

The Blue Earth County

# HISTORIAN



## The New Deal in Blue Earth County



The Works Progress Administration was a program under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. This building at Minneopa State Park is one of seven existing structures in Blue Earth County built by WPA workers in the mid-1930s. Read more about the New Deal in Blue Earth County on pages 6 and 9. Photo courtesy Minneopa State Park.

### Expansion Update



Expansion is underway, update in Director's Notes, page 3.

### Feature Art Exhibit



Artist perspective of the historic Seppman Mill, page 7.

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**BECHS Mission:** To lead in the collecting and promoting of Blue Earth County's history to ensure its preservation for the enrichment and benefit of present and future generations.

## The Blue Earth County Historian



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Hubbard House Assistants

### History Center & Museum

424 Warren Street, Mankato, MN  
(New Main Entrance)  
507-345-5566  
www.bechshistory.com  
Tuesday and Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### R.D. Hubbard House

606 South Broad Street, Mankato  
507-345-4154  
Hours

Closed for Regular Tour Season  
Open December 6-7, 13-14 & 20-21 for  
Christmas at Hubbard House

### The Blue Earth County Historian Fall 2014

The Blue Earth County Historian is published quarterly for the members of Blue Earth County Historical Society.

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## Board of Trustees



Randy Zellmer  
President, Board of Trustees

What a wonderful time we had at our open house in September. It was the organization's first chance to showcase our newly expanded facilities.

The lower level with its open space, gives us room to display the Marian Anderson art collection and the many items in the Gift Shop. The "Minnesota Disasters" traveling exhibit was an added attraction. If you were unable to make it to the open house, I encourage you to stop and visit.

With the additional space comes additional expenses. Our monthly operating expenses have increased. In addition, facility improvements will continue to occur based upon our capital improvement reserves and financial gifts to the organization. The changes so far consist of painting, cleaning and additional furniture.

We are currently meeting with professionals to analyze our space and assist us with reorganization of our facilities and potential expansion at a future date. For this to occur, we are dependent upon the financial support of individuals, governmental agencies, and other organizations and businesses. In particular we are dependent upon the financial support of our many members and donors. As we approach year-end, it is time to start thinking about making a monetary gift to the Blue Earth County Historical Society. In early November you will receive our year-end donor appeal letter. I encourage you to consider making a generous gift to BECHS. It is your organization and as a proud supporter, I hope you will continue to show your support. Your donation will help us to not only continue to provide excellent service as in the past, but it will also help us improve and expand our programs, displays and facilities. Now is the time to make history by giving today.



### Blue Earth County Historical Society Monthly Giving Program

The NEW Monthly Giving Program is an easy way you can help provide steady support for the ongoing work of BECHS. Enroll online or at the History Center. Your credit or debit card will be charged automatically each month.

[www.bechshistory.com/monthly-donations](http://www.bechshistory.com/monthly-donations).



# Director's Notes: Building Expansion Update

Jessica Potter, Executive Director

The Historical Society has officially moved operations into the lower level. Our new Gift Shop, Marian Anderson Art Gallery and Warren Street entrance opened on Saturday, September 27. Staff offices and a public meeting room quickly followed. Soon to come is the new



New traveling exhibit space in the lower level.

self-service coffee shop which will be available to our guests, volunteers and staff. It will serve as a small income-generating source for BECHS and will give people a reason to stay

longer. If this idea takes off, it could someday evolve into something bigger.

There are still many other small improvements, renovations and shifts that need to happen in the lower level, but we have happily made a good start. Soon we will turn our attention to the upper level for some cosmetic improvements like paint and some operational improvements like moving the Research Center so it is more centrally located for guests. And we are awaiting a much needed Facility

Conditions Assessment which will include evaluations of the mechanical, structural and electrical conditions of our 50-year-old building.

So, if you haven't visited in a while, please come and check out our new space. When you come, use our new main entrance

on the Warren Street side of the building. The parking lot is bigger, the entrance is handicap accessible and the new Gift Shop and traveling exhibit are inside waiting for you.

If you would like to know more about our



Same location, new address - the History Center's new address is 424 Warren Street.

upcoming projects, please feel free to give me a call. I would love to give you a tour of the building highlighting our future plans. You can also visit our blog on our website for regular updates on our progress.

Thank you to each and everyone of you who have helped to make this expansion possible so far! We have a long road ahead of us before we officially own the building debt free and fully realize our vision for the building, but at least we have started the journey.

## BUILDING EXPANSION WISH LIST

Want to make your mark on history? Consider a donation to the BECHS Building Fund or support a specific project detailed below.

\$750 for coffee shop equipment: self-service coffee station, countertop mini-fridge with clear door and condiment organizers.

\$2,000 for 50 additional meeting room chairs

\$3,000 for the purchase of two compact shelving units for collection's storage

\$4,000 for one of seven quarterly building acquisition payments

\$10,500 for Facility Conditions Assessment, Feasibility Study and Schematic Drawings - to help us prioritize and evaluate necessary repairs.

\$20,000 for renovations to the new Research Center and Volunteer Workroom including: new hallway entrance, carpet and paint.

\$1 Million to fully realize our vision of the new Blue Earth County History Center.

Check out [www.bechshistory.com/blog](http://www.bechshistory.com/blog) for regular updates and items added to the wish list. See our item wish list on page 17. Thank you to all who have supported the Building Fund so far.

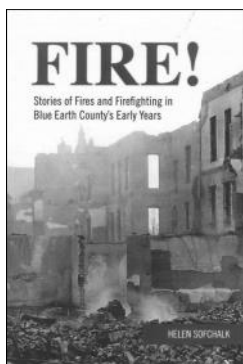


# Gift Shop & Art Gallery News

Danelle Erickson, Museum Manager

I am very excited to announce the Blue Earth County Historical Society's new Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery. Use our new Warren Street parking lot and entrance to visit this beautiful newly expanded space. The new Gift Shop is bigger, brighter and showcases more great products.

The holiday season is fast approaching. When looking for that perfect gift, make sure you visit the History Center Gift Shop. We have added some great new items, including beautiful Christmas decorations. We also have a great selection of books that you can



only buy through BECHS, including our most recent publication, *Fire! Stories of Fires and Firefighting in Blue Earth County's Early Years*, by Helen Sofchalk, revised edition.

November 7-8 is our Holiday Open House. The Gift Shop and Art Gallery will offer a double discount for BECHS members with additional store specials for everyone. There will be refreshments, free admission to the Museum and the opening of a new traveling exhibit. Get a jump start on your holiday shopping on November 7-8!

As part of the Holiday Open House, BECHS will be hosting a local author fair on Saturday, November 8 from 1-4 p.m. Local authors will be here to share their writings and sign copies of their books purchased from the Gift Shop. Stay tuned for a full list of participating authors.

The Marian Anderson Art Gallery is a wonderful space made possible through our expansion. In 2010, Marian donated her entire inventory of fine art prints to BECHS, and this new gallery is the perfect setting to display and sell her beautiful art. Did you know that 100% of all print sales benefit BECHS?

Come see the variety of subjects, including Marian's popular nostalgia prints, mountain men



NEW History Center Gift Shop

series, Native American portraits and wildlife. We have a variety of formats that include framed and unframed prints as well as note cards and other items.

BECHS is proud to introduce Marian Anderson's Mankato Series, Museum Edition. This series of 3 prints includes: *Closing Time*, *Partners in Progress* and *Good Ol' Summertime*. The series has long been sold out, but a limited quantity in this special edition are now available. Purchase the series for \$500 or individual prints for \$200. (Sorry, BECHS member discounts do

not apply to these limited prints.)

If you are unable to visit the Gift Shop or Marian Anderson Art Gallery in person, you can shop online at [www.bechshistory.com/shop](http://www.bechshistory.com/shop) and [www.mariananderson.com](http://www.mariananderson.com). Some of BECHS' publications are also available through Amazon.com. To help

you with your holiday shopping, we have included our Holiday Catalog.

Happy Holidays!



NEW Marian Anderson Art Gallery



**Give the Gift of History  
this Holiday Season!**

*Memberships, Art, Gift Certificates*

Browse the enclosed Holiday  
Gift Catalog for Ideas



# Historic R.D. Hubbard House

Ezra Grabau and Ryan Harren, Hubbard House Assistants

This summer has flown by. The Hubbard House enjoyed a season full of tours and events. The Hubbard House saw over 1,100 visitors. Many of the tours were specially arranged group tours, which we offer to groups of ten or more. The early part of the summer also saw a variety of school tours. In addition to the "Victorian Tea Party", the "Victorian Lawn Party" and the "Old Fashioned Independence Day Celebration", we had the "Far Eastern Medicine Show" on August 16 and the "Hubbard Girls' Birthday Celebration" on September 20.

The annual medicine show had a good turnout and kept people entertained. The three shows put on by Violet McNeal and friends featured different quack remedies. Besides the shows, there was a wide variety of activities to entertain visitors, such as palm readings, an Ouija board, tarot card readings, belly dancing, phrenology and a river boat gambler.

The birthday party recreated a typical party for the Hubbard girls, Katherine and Mary Esther.



Visitors played Croquet and Graces (a hoop tossing game). The children who came enjoyed making butterflies and custom calling cards. A crowd gathered to sing Happy Birthday to Katherine and Mary Esther prior to cutting the cake.

The Hubbard House is now closed for the season, but will reopen weekends in December for the annual holiday tradition "Christmas at the Hubbard House." Join us opening weekend, December 6-7, to see the house come alive with the sites and sounds of a Victorian Christmas with costumed interpreters throughout the house. Afterwards, stop at the Carriage House for some light refreshments and holiday shopping. The house will also be open the following two weekends for guided tours.

## Christmas at the Hubbard House

*An Annual Holiday Tradition*

### A Hubbard Family Christmas

**Saturday, December 6**

3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, December 7**

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

*Costumed Characters · Holiday*

*Gift Shop · Refreshments*

**Adults \$7.50 / Children 5-17 \$5**

**BECHS Members & under 5 FREE**

#### OPEN FOR TOURS

December 13-14 and 20-21, 1-4 p.m.

Adults \$5 / Children 5-17 \$2

BECHS Members &  
under 5 FREE

606 South Broad Street  
Mankato, MN



**BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Visit [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) for more details

## Maud Hart Lovelace

### Young Readers Book Club

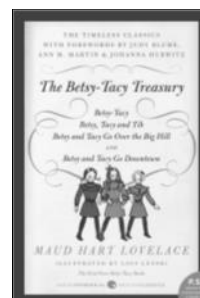
**What:** Book Club and Discussion of *The Betsy-Tacy Treasury*

**Who:** Children ages 9-12

**When:** 2nd Saturday of each month  
January-May, 1-3 p.m.

**Where:** BECHS History Center

**How:** Participants must complete an application form. Program details, benefits and application available at:  
[www.bechshistory.com/book-club](http://www.bechshistory.com/book-club)





# Collections & Exhibits

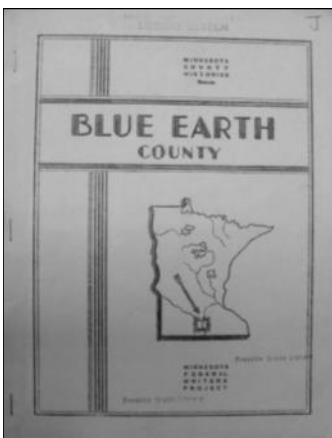
## “Uncle Sam’s New Deal” Coming Soon

Shelley Harrison, Archives & Collections Manager

On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed and the United States plunged into the Great Depression. Almost immediately the people of Minnesota and all over America found themselves in the midst of an economic crisis and widespread unemployment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented a series of economic rescue programs called the “New Deal.”

“Uncle Sam’s New Deal,” a traveling exhibit from the Minnesota State Historical Society, explores the legacy of the New Deal in Minnesota including a look at the Works Progress Administration (WPA) art murals in some Minnesota buildings and the state park Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects still standing. The exhibit features documents and artifacts, vivid photographs and memorabilia from Minnesota as well as Blue Earth County. “Uncle Sam’s New Deal” will be on display at the History Center November 7 through January 3, 2015.

New Deal agencies like the Works Progress Administration and the Social Security Administration played major roles in the lives of the residents of Blue Earth County during the 1930s. The WPA, created in 1935, was the largest New Deal Agency and impacted millions of Americans, including many in Blue Earth County. It provided jobs building roads and projects to enhance the local infrastructure. The WPA was not considered poor relief; it employed construction workers as well as teachers, librarians and artists.



Blue Earth County benefited from several WPA projects. One of those being, the Federal Writers Project, which employed writers who researched and wrote Minnesota guide books. In the process of creating the WPA guide book, the Writers Project also created the Minnesota

County Histories series. Another cultural project was the Historical Records Survey, which employed archivists to identify, collect and conserve historical records throughout the United States. The surveys included church vital statistics records, county records and cemetery records. The Blue Earth County survey included records held at the state level including early county minutes.

The New Deal also created social programs like the Social Security Administration. Before the Social Security Act in 1935, churches, missions and the county poor farms often provided the only poor relief for the aged, disabled and the sick. Blue Earth County’s Poor Farm was no exception. In December “Our History Matters” will feature a display and program from the Rapidan Heritage Society titled “Blue Earth County Poor Farm: The Safety Net Before the New Deal.”

The New Deal lasted over a decade and affected virtually everyone in America. Come learn how it touched those in Blue Earth County and Minnesota when “Uncle Sam’s New Deal” opens November 7.

## Uncle Sam's New Deal

A traveling exhibit from the Minnesota History Center and Landmark Center.

During the Great Depression, New Deal programs brought relief to America's poor and helped stabilize its economy. Find out how they revitalized Minnesota's communities as well, in this fascinating exhibit featuring photography, interviews, film footage and an interactive activity.

**Don't miss it—**

**November 7, 2014 - January 3, 2015**

**Blue Earth County History Center & Museum**

**Free**

Minnesota History Center

LANDMARK CENTER  
A Ramsey County Property

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY

# Every object has a story...

By Grace Keir, Textile and Clothing Historian and BECHS Volunteer

The three-dimensional artifacts in Blue Earth County Historical Society's permanent collection consist of over 22,000 objects, preserving the broadest cultural representation of Blue Earth County history. The collections have evolved to reflect, document and illustrate the history and development of Blue Earth County's past. Here is a glimpse into our collections.

Everyone today will recognize a crazy quilt by its variety of fabrics, odd shapes and decorative stitching. It is thought that the term "crazy quilt" refers to the visual appearance which lacks the traditional organized placement of fabric pieces into a pattern. However, it probably came from the term "crazed" in Japanese ceramics where the surface glaze is cracked into an irregular pattern.

So just when did the "crazy quilt" craze begin? They became popular in the late 1800s after a Japanese exhibition of ceramics in the U.S. and reached their zenith in the late 1880s. They were seldom used as functional bed coverings but often as ornamental throws in Victorian homes.

Crazy quilts differ from other quilts because they usually do not have batting or any quilting stitches. First, irregular fabric pieces were basted to a square



Crazy Quilt in the BECHS collection  
made by Kathryn McComb Quinn, 1892

of cotton muslin or other cotton fabric. The fabrics were often silk taffetas, satins, brocades and velvets which were left over from clothing

made for members of the family. Then very elaborate embroidery stitches were placed on the seams and elsewhere. Other embellishments might include flowers, spider webs, fans and even hand painting on the fabric. The embroidery was often done by a young woman to show how skilled she was in needlework.

The objects in our collection are donated by individuals and families, who want to make sure Blue Earth County's story and their own are never forgotten. Please contact Shelley Harrison, Archives Manager if you would like to make a donation.

## HISTORY CENTER ART GALLERY

### **An Artist's Perspective of Seppman Mill: 1887 to 2014**



"Seppman's in the Moonlight"  
by Gerry Tostenson

BECHS is proud to announce that the art exhibit "An Artist's Perspective of Seppman Mill: 1887 to 2014" will be held over due to remarkable demand!

The exhibit celebrates the 150th Anniversary of Seppman Mill. The art ranges from works completed in 1887 to 2014 by local artists. The show originally scheduled to end this month has been extended thru December. Don't miss your chance to see the exhibit that everyone is talking about.

### **Call for Artists**

We are once again accepting proposals from local artists to be featured in the History Center Art Gallery. Exhibits run for three months. All art mediums will be considered including photography, wall sculpture, fabric, mixed media, paintings and drawings including oil, acrylic, pastels, ink, graphite, etc. Work must be able to be hung on a wall and must be family friendly to be considered. For more information or for an application please contact Shelley at 345-5566 or [bechsam@hickorytech.net](mailto:bechsam@hickorytech.net).



# Education & Outreach

*Making Local History Accessible to All Ages*

Heather Harren, Education and Outreach Manager

Another school year has begun. What does that mean for the Blue Earth County Historical Society? It means that we are hard at work getting ready for school groups and developing programs that can go to schools and/or be incorporated into the History Center experience to aid in teaching local history to our youth.

BECHS is working with Washington Elementary School in Mankato to test our new local history programs. We have studied the Minnesota State



Classroom lesson about pioneers and westward migration

Standards for Social Studies for Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, and we have begun to connect the standards with activities that BECHS can support. The next step will be to develop those learning tools and

activities to be used. Then we can take them to the classroom, incorporate into the museum or perhaps use in a future learning lab at the History Center.

Here is how you can help now. We are looking for individuals with Early Childhood or Elementary Education backgrounds or those that have a passion for teaching our youth about local history. Volunteers are needed for program development as well as on-site instruction either in the classroom, at the Museum or at the Hubbard House. If you would like to be on the Education Taskforce, please contact Heather or Danelle.

In addition to the classroom connection, we are also upgrading our Museum and Hubbard House tours to not only fit the new Social Studies Standards, but also to meet the learning needs of today's school-aged children. We are also seeking volunteers to serve as tour guides for these new school tours. Training will be provided for anyone interested in helping in these capacities.

## Monthly Educational Opportunities

### **Our History Matters**

Monthly educational series promoting and celebrating local history. Free for BECHS Members, \$5 Non-members.



Garrett Ebling presented his book *Collapsed: A Survivor's Climb From the Wreckage of the I-35W Bridge* at the August Our History Matters program. Ebling is an I-35W bridge collapse survivor.

### Upcoming Programs

**October 23** – “History of Welsh Settlement in Southern Minnesota” by Bob Douglas, MWA

**November 20** – Civil War and Boy in Blue Memorial Project Update

**December 18** – “Blue Earth County’s Poor Farm” by Jane Haala

**January 22** – Connor Oldenburg presenting on Anti-Monopoly vs. General Mills Fun Group (*Tentative*)

### **Young Historians**

Monthly, free, hands-on history workshops for school-age children, 2nd Saturday of each month, September thru May, 10 a.m. to Noon. This year’s schedule will explore technology from the Progressive Era of the 1870s to the modern age. In between, we will explore Ellis Island, World War I, Great Depression and World War II. The full 2014-2015 schedule can be found online at [www.bechshistory.com/programs/young-historians](http://www.bechshistory.com/programs/young-historians).

### Upcoming Workshops

**November 8** – World War I and the 1920s

**December 13** – The Great Depression & New Deal

**January 10** – 1920s through 1940s Technology

# *“Happy Days Are Here Again”*

## **Roosevelt’s New Deal in Blue Earth County**

By Mary Ward

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted a series of domestic programs between 1933 and 1936 called the New Deal to help pull the country out of the depths of the Great Depression. The focus of these programs was on the 3 R’s: relief, recovery and reform; relief for the unemployed and poor, recovery of the economy and reform of the financial system. Each of these programs had its own acronym and collectively were often referred to as the “Alphabet Soup” programs. Here’s a look at some of the programs and how they affected lives in Blue Earth County.

### **Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA)**

As the Depression deepened, increasing numbers of Blue Earth County residents found themselves unemployed. In 1933, unemployment nationwide reached 25%, wages fell 42% and crop prices fell 60%. This loss of income affected all members of the family; therefore, relief programs were needed for men, women and children alike.

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) was in existence from 1933-1935 to give relief grants and loans to states. In 1935, FERA was replaced with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) - later known as the Works Projects Administration. The WPA operated from 1935-1943 employing millions of unemployed people to carry out public works projects building roads and public buildings. Other WPA projects included sewing, public art and food programs.

The initial programs established in Blue Earth County were city and county road and bridge projects designed to put men to work. One of the first projects, often referred to as the Strand Ravine Project, on County Road 1, involved cutting down dangerous corners, cleaning ditches and cutting brush. Each man working on this project received \$16.50 for 30 hours of work.

“‘Can I use it?’ One man exclaimed when approached by a newsman. ‘And How! This will put some coal in the basement; it will pay for my groceries; it will buy shoes for the kids - and maybe - if the job lasts - there will be some for a few Christmas presents – the first in four years.’ This comment and others similar to it were on every tongue as the men received their checks.... Here was something real. It was cash instead of promises – work instead of charity.” (*Mankato Free Press* December 11, 1933)

As of December 1933, 1,743 Blue Earth County men had registered to work and approximately 500 men had been put to work with more being hired as new projects got underway. Not all projects involved roads. The FERA Plan was used by the Lake Crystal School District to complete \$1,150 worth of improvements.

“Under the Emergency relief plan the government defrays the entire labor expense while the school district pays for the materials used in connection with the projects. Approximately \$850 have been paid out by the government for labor while about \$300 have been spent for materials by the school district. The 22 men of our community who have worked on these school projects have all been excellent workmen. All of these men have had the interest of the community and the school at heart. They have entered into the work in a most whole-hearted manner.” (*Lake Crystal Tribune* October 10, 1935)



Lake Crystal School benefitted from FERA program for improvements in 1935.

Some examples of additional projects approved in 1935 were reconditioning and redecorating the county courthouse, graveling and resurfacing of six miles of Medo Township roads, relaying brick and pavement on Front Street and West Fourth Street in Mankato and cleaning and repairing storm sewers, catch basins and drains in Lake Crystal.

Under the WPA, several bridges in Blue Earth County were built or refurbished. Seven rustic-style buildings at Minneopa State Park, as well as the stairs leading down to the Falls, are the works of the WPA in the late 1930s. All of the structures at the park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. WPA structures were crafted using native



Minneopa State Park stairs built by the WPA are among seven existing WPA structures at the park

stone and designed to reflect a sense of time and place. Other WPA structures that have survived include Tourtellotte Park Pool Bath House in Mankato

and the hog and cattle buildings at the Blue Earth County Fairgrounds in Garden City. Those that have been lost include the Mankato State Teachers College Physical Education Building and Sibley Park Dam.

Women sought employment either as a supplement to their husband's income, as sole supporters of their families or as single women. A women's sewing project was established nationally in 1933 by the FERA. In the fall of 1935, 32 women were involved in the Mankato sewing project. In 1938, 21 women participated and earned \$48 per month for working 120 hours, six hours per day.

"Many of the women enrolled in the project now or during the two and one-half years since the work was started, came to the project with little or no knowledge of how to handle a needle. Many have since acquired enough skill to qualify for finishing work in industrial clothing plants, according to Mrs.

Robert S. Willard, county supervisor of WPA sewing projects. Remodeling cast-off garments as well as working with new materials in their days at the sewing center, some of the women have put their newly acquired skill to practical application in their homes. One woman enrolled, told that she had learned enough from her sewing to make clothing for her nine children." (*Mankato Free Press* January 21, 1938)

This Mankato sewing project was located on the second floor of the Community Relief Center (Hubbell and West Front Street aka Park Lane). These women made new garments from



government donated fabric for adults and children as well

Seamstresses working in Minnesota. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota State Historical Society.

as sheets and comforters. Used clothing was also remodeled. All items were donated to those in need.

In 1933, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins told the country that one fifth of all pre-school age children were "showing signs of poor nutrition." Mothers, teachers and even Eleanor Roosevelt promoted improving childhood nutrition through school based lunch programs. In that same year a group of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) mothers at Franklin School in Mankato realized that lunches at school could provide the balanced diet needed by the growing child.

A group of seven women organized, prepared and served the meals. The program began serving 25 children daily and seven years later was serving 60-70 children over a six-week time period during the coldest winter months. The Hot Lunch Program targeted underprivileged children and those having to walk long distances. Programs like this across the country were financed by private contributions and federal farm commodities made possible through the FERA.

### **National Youth Association (NYA)**

The National Youth Association (NYA) was a work program for young men and women ages 16 to 25. They were employed in construction, art and recreation projects throughout Blue Earth County from 1935-1939. This program was different than the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in that it included women and the young people lived and worked in their community. Blue Earth County's NYA recreation programs ranged from kittenball and ice skating to one-act plays. Esseye Rix served as NYA Recreation Director in Blue Earth County. Rix was a graduate of Mankato Teachers College and a single mother with two children who lived with her parents Mr. and Mrs. David J. Price of Lake Crystal.

In 1935, a county-wide kittenball league was organized, sometimes referred to as the Diamond League or D-Ball League. Isabelle Meyer and Gertrude Klugherz, Mankato High School graduates, were two young women hired to organize a girls' kittenball league in Mankato. Teams in this league were composed of girls from 13 to 17 years of age who wanted to play kittenball over the summer. The NYA provided some of the equipment and paid the leaders. There were nine Mankato teams composed of both girls and boys, as well as teams in Good Thunder, Judson, Lincoln, Cambria and Lake Crystal.

Winter activities were organized as well with ice skating contests being the draw in January of 1935. Young people around Southern Minnesota competed in ice skating contests that winter. Eighty winners from meets held around Blue Earth County competed for a chance to participate in a regional contest in Faribault.

A Blue Earth County arts project sponsored by the NYA was a one-act play contest held during the late winter and early spring of 1935. First place went to the Mankato entry *Singapore Spider*. Lake Crystal's entry, *The Obstinate Family*, was awarded second place and third place was given to Watonwan's entry, *I Want a Divorce*. The receipts from the contest totaled \$60.22; expenses were \$14.10 leaving \$46.12 to be spent on recreational work in the county. This money was used to purchase kittenballs, bats and tennis rackets for use by children who could not afford them. For the

younger theater goers, a traveling puppet theater was organized. Seventy-five presentations were given in six communities over a period of one and a half years.

### **Rural Electrification Administration (REA)**

In 1935 Congress established the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as an independent agency making it a lending institution to help finance the cost of bringing electricity to the farm. The private power companies did not feel it was profitable to bring electricity to the sparse rural populations. This instigated farmers to organize rural electric cooperatives and to establish the Blue Earth and Nicollet County Cooperative (BENCO). The first farm to be connected with electricity on Blue Earth Nicollet Cooperative line was the Stacy Little farm in Judson Township on September 16, 1938.

### **National Recovery Administration (NRA)**

The National Recovery Administration (NRA) attempted to end cut-throat competition amongst businesses that the government felt was reducing wages and prices to disastrous levels. It encouraged the setting of codes to create fair competition by setting minimum wages, guaranteeing union rights and prohibiting child labor. As reported in the *Mankato Free Press* October 1933, "It is one of the chief aims of the NRA to restore value to the common things of life... a man's labor... a citizen's property. The government is trying to make everything worth something again." All businesses were encouraged to participate and proudly display the NRA's Blue Eagle. A large propaganda campaign was initiated by the Federal Government to promote the NRA which included newspaper ads, window displays and community events such as the largest parade ever held in Mankato. Thousands of people marched in the parade while thousands lined Second and Front Streets to watch. Many



of the people in attendance were from outside of Mankato. Even though the program was voluntary, a business could be boycotted for not displaying the blue eagle in their window.

The NRA was one of the most controversial New Deal initiatives and was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1935. The NRA stopped operations, but many labor provisions reappeared under the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act), which ties to the future rise and growth of unions.

### How Effective Were the New Deal Programs in Blue Earth County?

The effectiveness of the New Deal varied from program to program. The WPA managed to put many people to work, but was phased out by 1942 as the county and the country prepared for war. Some programs such as the NRA were controversial, but still have lasting impact. Many of the building and roads projects of the WPA still exist today. The county's active engagement today in all forms of youth sports can trace its roots to the FERA Recreation Programs of the 1930s. How many quilters and sewers today can trace their enjoyment of sewing to a grandmother or great grandmother who participated in the WPA Sewing Project? To learn more about the New Deal in Minnesota, visit the new traveling exhibit "Uncle Sam's New Deal" hosted by BECHS November 7 - January 3, 2015.

### Sources

*Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com/>)

Blue Earth County Historical Society vertical files including the *Mankato Free Press* and *Lake Crystal Tribune*

FROST-BENCO Electric 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet

"New Deal" *Wikipedia* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Deal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal))

"Roosevelt History, NRA Archive, Sharing the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum" ([www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/library](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/library))

The Blue Earth  
County Historical  
Society stands on a  
century long  
tradition of  
collecting,  
preserving and

**GIVETODAY.  
MAKEHISTORY.**

presenting Blue Earth County's rich heritage.

You can make history happen today by donating to the **2014 Year-End Drive to raise \$25,000.**

Donations will support remaining 2014 expenses and help us reach new heights in 2015 with expanded program and building opportunities.

**Invest in the future of BECHS today.**

**Watch your mailbox for details or give today at  
[www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com)**

## 113 BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEARS OF HISTORY

*A celebration of more than a century of our past.*

### Anniversary Open House

Join us at the Heritage Center for refreshments, door prizes, **FREE Museum admission** and Holiday Gift Shop Specials including **double shopping discount** for BECHS Members.

**Fri., November 7, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.**

**Sat., November 8, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.**

*Local Author Fair 1-4 p.m.*

**History Center is located at  
424 Warren Street, Mankato**

**Give History for the Holidays**  
Marian Anderson Art • Collectibles  
Books • Vintage Holiday Décor  
Memberships • Donations

BECHS member 20% discount at Heritage Center Gift Shop this weekend ONLY. Does NOT include consignment or sale items, online purchases, memberships or to be combined with any other offer.



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Visit [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) for more details.



# Around the Research Center

Heather Harren, Education and Outreach Manager

It is always amazing what people find in the Research Center. In the last three months, we have had several people looking for their family history, but we have had quite a few people looking for more information about their houses. House history can be a bit harder than genealogy, if you do not start with the correct tools.

The best place to start researching with your house history is the Polk City Directories. Starting in 1929, there is a reverse look-up in the directories; so with an address, you can find out who lived in the house or the business at that location. Then with that information you can find out more about the people who occupied the location.

Another source of information is plat maps. These are especially helpful for people who farmed rather than lived in a city. Plat maps show the land ownership and, in some cases, where buildings were located on the property. Using this information and comparing it to a current map can help you locate your family's land.

Another great location to find more information about your house is to visit the Land Records Department at the Blue Earth County Historic

Courthouse. This is especially helpful for people who live in Mankato. Once you know the addition your house is located in and the lot number, you can trace the property through many different books to see when it was bought or when the deed was transferred to someone else. With these names, you can visit the Research Center to learn more about the people.

Doing house history research takes time and effort, but can be worth it in the end. Good luck in your search!

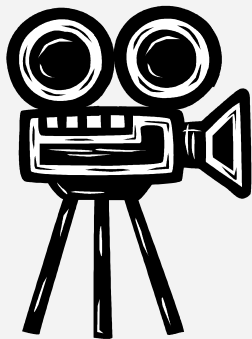
## Here's a little Blue Earth County trivia from the Research Center:

1. What was the name for Beauford before 1866?
2. When was the Good Thunder Elevator Mural dedicated?
3. Can you name two of the ten *Remarkable Men of Garden City*?

Answers can be found on page 19. Like Blue Earth County trivia? More can be found on our website and Facebook page.

## Wanted: Your BECHS Story

You may have seen one of our "Volunteer Story" or "Member Story" videos on Facebook or YouTube. We are looking for more people to share their BECHS story. Tell us why you joined or started volunteering at BECHS, what you enjoy the most about BECHS or maybe you have a specific



story or memory to share. The videos are informal and can be as long or short as you would like. If you are interested in sharing your BECHS story, please contact Heather. To view our current videos visit [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) click on the "Community" tab.

## Make a Difference

### In the Lives that Follow



## LEAVE A LEGACY® Mankato Area

*Sponsored By Minnesota Planned Giving Council*

**Blue Earth County Historical Society is a proud member of Leave A Legacy. Contact BECHS for more information or to pick up a free "Personal Planning Guide".**

Support local nonprofits through Planned Giving.

# BECHS Volunteers Make History Happen

THANK YOU to all the volunteers who have helped with light construction, cleaning, moving and arranging that comes along with our expansion. To the right, a volunteer helps to remove the wall in the stairwell that had separated the upper and lower levels for the past 25 years. We couldn't have done it without you!

Below you will find some volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in helping with any of these opportunities or would like more information about volunteering with BECHS, please contact Danelle, our volunteer coordinator, at [bechsms@hickorytech.net](mailto:bechsms@hickorytech.net) or visit [www.bechshistory.com/volunteer](http://www.bechshistory.com/volunteer).



## Volunteer Opportunities

### **Saturday Volunteers Urgently Needed**

BECHS has an urgent need for scheduled Saturday volunteers to help at the History Center with special events, the Gift Shop and the Research Center. Volunteers do not need to work every Saturday, but do need to commit to a day. Schedule can be split into two shifts.

### **Holiday Open House**

November 7-8 at the History Center. Looking for a couple of volunteers to help with refreshments, store sales and the author event.

### **Christmas at the Hubbard House**

December 6-7 at the Hubbard House. In need of costumed characters and help with refreshments.

### **Research Center Assistant**

Looking for individuals to help in the Research Center assisting visitors and fulfilling research requests. Seeking those interested in a set schedule, particularly Saturdays. Research/genealogy experience preferred; training provided as needed.

### **Gift Shop Attendants**

With the new Gift Shop location, there may be times when BECHS needs an additional hand in the shop. Must be comfortable with computers.

### **Kiwanis Holiday Lights**

BECHS needs to contribute hours to the event set-up, during and tear-down. Volunteers needed for set-up weekends of October 25 through November 23 and BECHS night November 30.

### **Building Projects**

There are still a variety of expansion related projects needing volunteers like handyman/light construction, moving, and reorganizing.

### **Writers and Editors**

In search of writers and researchers for regular article series and BECHS publications including main *Historian* articles. Also, looking for individuals strong in editing and proofreading.

### **"This Day in Blue Earth County" Researcher**

Looking for someone to research past Blue Earth County newspapers, looking for interesting tidbits that BECHS can share on social media or in future publications.

### **Scanning Project**

Looking for someone interested in assisting with a long-term scanning project of photos, slides, negatives and documents. Must be comfortable working with computers and scanning equipment. Training provided.

### **Data Entry - Photo Information**

Seeking an individual interested in entering photo information into a database.

### **Education Taskforce**

Assist with the development and implementation of local history teaching tools for early childhood thru elementary aged children.

# BECHS Donations

July - September 2014

## Donations

Helen Balcome  
CenterPoint Energy  
Joseph and Malda  
Farnham  
Robert and Linda Frost  
Sandi Garlow  
Char Hiniker  
Susan Hynes  
Dolores Jones  
Eldon and Helen Jones  
John Just Sr.  
Ann Kalvig  
Linda Karow  
Grace and Richard Keir  
Jack and Harriet Kent  
Beth Norman  
Shirley and Mark Piepho  
Carol Ries  
Tom and Cindy Salsbery  
Eunice Sassenberg  
Shirley Schaub  
Kevin and Jody Swanson  
Judy and Leo Voss  
Marnie Werner  
Randy Zellmer

## Monthly Donors

Dale Benefield  
Joel Botten  
Carol English  
Carlienne Frisch  
Shirley Grundmeier  
Jo-an & Dean Lavitschke  
Jack & Diann McGowan  
Donna and Jerry Webb  
Beth Zimmer

## Memorial

*In Memory of Doris  
Bateman*  
Jack Madsen

## Tribute

*In Honor of Leslie  
Peterson*  
Audrey Gatchell  
Peg Lawrence  
Jane Lawther  
Richard & Lucy Lowry  
James and Ann McGuire  
Brad & Jessica Potter  
Joyce Schneider  
Louis and Rebecca  
Schwartzkopf  
Richard & Lynne Weber  
Jerry Wegman

## In-Kind

Marian Anderson  
Cheryl Klages  
Piepho Moving &  
Storage  
Red Door Creative

## Surrounded By History 2015

**Sponsors**  
Industrial Fabrication  
Services  
Minnesota Elevator, Inc  
Stinson Leonard Street  
The Free Press

*Marian Anderson*  
**Fine Art Prints**

**You can help BECHS raise funds by  
purchasing Marian Anderson Art for  
yourself or as a gift.**

As a living legacy, Marian Anderson donated her entire inventory of fine art prints to the Blue Earth County Historical Society; **100% of all print sales benefit BECHS.** Fine art prints are available to view and purchase at the Marian Anderson Art Gallery located at the Blue Earth County History Center and online at [www.mariananderson.com](http://www.mariananderson.com).

## SPECIAL MUSEUM EDITION

Marian Anderson's Historic Mankato Series is now available in a Limited Museum Edition. This sold out series is back with a limited quantity for a limited time only. All proceeds benefit BECHS's expansion. Get yours before they are gone!



**Mankato Series  
includes *Closing  
Time, Good Ol'  
Summertime* and  
*Partners in Progress*  
by Marian Anderson**

**Set of all three  
historic Mankato  
scenes \$500  
(unframed)**



**Individual print  
\$200  
(unframed)**

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

**TO THE MAX**  
**giveDAY** 

**NOV 13, 2014**

Visit [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) for more information

# Membership Makes a Difference



Thank you to all the members who came to our Open House and Member Appreciation on September 27. BECHS Staff, Volunteers and Board of Trustees had a great day showing

off our space and are so appreciative to those that shared their day with us.

As the Thanksgiving and holiday seasons approach, we are often reminded of the things we are most thankful for. Without a doubt, BECHS is most thankful for YOU! While we are grateful for the opportunity to grow and improve, it wouldn't mean anything if it weren't for you.

If you weren't renewing your memberships, coming to events or visiting the History Center, there would be no point in expanding. True, BECHS could continue to preserve the objects and memories of the past, but if we didn't have members, we would be little more than a warehouse. Our members bring BECHS to life. And for that, we are extremely thankful.

If you aren't a BECHS member, consider joining today. Our members receive a number of annual benefits, including:

- Free annual pass to the History Center and Museum, Research Center, R. D. Hubbard House and more.
- 10% off most items in the Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery.
- *The Historian* in your mailbox or inbox 4 times a year
- The knowledge that you are supporting the one organization dedicated to Blue Earth County's history.

BECHS Memberships make a great gift. Give the gift of History this holiday season!



## BECHS Membership

**July - September 2014**

### **New Members**

Terri and John Anderson  
Elaine Anderson  
Norma Bergquist  
Callie Ehlenfeldt  
Al and Marge Eichten  
Pam Hartmann  
Barbara Jackowell  
Maurine and Walter Johnson  
Minnesota Elevator, Inc  
John and Kathy Kachelmyer  
Kristin Matzke  
Bob Mayer  
Jack and Sandra McDonald  
Hilda Parks  
Joanne Thomas  
Chuck and Cindy Wright

### **Renewing Business Members**

Goodrich Construction, Inc.  
Insty-Prints of Mankato  
Radio Mankato  
Voyager Bank

*To ALL our new and renewing members,  
THANK YOU for your continued support.*

# SURROUNDED BY HISTORY

*Built in Blue Earth County*

**Save the Date**  
**FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2015**

For more information call 507-345-5566.  
[www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com)





## MANKATO BALTICS 1860s BASE BALL CLUB

Brad and Ariane Hawker, Mankato Baltics

The Mankato Baltics hope you are having a wonderful fall!

In the last newsletter, we were basking in summer; and that briskly flew by like an 1860's daisy cutter (hard hit line drive)! The latter part of our schedule consisted of a road trip to Reedsburg, WI near the Wisconsin Dells where we played three matches against the Milwaukee Cream Cities, Rum River Rovers and Menomonie Blue Caps. On the way home, we stopped in Rochester to play two matches against the combined Chicago Salmon/Springfield Long Nine and the hosting Roosters, respectively.

We ended our regular season with matches at the Pat Tierney Memorial Cup at Lake St. Croix Beach and at Farm America in Waseca. Overall, we had a great season with a 12-8 record.

In November, team representatives will meet with the other Minnesota clubs to form our 2015 schedule. It is an exciting time to reflect on 2014, discuss challenges and successes with other clubs and make the upcoming year even better.

However, our year is not over yet, as we squeeze

in one more time on the field...although this time it usually consists of a white field. Our annual "Snow-Ball" match with the Arlington Greys is December 6 during the Arli-dazzle celebration. We encourage you to make the short trek to Arlington for a day of activities, vintage base ball and a fantastic parade!

Thank you so much to our generous sponsors, all the volunteers and BECHS who make it possible for us to play the game the way it was meant to be played—for the love of the game....HUZZAH!



2014 Mankato Baltics

### WISH LIST

Here are a few items we could use.  
New or used; item or cash to purchase. Questions or to donate, contact Jessica at 345-5566.

**Keurig K-Cups**  
Any flavor.  
For use with the new Keurig 2.0.

**Used Printer Ink Cartridges**  
to be recycled for cash

**1.7 cu. ft. "Dorm" Fridge**, new or used in good condition

**Electric 22-Quart Roaster Oven**

**Digital Camera**  
20 megapixel, point-and-shoot with video capability

**Holiday cookies and goodies**  
for "Christmas at Hubbard House"

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

# Around Blue Earth County



Fall is in the air, trees are showing off orange and red colors, pumpkins are appearing on doorsteps and the farmers are in the fields. With the change of seasons it soon will be Halloween! Once again, we will open the Rapidan Depot on October 31 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. to trick-or-treaters and their escorts for treats and hot cocoa.

The Good Thunder Fire Department held their annual Pork Feed in Rapidan September 6. It was encouraging to see so many people attend in support of our local fire department. The Good Thunder Fire Department has been in existence since 1896 and covers the townships of Lyra and Rapidan, plus the western edges of Decoria and Beauford townships, and the eastern edge of Garden City township.



A big fire in Rapidan occurred March 8, 1949 when the Hubbard and Palmer Elevator caught fire and strong winds quickly swept the flames through the wood frame elevator. The Rapidan fire crew was assisted by fire departments from Mankato, Lake Crystal, Mapleton, Good Thunder, and Judson; however, an insufficient water supply hampered their efforts. The elevator was later replaced with the Cray Elevator.

## BECHS Needs You!

Saturday volunteers urgently needed for upcoming special events, programs, the Gift Shop and Research Center. See page 14 for more information. Please contact Danelle at 507-345-5566 if interested.



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**ORGANIZATION**

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### Thrivent Choice Dollars® can help the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Are you a member of Thrivent Financial who's eligible to direct Choice Dollars®? Choice Dollars charitable grant funds can make a world of difference to our organization as we work together to connect the present to the past. By directing Choice Dollars, eligible Thrivent members recommend where they feel Thrivent should distribute a portion of its charitable grant funds.

Directing Choice Dollars is easy. Simply go to [Thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://Thrivent.com/thriventchoice) to learn more and find program terms and conditions. Or call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" after the prompt.

### Support BECHS on AmazonSmile

You can support BECHS by shopping through AmazonSmile when you do your Amazon shopping. Visit [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com), login to your Amazon account and enter "Blue Earth County Historical Society" as your charity of choice to get started! It's that simple and next time you shop on Amazon, you will be supporting BECHS while you shop.



### *Moving? New Address?* *Please let us know!*

It costs over \$2 for each returned newsletter that cannot be delivered. Please help the Society reserve funds and assure that you get your *Historian* by notifying us of your new or seasonal address.

# Calendar of Events October 2014 - January 2015

## OCTOBER

- 23 Our History Matters: History of Welsh Settlements in Minnesota**, 6 p.m., History Center, \$5 Adults, Members Free

## NOVEMBER

- 7-8 Holiday Open House**, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., History Center
- 7-8 "Uncle Sam's New Deal" Exhibit Opening**, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., History Center
- 8 Young Historians: World War I - 1920s**, 10 a.m., History Center, RSVP to 345-5566
- 13 Give to the Max Day**, Minnesota's Annual Day for Nonprofit Giving, visit [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) for more information.
- 15 Madison East NonProfit Holiday Gift & Bake Sale**, 9 a.m., Madison East Center, Mankato
- 20 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS update on Talk of the Town
- 20 Our History Matters: Boy in Blue**, 6 p.m., History Center, \$5 Adults, Members Free
- 27-29 History Center Closed** for Thanksgiving
- 30 BECHS Night at Kiwanis Holiday Lights**



## DECEMBER

- 6 Christmas at Hubbard House**, 3-7 p.m., Historic R.D. Hubbard House
- 7 Christmas at Hubbard House**, 1-4 p.m., Historic R.D. Hubbard House
- 13 Young Historians: The Great Depression**, 10 a.m., History Center, RSVP to 345-5566
- 13-14 Hubbard House Open** for walk-in tours, 1-4 p.m.
- 15 BECHS Annual Volunteer Holiday Potluck**, Noon, History Center, RSVP to 345-5566

- 18 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS update on Talk of the Town
- 18 Our History Matters: Blue Earth County Poor Farm**, 6 p.m., History Center, \$5 Adults, Members Free
- 20-21 Hubbard House Open** for walk-in tours, 1-4 p.m.
- 24-27 History Center Closed** for Christmas

## JANUARY

- 1 History Center Closed** for New Year's Day, Happy 2015!
- 3 "Uncle Sam's New Deal" Traveling Exhibit Closes**
- 10 Young Historians: 1920s-1940s Technology**, 10 a.m., History Center, RSVP to 345-5566
- 22 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS update on Talk of the Town
- 22 Our History Matters: Anti-Monopoly vs. General Mills Fun Group**, 6 p.m., History Center, \$5 Adults, Members Free

## SAVE THE DATE

- **February 14, "Minnesota Homefront" Traveling Exhibit Opens**
- **March 1, BECHS Annual Meeting**
- **March 20, Surrounded By History, Annual BECHS Fundraiser**

## Three easy ways to stay up-to-date:

- Check out [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com) for full event details and updates!
- Sign-up for our free monthly e-news to receive updates between *Historian* issues
- Follow BECHS on Facebook and Twitter.

## Electronic Version of *The Historian* Now Available

If you would like to receive *The Historian* via email rather than traditional mail, please contact Danelle at [bechsms@hickorytech.net](mailto:bechsms@hickorytech.net) or 345-5566.

## Answers to Blue Earth County Trivia on page 13:

1. Winneshiek
2. June 25, 1988
3. Carlos Boynton, George Palmer, George Piper, Adoniram Rockwood, Chelsea Rockwood, Amos Warner, Eli Warner, Ellsworth Warner, Fernando Wellcome, and Henry S. Wellcome

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Membership Levels**

Individual Senior (62+) \$20

Individual \$25

Household \$35

Contributor \$50

Supporter\* \$100

Booster\* \$250

Advocate\* \$500

Benefactor\* \$1000

\*denotes Business Member levels

Please send this form and check to:

BECHS Membership

415 Cherry Street

Mankato, MN 56001

**OR**

Complete your membership form

online at [www.bechshistory.com](http://www.bechshistory.com)

*Affiliate Membership levels available for Groups or Organizations, call for details.*



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