an MCHA member and supporter who now lives in Flint Michigan.



The photos recall community participation in the ritual-like observance of the farm events of grain threshing, silo filling, barn raising and others that remain like etched memories of sights, sounds, movements. There was a rhythm in setting up the shocks. Place bundles firmly into the ground, two opposite each other, two on each end of these, then one added to the middle on both sides, and the final one, the cap, spread and pushed down over both sides to keep off the rain until the threshing rig would come. Shockers, including the neighbors, were judged by the number of caps blown off in wind storms.



Everyone had prescribed duties; take water and lunches to the shockers and then when the threshing rig had come, haul in the bundles, pitch them onto the wagons and off the wagons into the rig, prepare the elaborate meals at each of the farms—finer than even holiday family meals; build the straw pile while listening to the slapping sounds of the belts, the grinding of the machine parts and wonder at the gold of the straw and the gold of the grain—and the dust, the dust, the dust. The machines were wonders and there were few of them; their movement by owners from one farm to the next involved cooperation and skill. Lester Maus (father of

Edwin), the Gardner family, the Mastenbrook family, were among the area owners. The Maus family continued to demonstrate the machines in the area long after most farmers had stopped using them.

Newspapers found the threshing process newsworthy. From their reports, readers learned about yields, accidents, complications of the process in the surrounding area.

(October 17, 1901 WRH): “The workshop and fruit storage warehouse of O.M. Lord at Minnesota City burned at 1:00 this afternoon, supposedly catching fire from sparks from the threshing machine engine of Bert Stewart who was threshing oats on Mr. Lord’s farm. The loss is placed at \$150.00”



(August 7, 1919, WRH): “The first threshing of the season in this vicinity was done on Thursday afternoon when Charles Maceman had his rye threshed by Christ Ludwigson’s machine, resulting in a good yield.”



(September 30, 1915, WRH): “Street Commissioner John Jozwiak stopped Quimby Burley of Minnesota City from crossing the new paving on the lake fill with a heavy threshing machine and outfit. The machine came into the city from the west and was bound for the Bundy farm near Sugar Loaf. The machine had run over one block of creosote pavement on fifth street from Harriet to Huff... It will be made a point to protect Winona’s newly paved streets from damage by such machines.”

(July 27, 1932: WRH): “The direction of the wind is believed to have been a factor in averting a serious fire at the F. Miller farm between here and Minnesota City, early Tuesday afternoon when sparks coming from the blower of a threshing machine ignited the straw pile. The straw pile was destroyed and timbers constructed beneath it for the housing of hogs and a nearby fence were also burned. The loss was estimated at \$500.00 completely covered by insurance. “

(Sept. 4, 1945 WRH) “An average of 90 bushels to the acre was the yield of a field of Vicland oats on the Henry Wiemer farm three fourths of a mile west of Minnesota City. The field was threshed Friday and 610 bushels were harvested from 6.8 acres.”

Demonstrations of threshing machines are still held in rural areas, often connected with summer festivals and/or sponsored museums, but in the memories of many, they cannot match the experience of participating in an authentic ritual that embraced people, machines, crops, and the elements.