

# THE BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORIAN

Winter 2021

A Blue Earth County Historical Society Publication

Vol. XXVII No. 1



## SWIMMING IN THE RIVER: The Sibley Park Dam

By Tim Pulis

"New Dam at Sibley Park Mankato, Minn."  
Postcard, c. 1940

Two rivers form the northern boundary of Blue Earth County and Mankato. Our rivers are a natural attraction and a source of entertainment. Minnesota is, of course, the land of 10,000 lakes and there are many lakes in Blue Earth County, but a century ago it took some effort to easily get to them. The rivers however were just a five-minute walk for most of Mankato's early population. On a hot summer day with no air conditioning at home, a dip in the river always felt great.

The problem with river swimming was the water was often polluted and potentially dangerous. Originally towns dumped their sewage directly into the rivers as did factories and farms. Even the town dump for Mankato utilized the river bank. Unlike lakes, river water levels were constantly fluctuating, making the currents in them unpredictable. Dangerous obstacles lurking in the murky waters like dead trees could easily snag a swimmer. What was a great place to swim one year could change the next year with major spring floods reshaping the river bottom.

A hundred years ago there were no telephones or email for young people to stay connected to what was going on. They would have to

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## The Blue Earth County Historian

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Jessica Potter, Executive Director

New year, new possibilities. If you've followed my columns you know that the Winter issue is always about looking forward to the new year. There's something hope filled about the beginning of a new year to build on successes and looking ahead to new opportunities. Mind you, no one could have planned for what 2020 would bring. Even though it was filled with so many challenges, there were also some incredible successes that we couldn't have even imagined last January.

In all my years with BECHS, I never thought we would embark on asbestos abatement in the lower level, knowing it would mean being closed to the public for an extended period of time. With the project now complete, the results are incredible, thanks to new relationships with local trades and businesses and the support from you!

I could also never imagine how we could shift what we do in-person to virtual. But I'm so glad we did! What an amazing opportunity to reach people across the country (and Canada) with dozens of virtual programs including *History @ Home* and *Ghosts from the Past*. Let's not forget our *Surrounded By History* podcast (my personal favorite). Last year, we produced 22, 20-minute podcasts focused on Blue Earth County History, thanks to our partnership with KTOE/Radio Mankato. I especially love the "rest of the story" from the listeners. If you've missed an episode, you can check them out at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast). Be sure to listen to KTOE on Mondays at 1 p.m. for new episodes.



Everything accomplished in 2020 was only possible because Blue Earth County Historical Society has the BEST members and donors! You walked alongside us, cheered us on, renewed your membership, contributed your best gift, participated in our programs and were excited when we were able to reopen. BECHS has weathered this storm called COVID-19 because of YOU! Thank you!

So, to give back to you, we have some incredible opportunities for you to be inspired, engaged and connect to each other and local history coming in 2021. For now, all programming will remain virtual, but as restrictions loosen, we will offer hybrid opportunities (in-person/virtual combo). Some programs we are planning includes concerts with local musicians, trivia night, virtual tours and a History Mystery. At the History Center check out the extended *We are Water MN* exhibit (here until March 6) and then a special exhibition of Marian Anderson original oil paintings (some never seen by the general public). Please check out all we have to offer, share it with your family and friends. Let's connect in 2021!

## DAM Continued from page 1

venture outdoors much more often than today to meet with friends. If swimming was on their minds there were no outdoor pools. The only indoor swimming pool was at the YMCA, located downtown starting in 1906, where it was free for boys.

Imagine a group of young teenagers preparing for an outing to the river. One of their parents said they had to take a younger sibling along with them which they reluctantly did. As the older kids swim out into the deeper parts of the river, the younger one follows them because he didn't want to be called a chicken. The current is too strong and the group loses track of him and he quickly tires and drowns. His body is found a day or two later.

This scenario was all too common through the years. Whenever it happened, the town elders became alarmed. They considered outlawing swimming in the river, but knew it would never work. The only alternative would be to create a safe place to swim with a sand beach and a clean bottom out of the strong currents.

The annual "Old Settlers' Picnic" was held at Sibley Park in 1900. Parsons King Johnson, the first settler to arrive in Mankato in 1852, was unable to attend the picnic, so he wrote a letter that was read aloud to the 500 people attending. In it he recalled the old days fondly. He ended with the following words, "Caution the old boys about going in bathing, for you know the seductive Minnesota River has lured many a victim to its watery bosom."

In 1898, Park Superintendent George E. Blake noted there was no suitable place around Mankato for river bathing. He suggested a bathhouse at Sibley Park on the Blue Earth River with a water slide from the top of the mound into the water. He also wanted a dance pavilion and lookout tower on top of the mound. None of his suggestions materialized. The first bathing beach was in 1901 on the Nicollet County side of the Minnesota River, north of the Main Street Bridge near an old canning factory building which was used for a bathhouse. This site was convenient for people and according to Health Officer Dr. Julius Hielscher the river bottom sloped out

gradually. This spot was well patronized with between 150-200 people swimming every night. A special policeman patrolled the beach area and swimsuits could be rented from the city for between 3 and 5 cents. One concern was that crowds of people might gather on the iron bridge to watch the bathers and cause accidents to happen.



The Blue Earth River at Sibley Park, c. 1908.

In 1903, the Mankato City Council decided they would rather have the swimming done at Sibley Park and Park Superintendent Blake was authorized to build a bathhouse. This twenty-room building was located on the bank of the Minnesota River just west of the park. Though it was located 150 feet from the river, there were two

wooden plank walkways leading to the water. A partition divided the bathhouse with women on one end and men on the other.

City workers installed timbers strung together and anchored fifty feet from shore and extending 200 feet up and down the river to form a bathing pool. A boat was kept manned and ready in case an accident happened to any of the bathers. To help pay for the added expenses, bathing suit rentals went up to a dime. All was good until August 31, when 15-year-old Richard Olson drowned at the beach just before it officially opened for the day. To make things worse, Richard's older brother Olvin had drowned four years earlier. He was 15 years old at the time and had died in the Minnesota River at the outlet of Warren's Creek. Drownings were so common that one newspaper article referred to a young man's death as the "first drowning of the year," as if they expected more to come. The Council immediately shut the beach down and moved the bathhouse.

People continued to swim in the rivers and the need to have a safe place was discussed through the years. In 1924, George Palmer and F.A. Landkamer approached the Council and asked that they establish a beach for swimming. Nothing resulted from their request. The next mention of a beach was in a July 1928 *Free Press* article. It discussed a swimming beach on the North Mankato side of the Minnesota River. It was evidently popular as a "continually changing group of about fifty persons are found to be using the beach, so that the number each day will run to perhaps two-hundred." Observers noted however

the beach had some issues. Unsanitary, dead animals were continually found in the water by the beach and just upstream from the beach was a running sewer emptying into the river. Swimming also proved to be dangerous as large rocks and boulders were located in the water, a big drop-off was located close to shore and treacherous undercurrents made drownings probable. So, it was suggested a swimming beach be created at Sibley Park. Like Yogi Berra used to say, "It was déjà vu all over again."

In the late 1920s, the idea of building a municipal swimming pool was starting to be floated. Another idea was to build a dam at the junction of the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers at Sibley Park and create a recreational lake. But then in 1929, the stock market crashed sending the country into the Great Depression. The thought of spending money on swimming was overtaken by just getting food on the table. But then in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president and soon after things like the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were started.

In December 1934, after years of talk of a dam at the mouth of the Blue Earth River in Sibley Park, Mankato Mayor C.K. Mayer signed a preliminary application to the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) for such an endeavor. SERA had actually been considering such a project for months. Mankato would be required to pay \$10,000 of the cost and the rest of the \$40,000 estimated cost would be furnished by labor from people on county relief rolls.

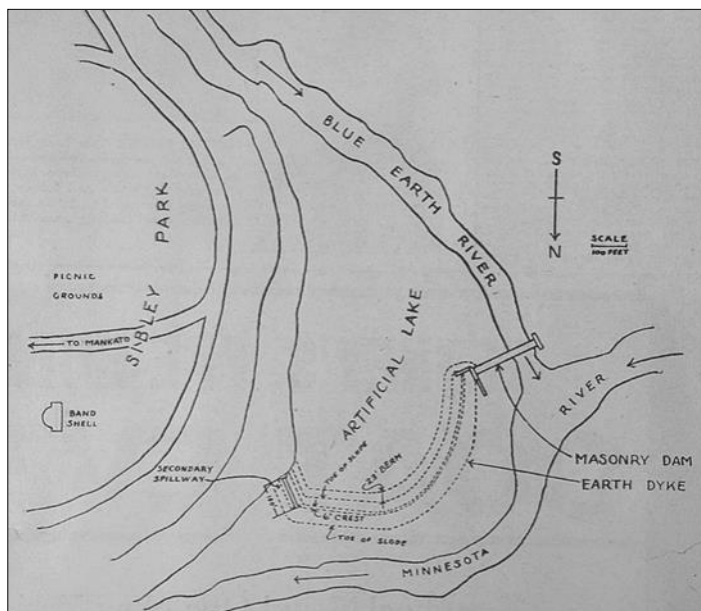
The project as outlined by SERA engineers provided a dike of earth 1,000 feet long and 20 feet wide at the top to extend from the Sibley Park side of the Blue Earth River bed to the 200 foot dam across the river channel. This created a lake of 19.5 acres. The Blue Earth River would be affected for four miles upstream and would widen the stream slightly to the first railroad bridge. When completed, a bathhouse and boathouse would be developed, creating a considerable source of revenue to the city from the rental of lockers, boats and canoes. The lake should be ideal for bathing purposes because it would be kept continually fresh by the flow of the river.

Early in 1935, work began with 20 men working in temperatures of 20 below zero, cutting brush from the Blue Earth River bottom to form the bottom of the proposed lake. That these men would work under such harsh conditions with such a short notice shows how desperate they were to make some money. Unemployment was

high and they needed to feed their families.

SERA engineers described the site of construction as "a natural" fit for the project. Mankato engineer Al Kircher, city officials and the citizens were excited they could finally have a safe place to swim in the river, and the estimated 87 men that would be employed for several months were relieved to think a regular paycheck would soon begin.

An overall view of the plans to create the lake were very elaborate given the short planning time. There was a 200-foot-long stone dam on the west end over the river. The dam would rest on a timber piling, driven to a depth of 25 feet. This piling was capped by a 29-inch reinforced concrete slab with proper provision for tying the masonry above to the concrete base. The height of the limestone masonry was 9.5 feet above the base which was 2.5 feet thick. Steel sheeting would be pounded into the lower strata of earth beneath the dam and would cut off any water seepage. This height would raise the water level behind the dam and still allow the river to flow over the dam. From the east end of the dam was a 1,000-foot earthen dike heading east covered with limestone rip-rap to prevent erosion. From



Plans for the dam and artificial lake, *Mankato Free Press* December 10, 1934

the other end of the dike was a 100-foot limestone dam with spillways extending south toward the park to let water through during high water periods.

Graders and tractors dug and moved dirt and sand from the future lake bed and created the earthen dike. When that was done, a special

machine was rented from the Widell Company to dig a trench through the bottom to divert the flow of water from the Blue Earth River so the dam on the western end could be constructed. While this work was progressing, the curious public



The dam and the meeting of the Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers, c. 1951

came out one Sunday in January 1935 with hundreds of cars passing by the construction site. What a site it was with an average of 60 men moving dirt, laying rip-rap, pouring concrete and building a masonry wall. Exciting times during the middle of the Great Depression.

Things kept rolling along and the western dam was completed, as was the eastern dike. Then mid-summer of 1935 things came to an abrupt halt. There were actually three things responsible for this. First SERA was disbanded. Then the Minnesota Department of Conservation Division of Waterways raised an objection. If that wasn't enough, Army engineers, under the jurisdiction of the War Department, were worried about the effect of the dam on the navigability of the Minnesota River. After months of delay as weeds started to take over the lake bed, the WPA took over the project and the feds and the state gave their okay to proceed. The men who had been previously employed were about to start receiving a paycheck again.

On May 18, 1936, work was resumed. The lake would average 500 feet in width, the beach was 900 feet long and about 350 feet wide. By late fall, the eastern section of the dam was completed. Delays in getting some materials slowed the work. After decades of people trying to safely swim and enjoy the rivers bordering the town, a wonderful lake had finally been created next to the popular Sibley Park.

On June 23, 1937, the dam and lake were dedicated. What a celebration it was. At 5:30 p.m. a banquet was held at the Saulpaugh Hotel in downtown Mankato. At least 100 out-of-town guests, including WPA officials, were present. Besides a fine meal, music was provided by an orchestra of the Local 477 Musicians' Union. After the dinner and speeches, a parade of cars led by the highway patrol and local police went from the

hotel to Sibley Park. At the park a crowd estimated at 8,000 people and 2,500 cars gathered around the bandshell to hear the dignitaries speak. Victor Christgau, State WPA Chief, told the crowd how proud the WPA was of their efforts in Minnesota.

This project meant not only hard work but,

bread and butter to the men assigned to building the dam. He then presented the dam to Mayor Armin Kleinschmidt, the representative of the people of Mankato. City Engineer, Al Kircher, was lauded as the "man with the push."

Other people who spoke mentioned how the town had waited for decades for a place to swim in the river and what a beautiful structure the dam was. Music during the exercises at the park was furnished by the Mankato Elks Band and the Court House Quartet. As darkness was setting in, a brilliant display of fireworks lit the new dam and lake in all colors of the rainbow. People went home that evening feeling satisfied that all was well. However, unknown to most in attendance, a dark cloud was hanging over the entire enterprise.

One week before the dedication ceremony, 10-year-old John Kenny dove off the railing of the dam and was drawn through one of the flood gates which had been left open due to high water. A fisherman nearby saved the youth. The same week the State Board of Health declared the water in the lake to be impure and unsafe for swimming. On the same day as the ceremony at the park, 15-year-old Raymond Shama drowned at the lake after he stepped in a hole on the bottom. Another youth that day needed to be pulled out of the lake after he also went into water over his head.

On June 22, Robert Hopfenspirger was hired as the lifeguard at the new Sibley Lake. On June 29, six days after the grand dedication celebration, he went from lifeguard to simply being a guard. His job was to keep people from entering the lake. The Council outlawed swimming and ordered signs that read "No Swimming - Deep Pitch Off."

After decades of citizens dreaming of a dammed up lake in the river, two years of planning and two years building, the two million

dollar (in today's dollars) dam became a boondoggle. There was no one to blame. Swimming in the river was socially accepted despite its inherent danger. Building the dam to create a lake was a logical thing to do at the time. In addition, its construction provided jobs to the unemployed at the height of the Depression. Who could know that the State Board of Health would enter the scene and pull the rug out from under it at the last minute.

Two things happened to make the disappointment a little less painful for the swimmers. First, one year later, the city built a wading pool for youngsters at Sibley Park that lasted until 1974. Also in 1938, work began on Tourtellotte Pool, also a WPA project. The pool was completed in 1940 and provided a safe place for older kids and adults to swim. Swimming in the river had become more and more unfashionable over the years as more pools became available and more family cars made a trip to area lakes much easier.

In the winters following the creation and quick demise of Sibley Lake, the Mankato Ice Company cut large blocks of ice from the lake for its storehouses. Eventually, city officials told them to get their ice elsewhere and over the next few years the snow was cleared and a great ice skating rink was created.



Ice chunks pushed through the fence on the dam's walkway during the 1951 flood

In April 1951, one of Mankato's all time worst floods occurred. Large flows of ice were blocked by the dam and water backed up the Blue Earth River exacerbating the flooding issue. When the water receded, it was determined the dam had to be removed so it would not contribute to future flooding.

During the following summer several sportsmen's clubs and area farmers offered

explosives to blow up the dam. Once the City got the green light from the State Conservation Department for the removal of it, they put out a call for dynamite to be donated. Farmers were told to haul the boxes of dynamite to the City Engineer's office on the third floor of City Hall. The image of farm trucks and pickups pulling up and unloading boxes and boxes of dynamite and hauling them up the stairs in City Hall is hard to fathom today.



Dynamiting the dam, January 1952

On January 9, 1952 contractor Brown and Legull drilled holes in the dam and inserted 1,000 sticks of dynamite. After advising onlookers to clear the area, the fuse was lit and within seconds one third of the dam was no more. Spectators had gathered at the highway pullout on Lookout Drive (which was Highway 14 at the time). The debris from the blast spread out over a wide area, including a seven-pound chunk that landed on the bumper of a car there. As debris rained down on them everyone scattered for cover. In the coming weeks, two more explosions would occur to get rid of the remaining sections.

The dam project permanently changed the course of the Blue Earth River. The parts of the dam that remain today look as sturdy as the day they were built and is a testament to the quality of work done by the WPA workers. What had been the beach along the shore of the lake near Sibley Park is now a 10-12 foot high bank of sediment left by decades of flooding. Some would look at the whole project as a monumental folly. I look at it as a noble effort by people doing what they thought best at a very different time in our history.

#### Sources

Blue Earth County Historical Society vertical files

# GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY

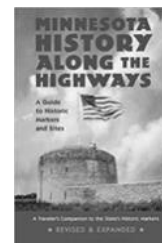
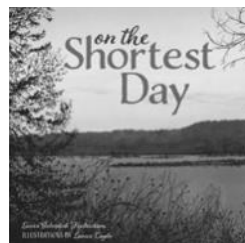
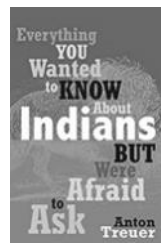
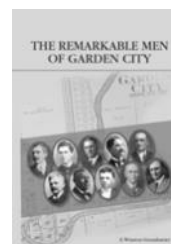
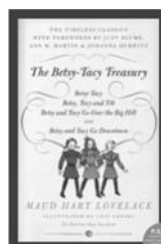
Danelle Erickson, Operations Manager

One thing I've seen on social media a lot these days is people sharing their list of books they plan to read in the new year. Do you have a reading list for 2021 or looking to start one? The History Center Gift Shop can help with that!

Here are some reading prompts to get you started:

- Read a local author
- Read a biography
- Read a genre you don't normally read
- Read a book that makes you think
- Read a children's book
- Read a travel book

Stop by the History Center Gift Shop and start reading! You can also shop by phone or online at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/online-store](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/online-store).



*The Betsy-Tacy Treasury* by Maud Hart Lovelace; *Little Crow* by Gary Clayton Anderson; *The Remarkable Men of Garden City* by Win Grundmeier; *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask* by Anton Treuer; *On the Shortest Day* by Laura Sulentic Fredrickson; *Minnesota History Along the Highways* compiled by Sarah P. Rubinstein

**FREE Contactless Pickup at the History Center for Gift Shop and Art Gallery orders.**

## Special Public Exhibition

*Marian Anderson*  
HER PERSONAL COLLECTION

Blue Earth County History Center  
March 16 - September 30, 2021  
**FREE**

Featuring original oil paintings by Marian Anderson on loan from her personal collection, some never before seen by the general public.

[www.MarianAnderson.com](http://www.MarianAnderson.com)

## IN MEMORIAM

With heavy hearts, the Blue Earth County Historical Society remembers Marian Anderson and her lasting legacy of beautiful art. Marian was nationally-acclaimed for her diverse subjects from mountain men to wildlife to nostalgic scenes of Southern Minnesota places.

Marian's paintings are not just an illustrated subject but within each a story is told. With each brush stroke a breath of life sets Marian's art apart. As you immerse yourself into the depths of her painting, her art reflects the beauty of a lifetime of experience of the artist.

In 2010, Marian generously donated her fine art print business to BECHS. At that point, we became the exclusive dealer of her art in the firsthand market. With every sale, 100% of the proceeds benefits the work of the Society.

It's bittersweet that we were already planning the new exhibit of her originals before we heard of her passing. We are honored to remember her legacy in this way.



# COLLECTIONS & EXHIBITS

Shelley Harrison, Curator/Archivist

The Historical Society is excited to announce the traveling exhibit *We Are Water MN* has been extended until March! This exhibit focuses on the relationships between people and water — how water connects story, history, faith, ethics, the arts and science.

The exhibit also highlights stories about the meaning and use of water by local people and communities. One of those stories that affected our community and had statewide repercussions was the 1963 Honeymead oil spill in Mankato.



Honeymead oil spill

On the morning of Wednesday, January 23, 1963, a tank holding three million gallons of soybean oil burst open, spilling most of its contents. The rupture was caused by the extreme cold and a steel access panel added by Honeymead to the bottom of the tank. The force of the oil escaping created a wave that knocked two nearby railroad cars into the Blue Earth River and derailed several other cars. Two smaller tanks also began leaking, spilling an additional million gallons of oil. Most of the employees of the plant were on break at the time and only one person was seriously injured.

The soybean oil quickly spread across the grounds of the Honeymead plant (now CHS) and about half of the oil flowed onto the frozen Blue Earth River. The oil ranged from several inches to three feet deep in some areas. Several streets were barricaded and some people couldn't leave their homes due to the oil.

Honeymead employees and city personnel began cleaning up the oil by dumping it into the Blue Earth River. Despite the cold temperatures, the soybean oil didn't freeze, but congealed into a heavy sludge. Some oil went down the sewer drains. Concerned that the oil would clog Mankato's sanitary system, this oil was pumped out and dumped into the Minnesota River.

Of the estimated 3 million gallons of soybean oil that spilled, about one-fourth was reclaimed

by Honeymead. Losses from the spill were estimated at \$2.1 million.

As the cleanup continued, the Minnesota Department of Health soon banned disposal in the rivers due to concerns the oil would harm wildlife. Much of the oil and debris was then hauled to a ravine near Rapidan and the LeSueur River. Eventually this oil would make its way back to the Blue Earth River. As the ice melted that spring, the oil eventually flowed into the Mississippi River. A \$38,000 effort began to clean the oil from the rivers and save the ducks the oil was killing. A variety of techniques were used to remove the oil from the river, but they mostly failed. An estimated 10-12,000 ducks were thought to have died as a result of the oil pollution. Other species of animals were affected as well.

At the time of the Honeymead oil spill, water pollution control was still fairly new. Twenty years earlier, industrial and agricultural waste was regularly dumped into lakes and rivers. Minnesota's Water Pollution Control Commission had started in 1945, but since the oil spill didn't affect the drinking water, Honeymead hadn't broken any laws. Not long after the oil spill, the state gave the Pollution Control Commission the ability to regulate accidental industrial pollution.

The Honeymead oil spill is just one story that shows how important water is to us all. We invite you to visit *We Are Water MN* and share your water stories, too.

*We Are Water MN* is a project of the Humanities Center that engages Minnesotans with our state's most important natural resource through personal stories. We are honored to be partnering with the Water Resources Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato and Le Sueur River Watershed Network, bringing the exhibit to South Central Minnesota.

*We Are Water MN* is at the History Center now through March 6, 2021. This exhibit is free and open to the public.

[This is only part of the oil spill story. Visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/podcast) for more!]



# EVERY OBJECT HAS A STORY...

At the Blue Earth County Historical Society, new-to-BECHS artifacts are being donated all the time. What fun it is to learn more about each item. Here's a closer look at one donated item.

## Mahowald's Bicycle Head Badge

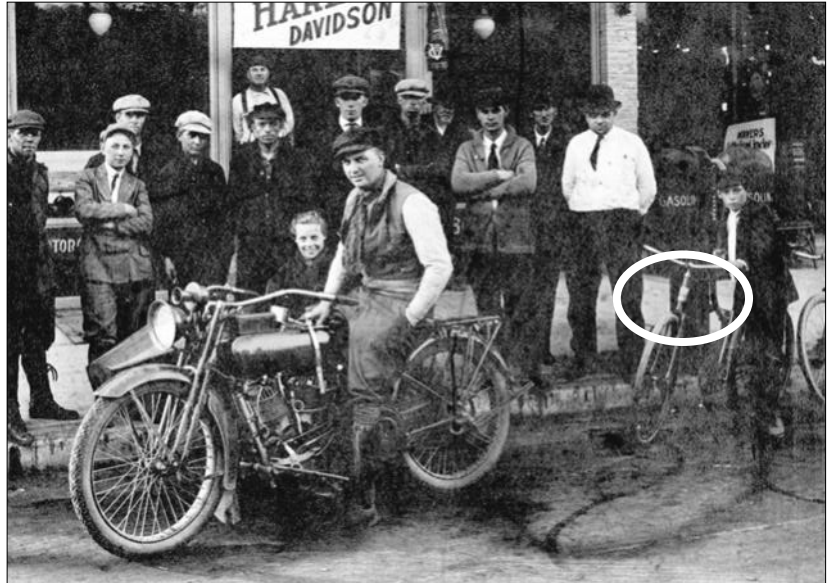


Bicycle head badges are a brand logo affixed to the head tube of a bicycle. It was used to

distinguish similar looking bikes from one another. In a competitive industry, they quickly became an elaborate artform adorning all bikes; a good reason to buy one bike over another. Metal bike badges were being phased out in the 1970s and replaced with plastic decals. Now most manufacturers use a sticker or decal.

Mahowald's is one of the well-known stores on Front Street. It was started in 1911 by Burt Mahowald and was

located at 608 North Front Street. It began as a cycle shop selling motorcycles and bicycles before they added sporting goods and then hardware supplies.



While the gentleman in the center shows off the 1917 Harley Davidson, on the right, the young man's bicycle displays its head badge.

## HISTORY CENTER ART GALLERY

### A PASSING - THE VANISHING FAMILY FARM

#### A Photography Exhibit

By Randy Wood

January 12 - March 31, 2021

*A Passing—The Vanishing Family Farm* captures the loss of small family farms as they disappear from our landscape. Randy's photographs catch a glance at the once vibrant but now vanishing rural life. The exhibit is free and open to the public at the History Center through March 31, 2021.

**Opening reception on Friday, February 26th, Noon - 4:00.**

ALL VISITORS must book a time to visit the History Center. Book online at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com). You can also email [Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](mailto:Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com) or call 507-345-5566.



*Listen - Can You Hear the Children Playing?*

By Randy Wood

# RESEARCH & GENEALOGY CENTER

Heather Harren, Communication & Archives Manager

Happy 2021! We are open once again by appointment only and at 25% capacity. For those who are wondering, this allows up to two visitors in the Research Center. If you are concerned about being in the room with other people but still want to do some research, please reach out to make arrangements.

In a way, not much changed while we were closed to the public. People continued to reach out to have research done remotely and we continued to add to our files. A special thanks to Jo Schultz for keeping up with the obituary books and newspaper clippings while we were closed much of last year. History never stops!

There will be some exciting additions to the Research Center in 2021! We discovered in 2019 there were issues of the *Mankato Free Press* that had been microfilmed through the Minnesota Historical Society which we do not have in our collection. In December, BECHS

was awarded a grant to cover the costs to add over one hundred rolls of the *Mankato Free Press* on microfilm to our collection and will bring the collection complete through 2015.

We will also be launching a new online search tool for our Research Center indexes (see below). The new search feature on our website will make searching for records much easier. This new feature will also allow you to order documents such as obituaries and wills and receive them by email in days.

We can't wait to show you what we're working on!



## New Online Research Center Indexes—Coming Soon!

BECHS is working on a better way for family genealogists and researchers to access historical records online. Not only will this new resource make it easier for those unable to conduct research at the History Center, but in-person researchers will be able to plan and prioritize their visit before even entering the Research Center. Do you want to be among the first to know when this resource is available? Sign-up for our weekly emails at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/newsletters](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/newsletters)

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Name	Information	Purchase details	Category	Price	Buy
Ackerman, Ferne M.	5/16/1914–08/31/1930 Buried: Medo Central Cemetery, Medo	Index only. No additional info to purchase.	Cemetery	\$0.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ackerman, Frank E.	Will filed on: 1957 December 12 Residence: Mapleton, Blue Earth County, MN	Will filed on: 1957 December 12 Residence: Mapleton, Blue Earth County, MN Purchase details to enter purchase.	Will	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ackerman, Frank E.	04/10/1882–1970 Buried: Sterling, Blue Earth County, MN	Index only. No additional info to purchase.	Cemetery	\$0.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ackerman, Fred	Book 90, Page 103	Newspaper clipping. Emailed 3-5 business days after purchase.	Obituary	\$5.00	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sneak Peek

# WELCOME BACK TO HISTORY—NOW OPEN TUESDAY-SATURDAY!

As you come back to the History Center, help prevent the spread of COVID-19 during your visit.

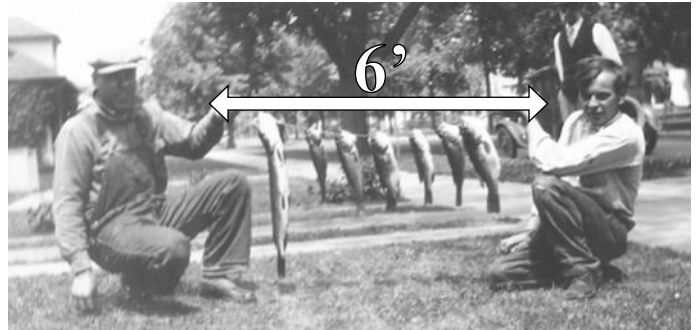


Call ahead or go online to **schedule your visit**. Visitors are by **appointment only**.

Scheduling helps manage building capacity and contact tracing.



**Face masks** are required for the duration of your visit.



**Practice physical distancing:** keep a **minimum of 6 feet** from others



**Follow** all signage and staff instructions.



**Wash and/or sanitize** your hands often and thoroughly.

BECHS has been selected for the

## HY-VEE REUSABLE BAG PROGRAM!



Each time a \$2.50 red "My Heart" Reusable Bag is purchased at the downtown Mankato Hy-Vee during the month of February, BECHS will receive a \$1 donation.

## Let's Get Social!

Did you know BECHS has a YouTube channel? Check out our playlists, including "History in a Minute," "Hubbard House" and "A Closer Look in the Museum." Subscribe now!



Grab a quick bite of history with "History in a Minute." There are over 30 topics to choose from!

BECHS can also be found on **Facebook** and **Instagram**. And don't miss the **weekly enews** which includes BECHS updates and is an easy way to register for future events and programs. Not receiving this weekly email? Sign-up at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/newsletters](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/newsletters).

Interactive Exhibit

# WE ARE WATER MINNESOTA



Think about what water means to you.



Learn about water quality in MN.



Learn about protecting water.



Read and tell stories about water.

**October 22 - March 6, 2021**

Blue Earth County History Center

424 Warren Street, Mankato | FREE

In partnership with the Water Resource Center.



Minnesota  
Humanities  
Center



[www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)  
507-345-5566

BLUE EARTH  
COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

BLUE EARTH  
COUNTY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

## 2020 ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, March 7 at 1:00 p.m.

In this COVID-impacted environment, BECHS Annual Meeting will be available both via Zoom and in person at the History Center. However, to follow social distance guidelines, only a limited number of people will be allowed in person at the History Center.

Registration is required to attend the meeting either in person or via Zoom. Please RSVP by March 5 to 507-345-5566 or [Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](mailto:Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com).

*Please note, under the Society's Bylaws, remote voting is not permitted and as a result, the members attending on Zoom will not be able to vote, but can otherwise fully participate.*

## A NIGHT AT THE SPEAKEASY

*Intrigue, Spirits and All That Jazz*

Thanks to everyone who joined us for *A Night at the Speakeasy* on November 7.

It was a fun night of intrigue, spirits and musical performances by The Jazz 10, Nate Boots, Stacy K and Bee Balm Fields

### Special Thanks Our Sponsors

Presenting Sponsor: Chankaska Creek

Entertainment: Purple Porchlight

Intrigue: Ardent Mills, The Free Press Media, and RBC/Brian Koch

Cocktail: Industrial Fabrication Services

Event: ISG, Curiousi-Tea House and Wingert Realty and Land Services

Blue Earth County Historical Society presents

Battle of the Brains

Virtual  
Trivia

Friday, March 26, 2021

Tickets On Sale March 1

Sponsorship opportunities available now



Follow us on Facebook for updates and event information. More details coming soon!

# BECHS HISTORY HERO DONOR CIRCLE

October 16, 2020–January 15, 2021

## HISTORY HERO CIRCLE

### History Superhero

Lonnie & Catherine Bristol  
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Medo Lutheran Church  
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### BUILDING FUND

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## MONTHLY DONORS

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Mike Lagerquist  
Jack & Diann McGowan  
Marnie Werner  
Beth Zimmer

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Marilyn and Kirk Beyer  
Margy Johnson  
Heather Lee  
Sheryl Peterson

## In Memoriam & Tribute

*In Memory of Bill James*  
Margaret James

*In Memory of Bob Layman*  
Eloise Layman

*In Memory of Irene Strum*  
Eloise Layman

## “\$35 TO THRIVE” CAMPAIGN UPDATE

*\$35 to Thrive*, the campaign that ran from November to December has come to an end. BECHS supporters generously gave **\$36,273**—exceeding our \$35,000 goal.

**THANK YOU!**



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

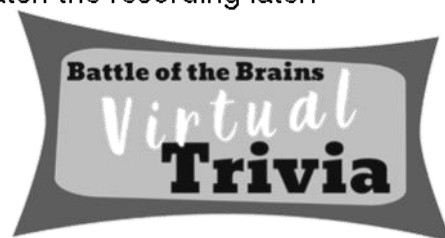
February – April 2021

## FEBRUARY

- 4 **History @ Home: Researching Your Family Farm**, virtual presentation. Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. Free/BECHS Members; \$7/non-members
- 13 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: Organizing and Research Tips**, virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.
- 18 **Virtual Tour: Mankato's National Register of Historic Places** Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. \$10/Household.
- 19 **A Virtual Night with Nate Boots** 7 p.m., \$10/Household. Registration required.
- 26 **Artist Reception for "A Passing—The Vanishing Family Farm"** Noon-4 p.m., Free

## MARCH

- 4 **History @ Home: Swimming in the River: The Sibley Park Dam with Tim Pulis**, virtual presentation. Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. Free/BECHS Members; \$7/non-members
- 6 **We Are Water MN exhibit closes**. Free. Book your visit at [www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)
- 7 **BECHS Annual Meeting**, via Zoom and in person. 1 p.m., History Center. Registration required. In person space is limited. Call 507-345-5566 or email [Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](mailto:Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)
- 13 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: Finding and Using Newspapers**, virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.
- 16 **Marian Anderson: Her Personal Collection exhibit opens**. Free. Book your visit at [www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)
- 18 **Virtual Tour: Eastern Blue Earth County** Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. \$10/Household.
- 26 **Battle of the Brains Virtual Trivia**. Tickets on sale March 1. Details to come.



## APRIL

- 4 **History @ Home: TBD**, virtual presentation. Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. Free/BECHS Members; \$7/non-members
- 13 **Talking Ancestors Genealogy Group: Mystery Photographs**, virtual chat. 11 a.m. Registration required. Free.
- 22 **Virtual Tour: Western Blue Earth County** Join live at 4 p.m. or watch the recording later. Registration required. \$10/Household.

**Registration for all virtual programs can be found on our website at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/events](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/events)**

Thanks to the hundreds of people who joined us for virtual events in 2020! BECHS had 39 programs by 10 different presenters. People joined in from 60+ cities in 12 states (plus Canada)! BECHS will continue with virtual programming and, when the time is right, we will switch to hybrid events – where you can join either in person or online.

# MEMBERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

On March 7, BECHS and its members can officially say “farewell” to 2020 at BECHS’ Annual Meeting. Join us as we look back on the previous year and make plans for the new year. The Annual Meeting will be the first of several “hybrid” events—meaning people can join in person or virtually. See page 12 for details.

Did you know—BECHS continues to offer virtual programs as we go into 2021, including some free for members. If you haven’t joined us, please check out the calendar on the previous page. Not sure how to join? Just get in touch. We’d love to help and it is probably less scary than you think.

## Your Membership and Marian Anderson Art

If you visit the History Center’s upcoming exhibit featuring Marian Anderson’s original artwork (on display March 16-September), don’t forget to shop in the Marian Anderson Art Gallery. Not only does your member discount apply to your purchases, but 100% of all sales goes right back to BECHS. Now that’s a win-win!



*Winter Solitude, Mankato* by Marian Anderson. Available for purchase in the online store.



## 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 levels are also available, call for details.*

# A Virtual Night with Nate Boots

A BECHS Special Presentation



**Friday, February 19**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Online**

**\$10/Household**

Local singer and songwriter, Nate Boots

Enjoy Nate's music. Hear the stories behind his songs. Concert includes live Q&A with Nate.

**Buy your tickets today**  
**BlueEarthCountyHistory.com**

Nate was one of BECHS' musical performers for *A Night at the Speakeasy* last November. Join us February 19 and watch the full musical set he recorded for BECHS.



Wherever You May Roam  
by Nate Boots

## EXHIBITS

### **We Are Water MN**

*extended through March 6*



### **ART GALLERY**

#### **A Passing—The Vanishing Family Farm**

photographs by Randy Wood

*through March 31*



**BECHS**  
BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
424 WARREN STREET  
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