

# THE BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORIAN

Fall 2021

A Blue Earth County Historical Society Publication

Vol. XXVII No. 4



Yaeger Schoolhouse, c. 1973

## Stranger Than Fiction: A Schoolhouse Mystery

By BECHS Staff

This article could have been titled “Fiction Outdone by Fact: Strange Story Concerning an Escaped Nebraska Convict” or “A Robber’s Nest.” Intrigued? Keep reading to discover one of Blue Earth County’s most memorable crime stories.

Perched on a grassy green hill surrounded by a cluster of oak trees in Rapidan Township just east of the town of Rapidan, was a brick schoolhouse. This school was established in 1867 as Blue Earth County School District #91. The school became known as the Yaeger schoolhouse, named for the Yaeger family who owned the land surrounding the building. This was quite common for a schoolhouse to be named this way. Prior to 1900, there were nearly 150 rural schoolhouses in Blue Earth County. The little Yaeger schoolhouse has a very interesting history because at one time it was thought to be “haunted.” Stories of the Yaeger schoolhouse “ghost” have become a part of local folklore passed down through the years. Newspaper accounts tell the story of what actually happened in 1897 and the events that began to unfold the mystery.

In the second half of 1896, local newspapers reported a number of strange incidences going on in the county for months. Teams of

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### History Center & Museum

424 Warren Street, Mankato, MN  
507-345-5566  
Tuesday—Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Research Center By Appointment

### R.D. Hubbard House

606 South Broad Street, Mankato  
507-345-4154  
Special event Dec. 4 & 5  
Tours Dec. 11, 12, 18, 19.  
See page 12 for details.



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BlueEarthCountyHistory.com

## The Blue Earth County Historian

Fall 2021

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Jessica Potter, Executive Director

**Historical Society:** a group of people who work to preserve the history of a place ✓

**Collect:** gather from different places and bring together ✓

**Preserve:** to keep safe from harm or loss ✓

**Share:** to have or use with others ✓

Since November 7, 1901, the Blue Earth County Historical Society has actively collected, preserved and shared the rich history and heritage of Blue Earth County. Like most organizations, starting out our beginnings were humble. But through the work of wonderful volunteers, generous donors and committed staff and board members, we've built an organization that we should all be proud of. I have always loved these three words from our original (and still current) mission statement—"for future generations". Just like those early founders knew back in 1901, history doesn't stop and neither should we. Now, on our 120th Anniversary, it's time to look toward our future:

- Imagine a History Center with **interactive exhibits** and **expanded** galleries for displaying our Model A, 1916 Firetruck, and even Stagecoach.
- Imagine an **updated, modern and accessible** History Center where all ages can be inspired, engaged and connect to our rich history.
- Imagine **new ways to learn and share** Blue Earth County stories "for future generations".

Five years from now, we will be ready to break ground on a **BOLD** new expansion of our museum. To realize this BOLD vision, we are taking a BOLD first step by committing to raise \$240,000 in 120 days.

Please join me in taking that Bold first step as we kickstart the campaign on our Anniversary weekend and wrap it up at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 7, 2022.

Your contribution now to the Blue Earth County Historical Society \$240k | 120 Days | 120th Anniversary **BOLD Future Campaign** covers the remaining expenses for this year. And is that first step needed to provide the resources and staffing to change those "imagines" listed above into exciting new stories waiting to be told. Watch for more exciting information to be released November 6 at 10 a.m. on our communication and social media channels

**We need BOLD History Heroes like YOU!**

Continued on page 6

## FICTION Continued from page 1

horses had been taken from barns and found tied to a neighbor's tree the next morning, having been driven hard. A cow disappeared one afternoon, and wandered home the next day after having been milked. Items had gone missing from chicken coops, smokehouses, clothes lines and even basement shelves stocked with preserves and canned goods.

In fact, former state senator William A. Just, owner of a beautiful riding horse, found his horse coming down the road toward his home one morning, tired and sweaty. The animal had been ridden hard. But there was no rider! Herman Miescke awoke to find his team, harness and wagon gone one morning. Later in the day the team came home, driverless, tired, and showing the signs of a hard, long trip.

Then, on the night of February 4, 1897, the depot at Garden City was broken into and over \$1,000 worth of freight was taken. However, there were no signs of the perpetrator.

These strange happenings kept on for months and months. At first people thought it was a very clever thief or maybe just a person wandering through the area. But then unexplainable things began to occur around the Yaeger schoolhouse. John Ballard, a student at the school who built the fire for the schoolhouse during the winter, reported to his teacher Miss



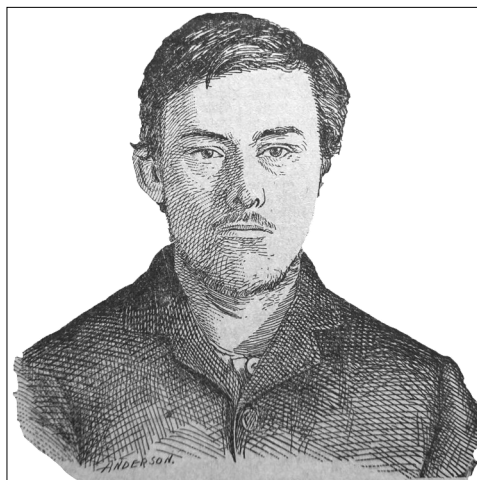
Teacher Eva Hower

Eva Hower that many times when he reached the building he saw smoke coming from the chimney, but he always found the stove cold. Sometimes he even found the kindling he had prepared the night before was gone in the morning. Who was this ghostly thief? Who could burn fires yet never heat the stove? Who could vanish

quickly into thin air? Who could never be seen or heard? It must be a ghost! The answer would soon be revealed by a pair of mittens and a red bicycle.

Cyrus Briggs Miller was a small 29 year-old man, who originated from Missouri. In 1894 Miller was arrested for theft in Nebraska and sentenced to one year in the Nebraska State Prison. One day, seven months into his sentence, while alone in a room, Miller cut out a panel of the wainscoting and stepped behind it. For the next

three days he worked his way up the chimney by taking out bricks above and filling in under his feet, thus raising himself to the top and to the roof. During these three days, the city



Cyrus Briggs Miller

was being searched for him, all while he was still in the walls of the prison. He made his escape and headed East landing in Iowa.

In the summer of 1896, he came North to Blue Earth County and happened upon the rural Yaeger schoolhouse when school was not in session. Now here's where the story truly becomes stranger than fiction.

He used a skeleton key to open the door and after surveying the building he went to work building his hideout. He skillfully removed a section of the wainscoting on the inside of the building directly opposite the chimney. The boards were sawed very carefully just under the molding, along the top and across the bottom level with the floor. Then, by sawing downward along the grooves between the boards, a small door was formed, which escaped detection by the students and teacher. The door had hooks on the inside with which to fasten it and a weight attached to a pulley kept his improvised door tightly closed. The weight was two heavy chunks of wood in a gunny sack. The wood was

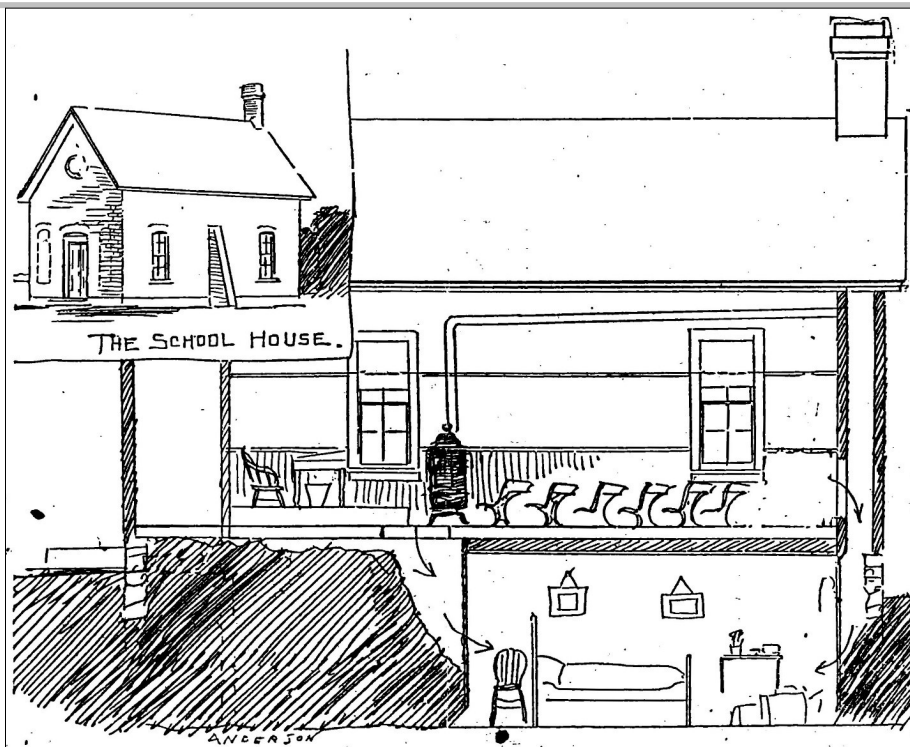


imprinted with the name Eric Holberg, from whose farm they had been stolen.

Miller then dug down inside the lower part of the chimney and by this means tunneled under the schoolhouse. Most of his work was done at night. The nearest house was the old Yaeger homestead about a ¼ mile

away, so he was safe from interruption. He labored for days digging a slanted tunnel and a room, which was under the north end of the schoolroom. Here he excavated a large room about 6½ x 7 x 9 feet. The ingenuity of this really remarkable man was again demonstrated by the method adopted to get rid of the dirt removed in order to form the room. The earth was packed between the joists holding the school house floor and held by boards nailed on the under side, and thus made a receptacle for the surplus dirt, as well as formed a dead wall through which no sounds could penetrate to give warning to those in the room above of the presence of the fugitive.

How long it took him to build this room is not known. The walls and ceiling of Miller's hideaway were of the best shiplap. In fact, the walls were even wallpapered and the floor had carpet. In the den Miller had all the comforts of home. A bed, stove, cooking utensils, books, papers and all the accessories to make a person feel that life is worth living. When he got hungry, he foraged the neighboring farms for choice meals: from hen coops, fresh milk and gardens to cellars of canned goods and smokehouses of meat.



"Yaeger School House, Rapidan. Showing Miller's Underground Retreat."  
Mankato Free Press, November 15, 1897

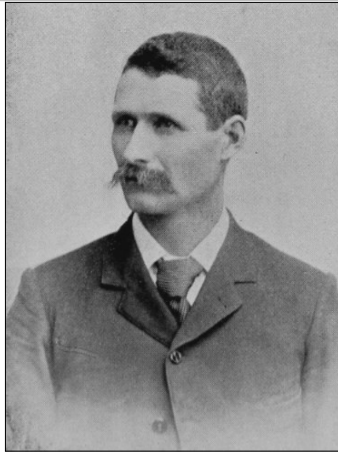
The Yaeger Schoolhouse ghost had everything he needed to keep himself comfortable during the day while school children studied above his head. No one suspected a thing; just like a ghost, he was invisible. Perhaps feeling the law was getting too close or feeling a little over-confident of his criminal

abilities, Miller began to move his possessions to a room he had rented in Fairmont in Martin County, Minnesota. To help with the move, he had taken a team of horses from the barn of Al Brush, near Amboy, and a buggy from C.H. Brush's barn nearby and moved two loads from the schoolhouse. He then left the team and buggy in the woods near Winnebago, and sent the owners postcards telling them where their property could be found.

Miller was seen around Fairmont but, didn't draw much attention to himself, or so he thought. On April 6, 1897, there was a report in Mankato that a red bicycle had been stolen from the Jensen and Perrin's warehouse. The Blue Earth County sheriff, Daniel Bowen, shared the report with his colleagues in the neighboring towns and counties including the sheriff in Martin County. Well, by now, you can about guess that Miller is the culprit who stole the red bicycle. While in Fairmont, he stashed the bike under the bridge. The sheriff spotted the missing bike and waited near the bridge for the culprit to retrieve it. Miller was arrested on June 10<sup>th</sup>. He wouldn't talk for three days, but then his will began to unravel and he confessed to everything. But it would take another five days



before he would tell the authorities about the Yaeger school hideout. Sheriff Bowen could hardly believe what he was hearing and paid a visit to the schoolhouse to see for himself. Miller was brought to the Mankato jail. It was here that teacher Miss Hower paid him a visit, curious to see the man who had lived literally under her feet for so long.



Sheriff Daniel T. Bowen

As Miller's story was put together with other mysterious happenings, all began to make sense. It explained why smoke had been seen coming from the schoolhouse chimney on a summer afternoon, but the stove was cold. Miller had rigged a way to use the same chimney for his stove. Now it was assumed a ham that had disappeared from a smokehouse, or preserves missing from a basement with an outside entrance, or school books taken from several schools in the area had ended up in the hideout under the Yaeger school. It also explained where George Darby's team, three miles south of Rapidan, and the sleigh of his neighbor, James VanWinkle disappeared to on the night of February 4, coming home the next morning, driverless but, covered with sweat. There could have been no coincidence that the Garden City Depot had been robbed that very night. And the only thing found at that crime scene was a pair of cloth mittens. When Miller's lair was searched, they found a piece of cloth of the same material with the pattern of mittens cut out; an exact match to the mittens in the depot. Caught red-handed.

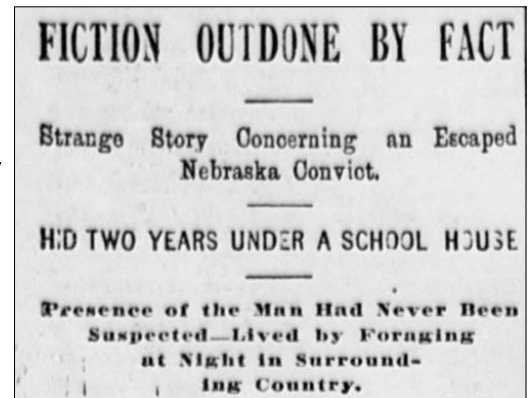
So, why did Miller carve out his hideaway under the schoolhouse? His only response was that he wanted to be alone, he wanted secrecy; he wished to get away from the world and in the seclusion of the room he had made for himself he could simply read books and study.

After Miller's confession, people for miles around came to see the wonderful underground home, and after a time, the curiosity became so

intense, the officers of the school district decided to charge a small admission fee to those wishing to inspect the strange retreat. Finally, the crush of sightseers grew to great proportions that the school officers decided to fill-in and destroy all trace of the cave. Unfortunately, the money raised from the admission fee was not enough to repair the damage Miller had made to the building.

Word about Miller's misdeeds continued to spread and soon articles about him and his underground dwelling could be found in newspapers across the country.

On November 15, 1897, Miller was found guilty in the Blue Earth County court for the robbery at the Garden City Depot and sentenced



Headline from *Omaha Daily Bee*, from Omaha, Nebraska, November 9, 1897.

to five years of hard labor for grand larceny in the first degree in the Minnesota State Prison in Stillwater. After serving that five-year sentence, he was to be returned to Nebraska to finish out the first sentence (and probably another for escaping prison).

Unfortunately for us, the end of Cyrus Briggs Miller's story remains a mystery. Perhaps he served his time and went on to live an honest life. Or maybe he once again disappeared in the shadows and became a ghost. It is definitely a story stranger than fiction.

#### Sources:

Blue Earth County Historical Society Subject Files

**Sidenote:** If you read the previous issue of *The Historian*, Summer 2021, you might remember reading about Anders Anderson, a long-time illustrator for the *Mankato Free Press*. He was the illustrator of the three drawings used in this article.



# BLUE EARTH HISTORICAL COUNTY SOCIETY

1901 — 120 YEARS — 2021

## ANNIVERSARY OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, November 6, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Visit the History Center for FREE Museum Admission and Door Prizes.

## DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

November 5 - 7

To celebrate our Anniversary, a generous donor has offered to **match every gift** we receive on our anniversary, up to \$12,000. Make a tax-deductible donation for our 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of \$120 or any other amount! All gifts will be **matched dollar-for-dollar!**

## MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS

Tuesday, November 9 - Saturday, November 13

Holiday Gift Shop Specials including **Double Shopping Discount\***, Door Prizes and Appreciation Gift for BECHS Members.

Unable to attend? See page 15 for virtual participation.

## Give History for the Holidays

*Marian Anderson Art · Collectibles · Books  
Local Handcrafted Items · Memberships · Donations*

\*BECHS member 20% discount at History Center Gift Shop during Appreciation Days ONLY. Does NOT include consignment or sale items, memberships or to be combined with any other offer.

## DIRECTOR Continued from page 2

I hope you are as excited about the future of History as we are. In the new year, there will be some wonderful opportunities for us to gather and dream together. Watch for more information to come soon. Of course, none of this would even be a dream without our dedicated supporters like YOU! Please join us November 9-13 for our Member Appreciation Days.

Thank you to everyone that attended and supported *A Night at*



*the Speakeasy* in October. We had a great time and raised much needed operating funds in the process.

On behalf of the BECHS Staff, we wish each of you a happy holiday season!

## Celebrating 10 Years at BECHS

Earlier this year, BECHS' Communications & Archives Manager, Heather Harren, celebrated 10 years of working at the Blue Earth County Historical Society. The next time you see Heather be sure to thank her for her years of hard work and dedication to local history!



## LOCAL HISTORY PODCAST

*Explore the history that surround us!*



New episodes air Saturdays at 11:05 a.m. on KTOE Radio. You can find all previous episodes on our website at

[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast)

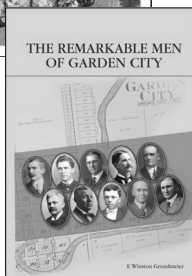
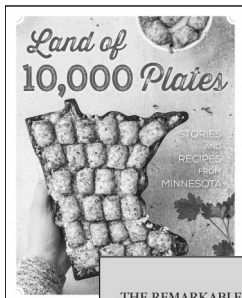
# GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY

Danelle Erickson, Operations Manager

**Shop Local. Something Unique. Meaningful Gifts.**

## Shop Local

Did you know the majority of the books available at the Gift Shop are from Blue Earth County and Minnesota? Over a dozen books have been written and published by BECHS. Several other titles come from Mankato publishers. Our great selection of Minnesota cookbooks, travel books and other history books come directly from the Minnesota Historical Society.



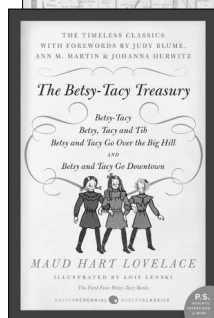
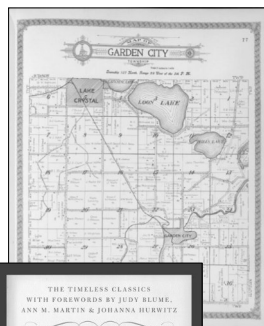
## Something Unique

Nothing against the big box stores, but the History Center Gift Shop is full of items you won't find anywhere else. For example, the Blue Earth County Historical Society is the exclusive dealer of fine art prints and note cards by Marian Anderson. Stop by and see the variety of art available.



## Meaningful Gifts

We all strive to make gift giving as meaningful as we can. How about Betsy-Tacy books to read with the young people in your life? Or a vintage Blue Earth County map that shows your ancestral farm? And while a gift certificate may not seem like the most personal gift, for a history lover—a BECHS certificate or gift membership can't be beat!



MANKATO AND NORTH MANKATO

NOVEMBER 19-28

*Holiday Experience*

'Tis the biggest shopping season of the year! Find unique items that you can only get from locally owned businesses while ensuring your spending stays local and creates a better community.

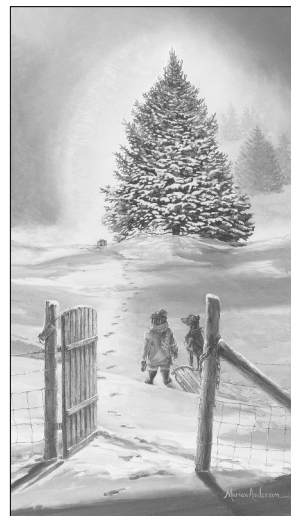
## City Center Holiday Bonus Gift Card Program SPEND \$50, GET \$20

For a limited time, make a purchase of at least \$50 in food, merchandise and/or gift cards from a participating Mankato City Center business and you will earn a FREE \$20 gift card to a participating City Center business. List of participating business and program details at [www.CityCenterMankato.com](http://www.CityCenterMankato.com)

*Marian Anderson*

*Holiday Sharing Tree*

In honor of the Mankato Holiday Sharing Tree's 20th Anniversary in 2004, this commemorative print was created by renowned local artist Marian Anderson. It symbolizes the hope and light the Holiday Sharing Tree program has provided for those in need since its inception in 1985.



The History Center Gift Shop has these commemorative prints for sale for \$25 in store and online. Sales benefit BECHS and the Holiday Sharing Tree. Visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Marian-Anderson](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Marian-Anderson)

During the holiday season the original oil painting will be on display at the Marian Anderson Art Gallery in the History Center. For more about the Holiday Sharing Tree, visit their website at [www.holidaysharingtree.org](http://www.holidaysharingtree.org)



# COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS

Shelley Harrison, Curator/Archivist

The Historical Society is pleased to present our newest exhibit: *Sips, Style and Stories*, an exhibit that is serving up stories about beverage history and the fashions and fads of that time. It highlights how fashion has been influenced by historical events and key individuals. For example, prohibition ushered in the first known cocktail dresses. We share some of our collection's rarely seen clothing pieces and artifacts, and perhaps discover a new drink. From pioneer aprons and egg coffee to satin jackets and the Pepsi Challenge.



1920s fashion

The exhibit traces the story of how social norms have been reflected in fashion, from ruffled Victorian gowns through contemporary clothing. Visitors also learn how practical, social, and cultural changes in our history are mirrored in what we wore and what we drank. The results could either reinforce the norms or support countercultural movements. We are excited to look back at over 100 years of style and discover the offbeat social history where fashion and drink fads collide.

The exhibit is a timeline of garments from the late-1800s through today. Each piece of clothing is shown with a drink or artifact of its time, such as a work of art, barware, or bottles. It also offers a little libation inspiration, and a play tea party and dress-up spot for kids.



Lemonade set and Gaudy Welsh cup and saucer

Be sure to visit our Facebook page for drink recipes from our archives and more. If you are unable to visit in-person, you can find a free virtual tour of the exhibit on our website's Videos on Demand page. (Links below.)

*Sips, Style, and Stories* will encourage visitors to have a little fun, curiosity and whimsy with a selection of clothing, drinks, and their accompanying stories. Come join the party—what would you like to drink?

This exhibit is free and open to the public and will be on view now – January 2022. If you have any questions or would like information on the exhibit please contact Shelley at [archivist@blueearthcountyhistory.com](mailto:archivist@blueearthcountyhistory.com).

## BECHS Facebook

[Facebook.com/BECHShistory](https://www.facebook.com/BECHShistory)

## Videos on Demand

[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/on-demand](https://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/on-demand)

*Sips, Style & Stories*

BLUE EARTH COUNTY BEVERAGE  
AND FASHION HISTORY

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is serving  
up stories about beverage history and the fashions  
and fads of that time in this new exhibit.

**OCTOBER 2021 - FEBRUARY 2022**  
Free, Open to the Public

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORY CENTER  
424 Warren Street, Mankato

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](https://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)

# EVERY OBJECT HAS A STORY...

Every object tells a story, here are just a few of those stories from our collection.

In the History Center Museum we showcase objects that tell the stories of Blue Earth County's past. These objects are quite diverse, with only about ten percent of the collection on display at any given time. Sometimes it's hard to know what to show with so much stuff! Here is a glimpse into a few garments now on display:

## Horsehair Coat, 1900

This is a brown horsehair coat with raccoon fur collar and cuffs, and toggle fastens. The label saying it was made by Thomas Figved, Robe & Tanning Company of Minneapolis. The coat belonged to Henry Thomsen.



Market building in St. Clair. The jacket belonged to Don or Doug Westphal.

## Dress, 1950s

This floor-length green and gold polka dot taffeta dress has a matching gold belt and satin scarf. It belonged to Mary Ward Jones of Medo Township.



## Jacket, 1980-85

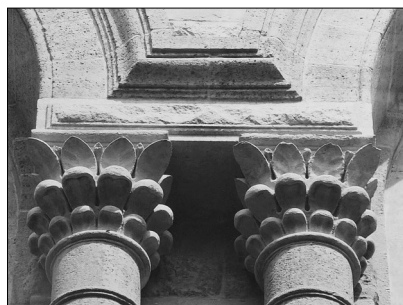
This black nylon jacket with long raglan sleeves, with "The Diner St. Clair, MN" lettering on back. The Diner was owned by Bill and Mary Jane Hager and was located in the former Rose's Meat

To accompany our new exhibit *Sips, Style and Stories*, what drinks would you pair with these garments? A Pink Squirrel with the emerald green cocktail dress? A can of New Coke or Pepsi Twist with the St. Clair Diner Jacket? The next time you take a spin through the Museum, you'll know a little more of the story.

## HISTORY CENTER ART GALLERY

### ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

By Bend of the River Photography Club  
through December 23, 2021



Details from the Blue Earth County Courthouse by Mary Gitter-Zehnder

This exhibit was inspired by one of the Bend of the River Photography Clubs monthly assignments "architectural elements". Each photographer had to express their own interpretation of what these words may mean when viewing a structure. The exhibit gives you a new perspective to look at Blue Earth County and the world, and the details that surround you every day.

The Bend of the River Photography Club was formed in 2008 to create enthusiasm for the art of photography and provide opportunities to enhance one's photographic skills. The Club meets every 4th Tuesday of the month 6:30-8:00 p.m. Anyone interested in photography is welcome to join. [www.facebook.com/bendoftheriverphotography/](http://www.facebook.com/bendoftheriverphotography/)

# RESEARCH & GENEALOGY CENTER

Heather Harren, Communication & Archives Manager

Happy Fall! It has been a busy couple of months! If you have not visited the Research Center recently, you will be surprised to see the room has been moved around just a bit. The tables are in a different orientation and the card catalogues are now side by side. Stop by to take a look sometime!

We are about six months into the new search feature for the Online Indexes on our website and it has been a great addition to the Research Center and for researchers. From my perspective, we have more people requesting our resources than in the past few years. I have also had a few researchers that have used the index prior to visiting, which has streamlined their onsite search. We will continue to add indexes as they become available and are excited to announce the recently completed Marriage Index from 1949-2015!

Currently, volunteers are working on

creating indexes for more Social Notes and news articles cited in the card catalog. Many of these articles show off achievements or milestones in a person's life and fill in that dash between their

years on your genealogy chart. This is a slow process as we have almost 90 drawers of cards to go through. As the indexes are completed, they will be added online. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.

If you have not checked out the new online search tool yet, you can find it on our website at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/indexes](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/indexes).



BECHS continues working to add more of our valuable Card Catalog information to our website.

## YOUNG HISTORIANS

### *Hands-on History for Kids*

School-aged children who love history are invited to join us for this free, monthly program. (Material is geared for 3-6



grades, but all are welcome.) This year, we are traveling through time from the earliest history in this area through current times. *Young Historians* meets the second Saturday of each month September–May from 10 a.m. to Noon. Please RSVP to Heather at 345-5566 or [Research@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](mailto:Research@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)

**November 13** – Pioneers and the Civil War

**December 11** – Industrial Revolution Through World War I

**January 8** – no meeting

## GREATER MANKATO ON THE MOVE



**greater munkato  
on the move**  
MOBILE TOURS

“Greater Mankato on the Move” is a mobile arts and history tour app brought to you by BECHS, Visit Mankato, CityArt Mankato, Twin Rivers Council for the Arts and other local arts and cultural groups.

Explore Mankato's rich Art and History throughout the community with a variety of tour options including CityArt Sculpture Walk, Heritage Plaques Tour and Poetry Walk.

Scan the QR Code with your smartphone to view or visit [GreaterMankato.oucell.com](http://GreaterMankato.oucell.com) to begin your tour!





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# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Steve Jameson, BECHS Board Chair

What a year it's been. Last year when I wrote this Fall column, we were gripped by a pandemic, our History Center had been closed for months and was just reopening and the promise of vaccines was still months away. We've come a long way in a year and yet we're still making history as we try to make this pandemic history. This month marks a big milestone for our Historical Society. It is our 120th Anniversary! Over the next 12 months we'll be celebrating our 120 years in a number of ways. We're also working on a **bold** future for our museum.

A couple weeks ago we held our Speakeasy event to help us celebrate history and kick-off our fundraising campaign. If you were there, you heard about our bold goal to raise \$240k in 120 days. Sure it's a big goal, but we know that with History Heroes like you we'll be able to raise the money that will set us up to do even bigger things in the coming years. Look for our campaign information in this newsletter and in

mailings to come. Your support will help get us to our goal.

Another way you can help is to consider joining our Board of Trustees, the governing arm for the organization. We're looking for strong leaders that share in our bold vision to serve on our Board.

Serving on the Board of BECHS is a true joy. If you have the passion and want to see BECHS grow to the next level, reach out to Jessica Potter or look for the board application on our website. We'd be happy to have you.

## Join BECHS' Board of Trustees

Applications are now being accepted for Blue Earth County individuals strong in fundraising and friend-raising, facility development, accounting/finance, human resources, and education. **Applications are due by January 31, 2021** and Board terms will begin in March 2022. Details at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/About](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/About)



## Share Your COVID-19 Story

BECHS needs your help documenting historic events. What COVID-19 related stories, photos and objects do think should be preserved and remembered for future generations? Please share with BECHS so we can do what we do best—collect and preserve today's history for generations to come.

**No story is too small!** Join this community project today by visiting:

**[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Story](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Story)**

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### Here are some examples of the stories and items you can share

#### Written word


Journal entries, memoirs, letters or emails from the last year and half document the personal side of this global pandemic. What do you want people to remember?

#### Photos

Pictures of "COVID Life" - working from home, home schooling, projects worked on, closed businesses, mask or vax selfies, reunions, etc.

#### Objects

Handmade masks, Lawn Signs School projects, etc. Contact the History Center to donate physical items.



## BECHS Membership make a great gift!

Great for history- ☆☆  
lovers, genealogists  
and families.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Contact Danelle if you are interested in volunteering or for more information.

### Kiwanis Holiday Lights

BECHS is a participating non-profit at the Kiwanis Holiday Lights and needs volunteers to help in the park **Sunday, November 28** from 4:30-9 p.m. Volunteers alternate between working outside and taking breaks to warm up. Dinner and snacks are provided. Contact BECHS.

### Front Desk and Gift Shop Assistant

Volunteers are needed to help at the History Center front desk. Duties include greeting visitors, ringing up store sales and providing general assistance. As this may include some downtime, this can be combined with other volunteer tasks such as data entry or archival work. Time commitment: Flexible, but a minimum 3-hour shift on a regular schedule would be preferred; Tuesday - Saturday. Shifts also available "as needed".

### Research Center Assistants

Seeking people to assist in the Research Center with daily operation such as assisting researchers, fulfilling research requests and keeping the room tidy. Training will be provided and staff will be available to assist. Time commitment: Flexible, but a minimum 3-hour shift on a regular schedule would be preferred; Tuesday - Saturday.



## Historic R.D. Hubbard House

*Where 1900s History Comes to Life*

### CHRISTMAS AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE

606 South Broad Street, Mankato

**Saturday, December 4, 3-7 pm**

**Sunday, December 5, 1-4 pm**

*Advanced tickets required. Space is limited.*

Explore the holiday décor at the Hubbard House and enjoy a "History Mystery" in this Self-Guided Tour. Something has gone wrong at the Hubbard House! Use the puzzles and scavenger hunt to solve the mystery.

Fun for all ages. Two Days Only!

\$10/Adult; \$7/BECHS Member; \$5/Child (5-17)

*Sponsored by Free Press Media*

### GUIDED HOLIDAY TOURS BY APPOINTMENT

**Saturday, December 11 & 18, 1-4 p.m.**

**Sunday, December 12 & 19, 1-4 p.m.**

\$7/Adult; Free/BECHS Member; \$3/Child (5-17)

*Advanced tickets required. Space is limited.*



Advanced tickets on sale  
November 18  
[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)

For Hubbard House updates and tidbits, follow  
"Hubbard House, Mankato" on Facebook



## HOLIDAY HOURS History Center Closed December 24 - January 10

This extended holiday break will provide both a break for our staff and an opportunity to gear up for 2022.

Staff will continue to have occasional access to their email during this time.

# BECHS DONORS, MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

July 16 – October 21, 2021

## DONORS

Kevin and Shelli Allen  
Chuck & JO Guck Bailey  
Dale Benefield  
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Amy Boles  
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Marnie Werner  
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Beth Zimmer

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Anita Baerg-Vatndal  
Steve Carlstrom  
Joan Collison  
Krista Helgeson  
Christianne Jones  
Marjorie and Michael  
McGraw  
Maureen Pearson  
Buck Pettit  
Dan and Mary Robinson  
Leslie Gene-Hartz Sprott  
Sara Tostenson  
Noël Van Tol

## IN MEMORIAM

*In Memory of*  
**Doris Backlund Boyce**  
Michael Frederick

*In Memory of*  
**Doris Cotton**  
Gerry and Mary Wolff

*In Memory of*  
**Nancy Craig**  
Ken and Julie Schrader

\*Donated to BECHS' parking lot improvements and new parking stripes.  
Thank you!

## A NIGHT AT THE SPEAKEASY

Return to the Roaring 20s

October 21, 2021 at Chankaska Creek

Thank you to our Speakeasy Sponsors and Attendees who made this year's Speakeasy one to remember!

Presenting Sponsor  
Chankaska Creek Ranch & Winery

## Sponsors

Cathy & Mike Brennan  
Coldwell Banker Commercial-Fisher Group  
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Hilton Garden Inn, Downtown Mankato  
Pratt Wealth Management  
RBC Wealth Management-Brian Koch  
Sign Pro of Mankato  
Williams Diamond Center  
Wingert Realty & Land Services



Save the Date!  
October 29, 2022

Chankaska Creek  
Ranch & Winery



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 2021 – January 2022

## NOVEMBER

- 4 **History @ Home: Blue Earth County Historical Society: The Story of Us**  
Hybrid presentation. 4 p.m. Attend in-person at the History Center OR register to join via Zoom (either live or watch the recording later). Registration required for virtual attendance. Free/BECHS Members; \$7/non-members
- 7 **BECHS 120th Anniversary Open House**, 10 a.m.—4 p.m. See page 6 for details.
- 13 **Young Historians: Pioneers and the Civil War**, 10 a.m. See page 10 for more details.
- 18 **Give to the Max Day**—Minnesota's Annual Day of Giving. Join thousands of donors from across the state and give to your favorite non-profits (BECHS included) by visiting [www.GiveMN.org](http://www.GiveMN.org).
- 20 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: Military**, virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.
- 25-27 **History Center Closed—Happy Thanksgiving!**
- 30 **#GivingTuesday** is a global movement of generosity. Thanksgiving is followed by Black Friday, Cyber Monday and #GivingTuesday. Donate to your favorite non-profits, including BECHS!



## DECEMBER

- 2 **History @ Home: Preserving Memories**, book talk with VINE Memoir Group.  
Hybrid presentation. 4 p.m. Attend in-person at the History Center OR register to join via Zoom (either live or watch the recording later). Registration required for virtual attendance. Free/BECHS Members; \$7/non-members
- 4 **Christmas at the Hubbard House**, 3-7 p.m. Advanced tickets required. See page 12.
- 5 **Christmas at the Hubbard House** 1-4 p.m. Advanced tickets required. See page 12.
- 11 **Young Historians Topic: Industrial Revolution**, 10 a.m.-Noon, Free. See page 10 for more details.
- 11-12 **Hubbard House Guided Holiday Tours** 1-4 p.m. ; Advanced tickets required. See page 12 for details.
- 18-19 **Hubbard House Guided Holiday Tours** 1-4 p.m. ; Advanced tickets required. See page 12 for details.
- 20 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: Your Genealogy Wish List**, virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.
- 24-  
Jan 10 **The History Center will be closed December 24 through January 10.** This extended holiday break will provide both a break for our staff and an opportunity to gear up for 2022. Staff will continue to have occasional access to their email during this time.

## JANUARY

- 11 **History Center reopens**
- 15 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: What Two Relatives Would You Invite to Dinner?**  
virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.

For more event information or to register, visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Events](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Events)


# MEMBERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

## Thank You Members!

While BECHS could never thank YOU to our members enough—that doesn't mean we aren't going try!

**Member Appreciation Days are November 9-13, 2021.** Stop by the History Center for door prizes, member gifts and double Gift Shop discounts. Unable to visit in-person? Visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/membership](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/membership) and enter your email for a chance to win a door prize, plus you will receive a coupon code for one of BECHS' Videos On Demand. And don't forget to use your member discount code when shopping online. Code: bechsmember

Renewing or starting your BECHS membership has never been easier! Simply visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/membership](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/membership) and complete the needed information. Returning members can renew at anytime. You won't lose any months by renewing early.

 **Be a BECHS Member Today**

☐ \$35.00 - Senior Membership, 62+  
☐ \$40.00 - Individual Membership  
☐ \$55.00 - Senior Household | 2 adults, 62+  
☐ \$60.00 - Household | 2 adults and children in same household

Contact Information

First Name \*

Last Name \*



## BECHS Annual Membership

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is a member-supported, non-profit organization. Membership dues make up a growing portion of the annual operating budget. Thank you for your support.

Name

Business Name

Address

Phone

Email

☐ Gift for:

Include name and address

### Membership Levels

Individual Senior (62+) \$35

Individual \$40

Senior Household \$55

Household \$60

*Membership expiration dates  
can be found on your mailing  
label on the back cover*

Please send this form and check to:

**BECHS Membership**  
424 Warren Street  
Mankato, MN 56001

**OR**

Complete your membership form online at  
[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Membership](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Membership)

*Corporate and Organizational Annual Memberships are also available, call for details.*

# BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1901 — 120 YEARS — 2021

**\$240k | 120 Days | 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**BOLD VISION, BOLD STEP, BOLD HISTORY HEROES**

To celebrate our anniversary, we have a **BOLD** vision to expand the History Center. To realize this **BOLD** vision, we are taking a **BOLD** first step by committing to raise \$240,000 in 120 days. And we need **BOLD** History Heroes to make it happen! See pg. 2 for more information.

## DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT NOVEMBER 5 - 7

A generous donor will match every gift we receive on our anniversary, up to \$12,000. Make a tax-deductible donation for our 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of \$120 or any other amount!  
All gifts will be matched dollar-for-dollar!

[www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/DONATE](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/DONATE)

**BECHS**  
BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
424 WARREN STREET  
MANKATO, MN 56001

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## EXHIBITS

**Sips, Styles and Stories**  
*through January 2022*



**ART GALLERY**  
**Architectural Elements by**  
**Bend of the River Photo Club**  
*through December 23, 2021*



*Old Town Mankato by Charlie Berg*

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
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Mankato MN  
56001  
Permit No. 86

Membership  
Expiration Date