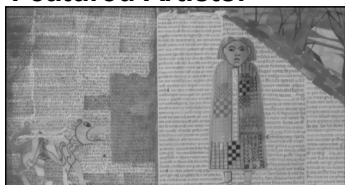


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SPECIAL EXHIBITS

Featured Artists:



Recent Work

By Brad Widness and
Ann Kronlokken
Widness
April 11-June 30, 2017

Married in Style: Blue Earth County Weddings

April 22-July 1, 2017

***Illuminating the Word:
The Saint John's Bible***
July 8-Sept. 1, 2017



Edward J. Naylor, of Rapidan, repairs a tire on a 1913 Overland Touring Car

Where there's a "wheel," there's a way

Each spring, the Blue Earth County Historical Society gears up for *Surrounded By History*, our annual fundraiser. This year, the wheels are turning as we celebrate the history of transportation on April 28. The evening will take off with a social hour, cash bar and silent auction, followed by dinner and dessert. Then we will change gears with some fun trivia, provided by the entertaining Savants of Question.

The funds raised at the event will keep the Historical Society on track as we continue to offer boatloads of history experiences at the History Center, Hubbard House and in our local schools.

So full steam ahead and climb aboard for *Surrounded By History* on April 28, 2017! Tickets are available through April 21. Call or visit the History Center or go to www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/tickets today.

As you travel through this *Historian* issue, be sure to navigate your way to the main article "Flying High: The History of the Mankato Airport." It's *plane* to see aviation history is rich in Blue Earth County. As we continue down the road, watch for more transportation history in the Summer issue as we cruise into the history of Mankato's streetcars.

The Blue Earth County Historian



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Beth Johnson, Education & Outreach Coordinator
Education@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com

History Center & Museum

424 Warren Street, Mankato, MN
507-345-5566
www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com
Tuesday - 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
May: Saturday - Sunday 1 - 4 p.m.
June-August:
Friday-Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday 1 - 4 p.m.

The Blue Earth County Historian Spring 2017

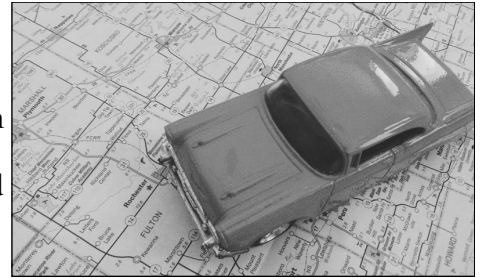
The Blue Earth County Historian is published quarterly for the members of Blue Earth County Historical Society.

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Director's Notes

Jessica Potter, Executive Director

"Are we there yet?" Have you ever taken a long car trip with kids? That question seems to come from the backseat every five minutes. Like any good road trip, the Historical Society needs a good map to determine where we are



going. And how we plan to do that is by updating our Strategic Plan, aka road map for the future. The great news is you get to help us draw up this map. Starting later this spring/early summer, we will be holding a series of focus groups seeking your input. We want to know why this organization matters to you, what you like, don't like and what our future could look like. This plan will serve as a guide or compass for decision-making, budgeting and facility improvements. Watch for signs ahead giving you details on how to participate.

Before we dig into our future, we are celebrating our past with our annual fundraiser, *Surrounded By History*, on Friday, April 28 at 6 p.m. In its 6th year, *Surrounded By History* will celebrate the history of transportation in Blue Earth County with "Blue Earth County on the Move." Join us for a social hour, dinner, transportation trivia by the Savants of Question, wine wall, silent auction and raffle. The evening will be fun and entertaining and it supports our efforts to make local history

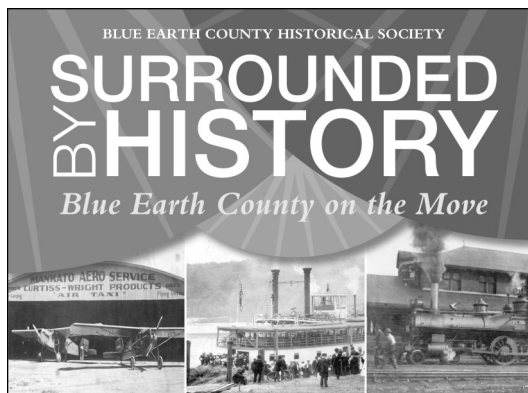
accessible to all ages. To date, *Surrounded By History* has raised about \$90,000 for BECHS! Please consider being part of the fun this year! Tickets are on sale until April 21.

A new feature for *Surrounded By History* this year is a raffle.

Whether you are able

to attend or not, consider buying a (or more than one) raffle ticket for \$20. The grand prize is an exclusive VIP Minnesota Vikings Training Camp Experience. Check out our website for more information about the raffle. Tickets can be purchased at the History Center or contact a BECHS Board Member.

We have a lot more engaging programs, new exhibits and volunteer opportunities planned for this Spring. We hope to see you at the History Center, Hubbard House or at one of our activities. Happy Spring!



Board of Trustees



Shirley Piepho
Chair, Board of Trustees

As the re-elected Chair of the Board of Trustees, I want to express my sincere gratitude to our outgoing Board Member, Preston Doyle, for the leadership and guidance he gave to this organization over the past 9 years. I am certain he will continue to support BECHS' mission. We are very fortunate the following four individuals have joined our board: Gretchen Bohl, Jon Guentzel, Katherine Hughes and Steve Jameson. They bring a variety of attributes that will strengthen our Board and our organization. You can learn more about each of them in the next column.

I hope to see you on April 28 at *Surrounded By History*. The event will be filled with pictures, memorabilia and trivia fun. It will be a very entertaining and educational event. In addition, *Surrounded By History* is a great opportunity to share your stories and history of the county with fellow BECHS members and friends.

We have an ambitious goal of \$35,000 to help fund programs and events that provide necessary support to keep Blue Earth County history alive. We still have a few sponsorship opportunities remaining. If you or your business are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact the History Center. If you are unable to attend, please consider a donation or purchase a raffle ticket or two. We appreciate your support and I hope you will join us in celebrating 116 years of collecting, preserving and presenting the history of Blue Earth County!

Need a Space for a Meeting or Special Gathering?



The Blue Earth County History Center has a number of rental options for your next business meeting or special gathering. Visit www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/visit/rentals for more information on rates or contact the History Center for availability.

Welcome to Our New Board Members

At the Annual Meeting in March, the following individuals were elected to serve on the BECHS Board of Trustees for 2017-2020.

Meet your new Board members in their own words (in order of the picture left to right):



Gretchen Bohl

I am a community health specialist for Blue Earth County Public Health, working in chronic disease prevention (through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership) and emergency preparedness. I live in Mankato with my husband and 3 kids (ages 17, 13, and 9). I'm very interested in genealogy as well as the threads of history that tie people to events, places, and other people.

Jon Guentzel

I am CEO of Guentzel Family Farms and Co-owner of TacAero. I live near Kasota on the 4th generation family farm with my wife and new child. I am very involved with the annual fly-in breakfast at the airport, Breakfast on the Farm and Kiwanis Holiday Lights and have a "get it done attitude."

Katherine Hughes

I am a life-long student of history and wish to share that interest. I received my M.A. in history from MSU, Mankato; my thesis topic was Mankato's founding and its early years. I've done further research on the U.S.-Dakota War and how memories of it have changed since 1862. Before my retirement I was a marketing assistant at Carlson Craft.

Steve Jameson

I am the publisher of Free Press Media which produces The Free Press, Mankato Magazine, MN Valley Business, Kid-Oh, The Land, The Home magazine and more. My wife, Susan, currently works for Greater Mankato Growth, and we have two daughters, Cayley, 20 and Kassi, 24. I'm excited to be on the board because its mission is much like that of the newspaper, which is really the record of community history on a daily basis.

Thank you Preston Doyle for your 9 years of service on the Board.



Education & Outreach

Making Local History Accessible to All Ages

By Beth Johnson, Education and Outreach Coordinator

It's spring and we are nearing the end of the school year, which means field trip season! In Education and Outreach we stay very busy with school tours and visits, programs at the History Center and Hubbard House, Community Education classes, *Young Historians*, Discovery Lab adventures and planning special activities. We strive to encourage our community to think about our shared history in new and innovative ways!

In the Schools

Our school classroom visits have become a popular way to reach our area students. We have conducted four Youth Enrichment History Classes offered through the Mankato Community Education Program. The students in these after-school classes have been able to participate in small groups with hands-on learning focused on specific history topics. We look forward to expanding these enrichment programs and their reach to other communities.

We are also gearing up for school tours to the History Center and Hubbard House. We offer on-site field trips to grades K-12. Visits include guided



tours at the Hubbard House, and guided tours with hands-on activities at the History Center. So far, we are looking forward to 70 kindergarteners coming to the History Center and 150 2nd graders visiting the

Hubbard House. If you would like your student(s) to have the opportunity to explore our local history, talk to your school or PTA. Every child in Blue Earth County should have the opportunity to learn about the history that surrounds them.

If you are interested in being a tour guide or helping tours or classroom visits, please contact the History Center. See page 12 for more information.

Young Historians is coming to an end, for now

Our Young Historians have been busily exploring Blue Earth County's natural history and learning how "This Land We Live In," has helped us

become who we are as a community. We continue to learn about the many unique natural resources of Blue Earth County and how we have benefitted from them throughout our history.

Every session was a combination of local history, fun experiences, crafts and a visit to the Museum to engage with history. We have had great growth in our number of attendees over the last few months. Even the adults want to join in!



Topics this year ranged from "Harnessing the Cold" where the kids learned how people used the weather to create a prosperous and necessary ice industry in Blue Earth County to "Digging for

History" where they learned about archaeology and how to study the past by things left behind (pictured above). Our last workshop for the year is in May and we will turn our attention to agriculture.

Over the summer months we will be planning for next year. Many, many thanks to the volunteers and parents who have been part of *Young Historians* this year! If you would like to join in any capacity, please contact me at the History Center.

BECHS Outreach

Our community outreach programming is an important asset to our work. We continue to have great attendance at our monthly *Remember When Coffee Club* and noontime educational program, *History Bits & Bites*. If you have not attended a program at the History Center, we invite you to come and enjoy.

In the upcoming months we will be hosting various workshops for adults. In May, printmaker Rachel James will offer a free, fun class on water-based monoprinting. Watch for additional classes to be announced soon.

If you would like to teach a class or present on a topic, please contact us at the History Center. Refer to the Calendar of Events on the page 18 for more information on all of our upcoming events and programs.

Monthly Educational Opportunities

Remember When Coffee Club

Love history? Love to swap stories of the good old days? Looking for a place to connect with other



history enthusiasts? **Come to the History Center the first Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. for BECHS'**

Remember When Coffee Club. This is an informal opportunity to share memories and photos with fellow local history enthusiasts at the History Center. Attendance and rich, lively conversation continue to grow. There is no formal program, just a conversation topic to get the group started. Coffee, tea and light refreshments are provided. Free.

Upcoming Topics

May 2 - Wedding Preparations

June 6 - Favorite Pets

July 11 - Parks, Picnics and Food

(note different day)

History Bits & Bites

History Bits & Bites is a monthly learning series held the **third Thursday of each month during the noon hour at the Blue Earth County History Center.** Bring your lunch for a bite while learning a bit of history! Come see what you have been missing.

Free for BECHS Members, \$5 non-members. Lunch is NOT provided, but beverages will be available.



Tom Hagen presenting on Mankato's 6th Street stone house.

Upcoming Programs

April 20 - History of the Mankato Airport

May 18 - History of the Former Newman Center and Coughlan Family – Dave Coughlan

June 15 - Wedding Traditions and Superstitions – Shelley Harrison

July 20 - Mankato's Street Cars – Tim Pulis

Young Historians



Young Historians on their archaeology "dig"

Young Historians is a free, monthly, hands-on history workshop for school-age children. It meets the **2nd Saturday of each month, September through May, 10 a.m. to Noon.**

This year, *Young Historians* is exploring how important our natural resources are to the development of Blue Earth County. Our students have been busy uncovering new ways to look at our natural history this year!

Upcoming Workshop

May 13 - Ag Life

Last meeting of the school year

Upcoming History Center Workshops

Water-based Monoprinting with Rachel James

Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Cost: Free (materials provided)

Participants: 10

Monoprinting is a painterly form of printmaking wherein an artist uses a matrix, stencils or other objects to create prints. In this workshop you will learn non-toxic hand-pulled monoprinting techniques suitable for painters and printmakers alike. Learn to cut stencils, ink plates and pull prints, all without the use of toxic materials or a press. Optional: bring a photograph or drawing to reproduce. Space is limited, so call the History Center to reserve your spot today. 507-345-5566

Awesome Women in History! Summer Camp

Date: Tuesday, June 20-Friday, June 23, 2017

Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Grades: 2-5 (school year recently completed)

Cost: \$129.00/student

Participants: 6 minimum, 15 maximum

Travel with us through time and meet some amazing women who helped shape history. Through multiple days of engaging activities, stories, food and more, learn about some of the many women who made a big difference in the world. Choose how you will shape history as an awesome woman! Call or visit the History Center to make reservations.



Collections & Exhibits

Married in Style: Blue Earth County Weddings

Shelley Harrison, Archives & Collections Manager

Here comes the bride! The Blue Earth County Historical Society is excited to unveil our newest temporary exhibit, *Married in Style: Blue Earth County Weddings*. It will feature dresses, photographs and memorabilia from over a hundred years of Blue Earth County weddings.

In many weddings, past and present, the wedding dress takes center stage. The same is true for our new exhibit. Over a dozen dresses from our collection will be on display, showing how styles and customs have changed over the years. For instance, many past brides could not afford a dress they would only wear once and it was common for women to be married in their best existing outfit. If there was a new dress, it was often worn many times after the wedding with alterations made over the years to follow fashion trends or to fit a changing figure. Even for high-society brides, it wasn't uncommon to see them wearing their dresses after their wedding day.

Contrary to popular belief, brides have not always dressed in white. First made popular by Queen Victoria's 1840 white bridal ensemble, the trend of bridal-white became a status symbol. White fabrics, being hard to keep clean, were rarely seen on women who performed manual labor as it was impractical for later wear.

Pictured here is an example of a non-white wedding dress. This brown velvet and silk dress was worn by Sarah Roberts (nee Wigley) for her wedding on her father's farm near Judson on January 16, 1890.

One of the exhibit highlights will be a 125 year old rose silk and linen embroidered gown worn by Lulu Murphy of Lake Crystal when she married Judge Lorin Cray in 1892. With its leg of mutton sleeves, fitted bodice and full skirt, the dress is a perfect example of how wedding gowns reflect the fashions of the day.

Along with the dresses, the exhibit will include a look at women's bridal accessories such as shoes, veils and hats. And we haven't forgotten about the groom. Among the pieces that will be on display are

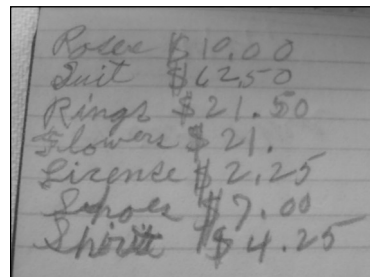
suits, hats and shoes.

Wedding dresses and finery won't be the only items in the exhibit. There will also be wedding photographs, marriage certificates and cake toppers. Some unique mementos include a 1946 notebook where groom John Depuydt documented the cost of the wedding from his attire to the flowers and rings.

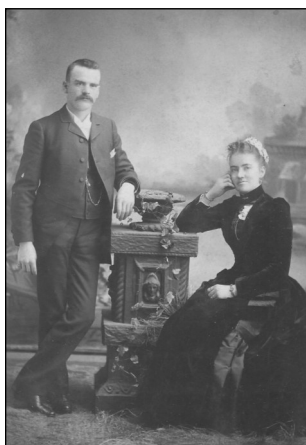
For some extra fun, there will be replica historical dresses, coats and hats for kids and adults to try on—perfect for taking a “wedding selfie.” In association with the exhibit, *History Bits & Bites* on June 15 will feature the

presentation “Wedding Traditions and Superstitions,” examining the origins of wedding traditions and customs surrounding the big day.

Married in Style: Blue Earth County Weddings opens April 22 and runs through July 1, 2017. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come and take a trip down the aisle with our latest exhibit.



John Depuydt's list for the roses, suit, rings, flowers, license, shoes and shirt for his 1946 wedding.



Hugh and Sarah Roberts

The Blue Earth County Historical Society
cordially invites you to view

Married In Style

Blue Earth County Weddings

**From simple to
extravagant, weddings
come in all forms. View
all the treasures that go
into making each
wedding day special in
our latest exhibit.**

April 22 - July 1, 2017
Blue Earth County
History Center

Every object has a story...

At the Blue Earth County History Center's Museum and R.D. Hubbard House, we showcase objects that tell the stories of Blue Earth County's past. With only about ten percent of the total collection on display at any given time, sometimes it's hard to decide what stories to tell! Here is just a glimpse at some items currently on display which are related to our transportation history.

Hand Forged Iron Star Railroad Marker, circa 1900s

This five pointed star was used as a sign marking a location where a locomotive engineer needed to sound the train whistle. This sign was found along the Dan Patch Railroad between Madison Lake and Waterville, MN.



Josephine Pay, wife of B. Frank Pay, one of the first people to own an automobile in Mankato.

Surrey Carriage, 1890s

A surrey is a light, four-wheeled horse drawn carriage with two seats facing forward. This surrey is the newest addition to the vehicles at the Hubbard House Carriage House.

Lillian Anderson, daughter of John and Stina Anderson, rode this buggy to Mankato to attend Mankato Normal School. Their family farm in Le Ray



Township is now a Century Farm.

So the next time you take a spin through the Museum or Carriage House, you'll know a little more of the story.



Bus Fare Collector, 1970s

This was used by the Mankato City Bus Line which operated from 1938 to 1982. Did you know that the bus fare in 1976 was 35 cents?



Woman's Linen Driving Duster, 1910

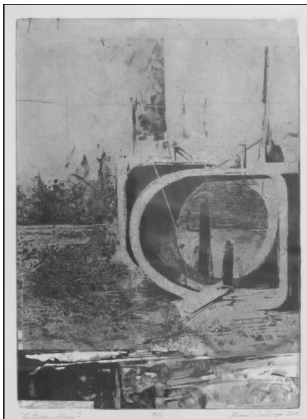
Dusters were worn while traveling by early automobile. With no car roofs and many unpaved roads, these long coats protected women's dresses from dust and dirt. This coat belonged to Sarah

HISTORY CENTER ART GALLERY

Recent Work

By Brad Widness and Ann Kronlokken Widness

April 11 - June 30, 2017



Between Places

Brad Widness and Ann Kronlokken Widness live and work in South Central Minnesota.

Brad is a draughtsman and printmaker whose work has been exhibited and collected regionally, nationally, and internationally. Brad's images study the relationship between object, space and memory and the connections between the intangible and tangible realities of life. His work hopes to engage the spirit and mystery that lies at the core of our daily human existence.

Ann works in the areas of collage and fiber. Her work exists in numerous public and private collections in the Midwest. Ann's work intuitively imagines the soul's path through a world full of challenges and unknowns. She hopes her work will provoke questions and perhaps even the desire to dig through the surface layer of daily life into what lies beneath.

OPENING RECEPTION WILL BE ON FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 7:00 P.M.

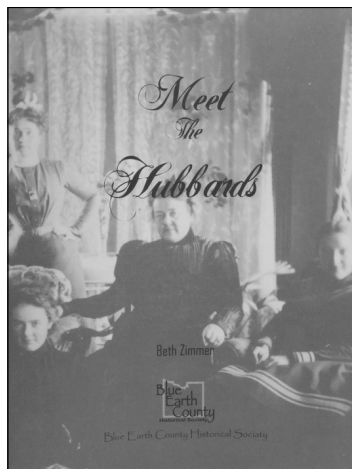


Gift Shop & Art Gallery News

Danelle Erickson, Development Manager

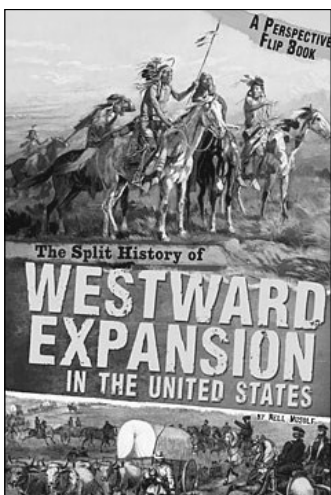
For the Blue Earth County Historical Society, the arrival of spring means the R.D. Hubbard House will soon be open for tours, making it the perfect time for you to *Meet the Hubbards*. Before or after your visit to the Hubbard House, make sure you pick up a copy of *Meet the Hubbards* in the Carriage House Gift Shop. Inside you will find family history and photographs of this family who was instrumental to the early development of Mankato and Blue Earth County. This book is also available in the History Center Gift Shop. \$14.95

If you are interested in writing your own family history, you might want to take a look at *The Palmer and Confer*



Families Photo Album and Genealogy. This book uses what is known as the “Register Style,” a popular format used for family history reports and publications. A number of photographs, charts and more are also included. Even if you don’t have any connections to these families, at just \$5.00, the book makes a great, affordable reference resource.

The History Center Gift Shop includes three book series for young readers from local Capstone Publishing. In the “You Choose” books, readers



step back in time and become part of history. Similar to “choose your own adventure” books, the outcome of the story changes based on how you respond to the questions asked. \$6.95

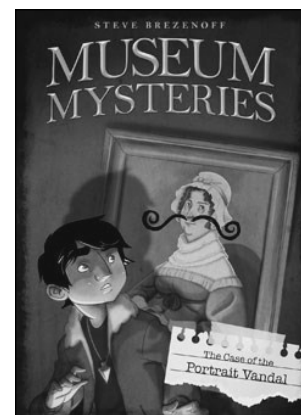
The “Perspective Flip” series are non-fiction books that show two sides of the same event. *Westward Expansion of the United States*, for example, tells of

wagon trains, land purchases and new cities. Flip the book over to read how these same events affected

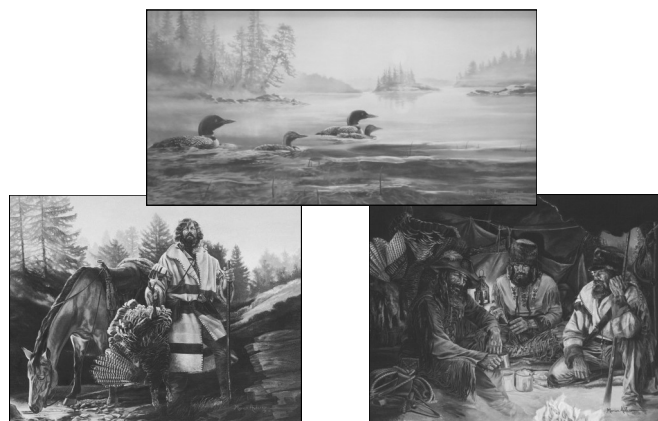
the Native Americans. \$8.95

The third Capstone series in the Gift Shop is “Museum Mysteries.” Follow four curious friends as they work together to solve mysteries and crimes in these light-hearted fiction stories. \$6.95

Recently, the Marian Anderson Art Gallery added some framed prints that were previously sold out. If you have been looking for *Spirits of the Water* featuring loons or the National Wild Turkey Federation prints of *Warming Retreat* or *First Hour*, contact the History Center. Only one of each framed print is available; prices start at \$495.00. To view these prints and the entire Marian Anderson fine art collection, visit the History Center or check out www.MarianAnderson.com.



Marian Anderson Fine Art Prints



First Hour, Spirits of the Water and Warming Retreat

Fine art prints are available exclusively at the History Center and online at **MarianAnderson.com**.

100% of all sales benefit the Historical Society.

Artist Marian Anderson is recognized for her diverse subjects that come from a natural ability not only to create a beautiful painting, but to breathe spirit and soul into her work.



Mankato Airport, c.1930s. Photo courtesy of Mark Smith.

FLYING HIGH

THE HISTORY OF THE MANKATO AIRPORT

By Grace Webb

On any given day, dozens of flights arrive and depart from the Mankato Regional Airport, located five miles outside of the city on the aptly named Airport Road. More than 100 aircraft are based on the 1,000-acre field, including everything from single-engine airplanes to jets to helicopters. The city-owned airport leases 86 indoor hangar spaces to different companies and corporations, as well as offering space to North Star Aviation to train the next generation of pilots. In addition, Mankato's MN Air Spectacular has drawn thousands of guests over the years and featured such big-name flyers as the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, the Air Force Thunderbirds and the Canadian Snowbirds. Even famous figures like Richard Nixon and Bob Hope have flown into the airport.

There's no question the Mankato Regional Airport is a crucial part of Blue Earth County's landscape. It's also a special part of the region's history, dating all the way back to the first airport used by local pilots in the 1920s.

Getting Off the Ground

When aviation enthusiasts began spreading their wings across southern Minnesota, they had to make do with what they had before any official airports came into being. In the case of the Blue Earth County region, that meant transforming cropland into runways. According to the *Mankato Free Press*,

the first landing strip was located in a flat field just north of Mankato near Highway 5. It wasn't exactly an ideal location, with boulders creating bumpy landings and strong westerly winds forcing pilots to make tricky takeoff maneuvers.

Because of this, Mankato Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee chairman, Morgan Bowen, began looking for another location. By 1927, he found it in a 107-acre plot of land between Monks Avenue and Pohl Road, about two miles southeast of the city. It had been used as a wheat field until local aviation enthusiast Robert "Bob" Rasmussen purchased it for about \$7,000 and leased it to Lawrence Sohler, a 22-year-old from Eagle Lake. Sohler, who learned to fly only three years earlier in a vintage World War I "Jenny," had helped Bowen and Rasmussen scout out locations for the new airport. He became the airport's first field manager and supervised the grading for a single grass runway and construction of a metal hangar before leaving Mankato in 1934 to train hundreds of military pilots before and during World War II, along with ferrying supplies to the Alaskan Highway project. Eventually, Sohler headed the U.S. Forest Service's patrol on the West Coast. He also trained Harold Schlesselman, who took over managing the airport in 1934.

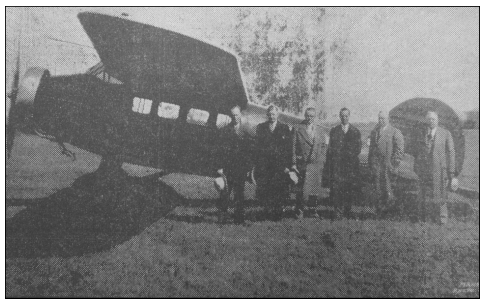
The airport was officially dedicated on September 28, 1928. According to the *Mankato Free Press*, it was quite an event. The three-day

celebration, which ran from September 28-30, included an aerial parade over the city, a 15-mile plane race, an exhibition flight by four Army pilots, a parachute drop and a flight by one of the gliders crafted by the Minneapolis-based Marvin A. Northrop Airplane Corporation—the first motor-less man carrier to be shown and flown in the northwest. In addition, there were prizes given out to the shortest, tallest, oldest and youngest pilots involved, as well as a “dead stick spot landing contest” where pilots were required to cut their engines at 2,500 feet and land on a mark without using their motors. Both local businessman George M. Palmer and Congressman Frank Clague of Redwood Falls spoke at the event, with Clague promising an air mail service “within two years.”

The first recorded commercial flight was on June 24, 1929, when E. W. Owen of Owen Music Co. sent a pilot on a 40-minute flight to Minneapolis to pick up a new radio.

When the airport first officially opened, it cost only \$60 to lease private hangar space for one year, and only four planes were stationed there. The number of planes increased substantially throughout the next 10 years, with 49 planes using the airport by 1937. While most of the traffic was still local, planes also flew in from places as far as New York, California and Texas.

In 1932, Hanford’s Tri-state Air Lines of Sioux City launched its first daily airplane passenger service between the Twin Cities and Omaha, utilizing the Mankato airport as a go-between. Only one four-passenger plane was available at first. Boasting a cruising speed of 120 miles per hour, the plane was able to transport passengers from Mankato to Minneapolis in less than half an hour. The first flight took off on April 8 of that year, with five Mankato men, including Bob Rasmussen, along for the ride.



First passenger flight, April 8, 1932

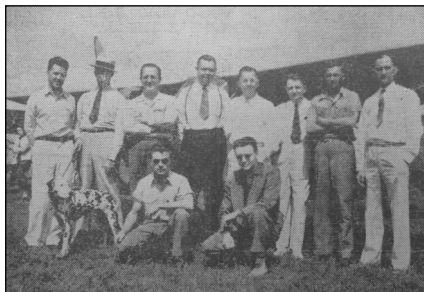
Taking Wing

As more pilots began using the airport, it became apparent that more buildings and equipment would be necessary. Work began on a new airport hangar in 1939. Costing about \$1,500, the hangar was able to house eight planes. It was financed by Schlesselman and a group of local fliers, who saw the need to give more permanent shelter to the 200-plus planes that

were flying into the airport at this time.

That same year, the airport picked up a new ambulance plane, a Stinson SR8B “Gull Wing,” which could cruise at 143 miles per hour and could transport passengers from Mankato to Kansas City in less than three hours.

About that same time, Helen Murphy and Gordenna Dahl became the first women from Mankato to earn their pilot’s licenses. In addition, the airport picked up its first flying club, made up of a group of local businessmen (and their Dalmatian club mascot) who purchased a plane and learned how to fly it on Sunday mornings.

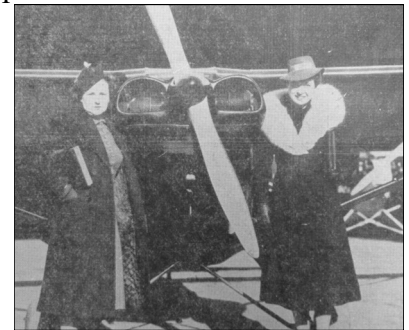


Mankato Flying Club, 1940

The airport changed hands in 1943 when Schlesselman purchased it after leasing it for 10 years. He had many grand plans for his new airport, including continued work on a new runway and control tower. By this time, the airport already had an administration building, two hangars, and a welding and painting shop. About 30 planes were using the space regularly.

The majority of that use came from Navy cadets, learning to fly through the Mankato State Teachers College. Schlesselman understood the importance of providing this educational tool to aspiring pilots, leading the airport’s successful effort to become an accredited Navy V-5 program flight school in 1943. He personally trained more than 1,200 Navy pilots during World War II, which also brought heavy civil air patrol activity to the airport.

Immediately after Pearl Harbor, all flights were grounded, and the airport was briefly



Mankato’s first female pilots, Helen Murphy and Gordenna Dahl, and the airplane they co-owned.



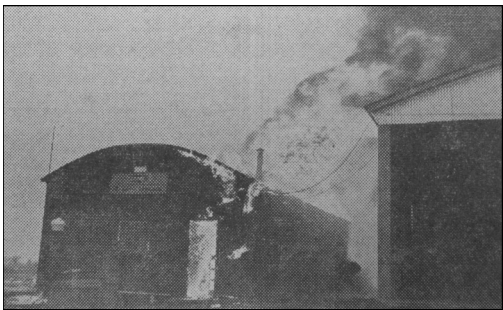
Flight instructor and manager Harold Schlesselman with students from Mankato Teachers College

put under the jurisdiction of the (now deactivated) Minnesota State Guard.

Turbulent Skies

The airport has seen its share of challenges and dramas over the years. In 1940, a fire caused \$4,000 worth of damage after a spark from a welding torch destroyed the building that housed both the airport's office and its repair shops. While airport employees weren't able to put out the flames, they were able to save six planes by wheeling them out of the hangar and also salvage many of the items located in the office—including, strangely enough, a stove. Unfortunately, two other planes were destroyed, since the blaze was too intense for the Mankato fire department to put out. In less than an hour, the hangar was reduced to ashes and charred metal.

One particularly interesting story happened in February 1982, when someone stole



1940 airport fire

a state highway patrol plane from one of the airport's hangars. Local law enforcement guessed that the thief (or thieves) had stolen the plane as a replacement for another plane that had been lifted from an Eden Prairie airport and left in Mankato when it ran out of gas. Both planes were eventually returned to their proper airports.

The airport has also had its share of spectacular crashes. Jack Lysdale, who eventually worked for both Sohler and Schlesselman, survived a 500-foot fall in his homemade plane in 1933 by landing in a field of winter wheat. In 1985, a plane simply took off without its pilot one day and crashed into another plane, while in 1992, a Mankato pilot and his passenger ended up tangled in power lines when their plane's engine failed and smashed them into a power pole, cutting off power to rural Mankato and Kasota. Pilots have also had to contend with geese, with about 60 of the large birds taking up residence along the airport's runway in 1992. Surprisingly, the geese weren't scared off the runway by the sound of plane engines, resulting in some minor damage to a small plane, but they did move along when airport employees used a "scareaway" pistol, which made the sound of a firecracker.

Unfortunately, not all crashes ended without casualties. The first recorded fatality was reported in

the *Mankato Free Press* on August 27, 1934, which detailed a crash in which both passengers were killed after their engine stalled. Another crash in 1982 saw the death of two adults, while the two toddlers strapped into car seats in the rear of the plane miraculously survived.

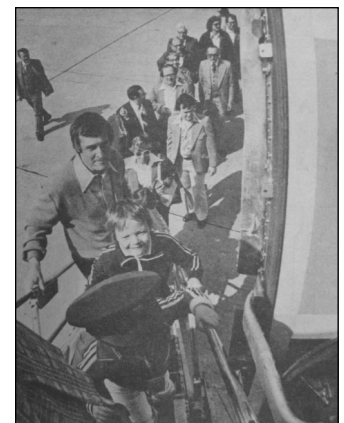
Someone New at the Controls

While Schlesselman tried to sell the airport to the city of Mankato several times, it wasn't until 1948 that the city finally took him up on the offer. Even then, it took three bond issues to win approval. The city council finally agreed to purchase the airport for \$385,000 (with the city of Mankato responsible for \$110,000). By the official July 4 dedication in 1950, the airport had grown to 262 acres and two runways, which had both been extended to allow larger planes to land. A regular air mail service was also started that year (a little later than Clague's prediction in 1928), facilitated through Western Airlines.

By the 1960s, talk had begun about the possible need for a new airport. Part of the reason was because of the city of Mankato's new scheduled air carrier, North Central Airlines, which was converting to an all-jet fleet and needed longer runways. After months of study, the Mankato City Council voted in 1967 to begin work on a new airport on land located outside of the city. The project took longer than expected to complete due to a nearly unbelievable 54 inches of rain over the summer of 1968, which resulted in flash flooding all over Mankato and North Mankato. When the project was finally completed in 1970, it came with a \$1.96 million price tag, more than \$640,000 over the original estimate.

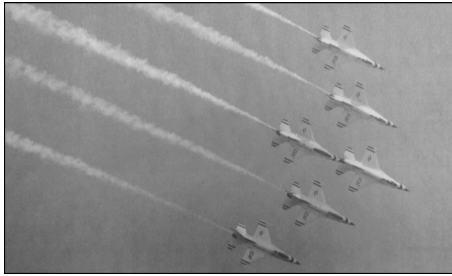
Since 1970, the airport has continued to grow and expand into the 1,000-acre site it is now. Some of the additions included an instrument landing system to help pilots land in foggy weather, a new runway lighting system and two 12,500-gallon fuel storage tanks. More flights were added, offering trips to places such as Chicago, while private jets started flying businesspeople into the city from around the world.

One of the latest additions, which has quickly become a regional staple, is the Minnesota Air



The Fred Lutz family boards the first direct flight jet from Mankato to Chicago, 1978

Spectacular, an event reminiscent of the Mankato Airfest in the 1970s through 1990s. The Air Spectacular is organized through the Mankato Regional Airport Commission, the Mankato Verizon Wireless Center, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Blue Earth County, the MN State Patrol and other representatives from the city of Mankato, the \$750,000 event drew more than 35,000 people to its first show in 2003. That year, the U.S.A.F. Thunderbirds were the headlining act, and they returned for the 2015 show. Other performances have included the Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Army Golden Knights. The next show is planned for 2018.



Air Force Thunderbirds, 2015
Minnesota Air Spectacular

Another important addition came through a partnership between Minnesota State University, Mankato and North Star Aviation, Inc. in 1991, when

the business started training the university's aviation students at the Mankato Regional Airport. As Mankato's only full-service, fixed based operator, North Star Aviation was the natural choice to offer training to the next generation of pilots across southern Minnesota. Since the partnership began, North Star has trained thousands of pilots while continuing to manage the airport for the city of Mankato.

These recent additions are just some of the changes the Mankato Regional Airport has seen throughout its nearly 90-year existence. While some of the changes have been difficult, the airport has been able to grow and thrive regardless, always striving to better serve the southern Minnesota community. Only time will tell what the future holds, but one thing is for certain: The sky is the limit.

Sources

Mankato Free Press various articles

Minnesota State University, Mankato press archive

North Star Aviation website, www.flymankato.com

Excerpt from the BECHS two-page history spread in the May/June issue of Kid-oh! magazine.

THEN and NOW AUTOMOBILES

Man's love of the car dates back to the 1890s in the United States. Did you know if you bought a car in the 1890s, you would have to put the parts together yourself? Many people in Blue Earth County did just that. They even made changes to the car with new inventions. From 1903-1907 Louis Mayer of Mankato built a car that had one of the world's first V8 engines in order to climb Mankato's steep hills! The V8 engine wasn't common in cars until the 1910s.



Haynes Apperson 1898 was one of the first motorized vehicles. It was not controlled by a steering wheel.



Ford Model T was one of the first cars to be mass produced on the moving assembly line.



Today, we have many options for cars—sedan, SUV, truck, van. They all have the same purpose as they did over 100 years ago, to transport people and goods.

How is the Haynes Apperson different from the today's cars? _____

What is your dream car? A convertible? A pickup truck? _____



Around the Research Center

Heather Harren, Communications Manager

Thank you to everyone who came to the genealogy classes in March. During the three Saturday classes, many topics were presented, from tips on how to begin researching, to using different online resources. Over 20 participants were also able to discuss with each other how they were proceeding with their research and brainstorm ideas on how to overcome roadblocks in their family history research.



We are starting to brainstorm ideas for further genealogy classes. If you have any suggestions for class topics, please contact me at Research@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com.

One of the resources discussed in the genealogy classes was the Polk City Directories. Although similar to a standard phone book in that both include addresses and phone numbers, the Polk City Directories provide so much more information. For example, listings for city dwellers may include where they worked (or if they are retired or a student) and whether they owned their home or rented it. Business listings often included the name of the general manager.

These directories have even more information

about farmers including: which township and section the person lived in, if their land was rented or owned, how many acres were farmed, how much the farm was worth and the mailing address.

Starting in the 1929/1930 volume, Polk City Directories include an address look-up—a great help for researchers tracking house histories.



Polk City Directories can open up a number of different research avenues, answering questions such as: “Where did my relative work? Did they live in the city or on a farm? Where did they live when attending school?” The Research Center has Polk City Directories dating back to 1892. Stop in and check out this great resource!

Blue Earth County Trivia

1. What year did the annual Cambria 4th of July celebration begin?
2. What year was the Schostag Mill in Danville Township completed?
3. “Volksville” was located near what present day town in Blue Earth County?

Answers can be found on page 18.

WISH LIST

Here are a few items we could use. New or used; items or cash to purchase:

Velvet Fabric
5-10 yards to use to make drapes

Keurig K Cups
Any flavor of coffee for our Coffee Nook, used by guests, staff and volunteers.

Industrial Strength Metal Shelving for collections storage, call for more info.

MP3 Players and/or Docking Stations for background music in the Museum.

Laser Printer
Gently used, working condition.

Bison Hide
The bison hide lent to the Discovery Lab has been returned. In 2016, over 500 children explored the history of Native American life with the bison hide. Seeking a replacement hide.

Historic R.D. Hubbard House

Where 1900s History Comes to Life

The Historic R.D. Hubbard House will open for its 21st season as a Historic House Museum. The House will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m., starting May 6 and 7.

The Historical Society is currently seeking two part-time employees for the upcoming season. For more information, see the opposite page.

This season the Hubbard House will be filled with walk-in, guided tours and new and returning favorite living history programs. Mark your calendar for the special programs below and watch for more to be announced.

June 3, 1-4 p.m.

Victorian Lawn Party

The annual lawn party features lawn games, refreshments and dolly tea party. Free and open to the public; admission charged for house tours.



June 12, 7 p.m.

Hubbard House Gaslight Series

"Wedding Woes and Whims:

Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something Missing..."

Will Kate Hubbard's nuptials go on or will someone succeed in stopping them? Join costumed characters in the hunt for missing items while keeping an eye out for a possible wedding saboteur. Wedding or no wedding, enjoy a piece of cake before you leave! \$8/adults, \$5/kids, \$5/BECHS members

The **Hubbard House Gaslight Series**, will continue on July 12 with another great living history event. Stay tuned for more details.

Historic R.D. Hubbard House

Hours of Operation

May and September

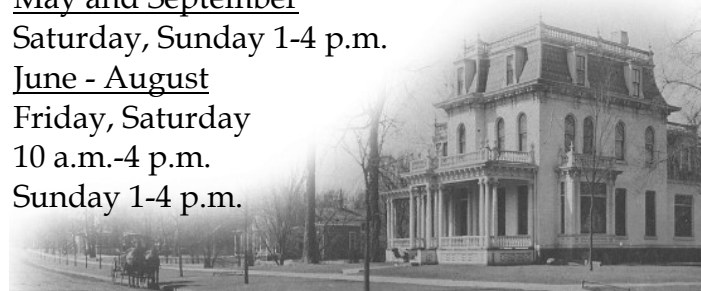
Saturday, Sunday 1-4 p.m.

June - August

Friday, Saturday

10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday 1-4 p.m.



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THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

Illuminating the Word: The Saint John's Bible exhibit



The Saint John's Bible is the first handwritten, illuminated Bible commissioned by a Benedictine Abbey in over 500 years. Discover the beauty and splendor of this rare book featured in this traveling exhibit.

July 8 - September 1, 2017
Blue Earth County History Center

BECHS Volunteers Make History Happen

Our volunteers are the sweetest! April is national volunteer appreciation month, and while we never stop appreciating our volunteers, it is great to be able to have a special time to give our great volunteers a little extra attention. This year, BECHS invited our volunteers to a sweet appreciation as we served fun desserts and looked back over everything they have accomplished in the past 12 months at our annual Volunteer Appreciation, held on April 12. Thank you all!

New volunteers are always welcome. Visit www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/volunteer or contact the History Center for more information.

See below for some great volunteer opportunities available now.



Each year at the BECHS Volunteer Appreciation, we acknowledge the volunteers with the most recorded hours. These ten volunteers (seven of whom we see here) donated over 2,000 hours to BECHS in 2016. In total, we saw 135 volunteers give over 6,000 hours last year.

Volunteer and Employment Opportunities

Gardeners

The gardens around the History Center are growing fast! Volunteers are needed to help with cleaning the flower beds, weeding and general upkeep. Flexible schedule and all gardeners are welcome.

Hubbard House Tour Guides

Tour guides are needed this spring and summer at the Hubbard House. New guides are welcome! Contact Danelle for more information. Training is provided.

Speakers Bureau

Enjoy sharing history with groups of people? Consider joining our Speakers Bureau to present historical information to a variety of groups. Use one of our topics or develop your own. Some training provided. Schedule varies.

Technology Assistance

Looking for individual(s) 10-20 hours per week to help at the History Center with computer maintenance and problem solving. Experience with PC hardware and software, Windows 7 and 10 is preferred. Experience with Windows Server 2012 would be useful.

History Center Receptionist/Gift Shop Attendant

Seeking individuals interested in greeting visitors, answering basic questions about BECHS and ringing up sales in the Gift Shop. Must be comfortable with computers. Training is provided.

Education/Classroom Activities

Enjoy helping kids explore history? We are looking for individuals to assist with classroom visits and kids activities and tours at the History Center and Hubbard House, from on-site educators to living history characters. Also seeking individuals for the research and planning of activities. Schedule varies.

Rental Facilitator

Volunteer needed to assist with after-hour rentals of the History Center Meeting Rooms. Volunteer will greet and assist renters, stay on-site during the event and lock-up when done. On an as-needed basis.

There are countless ways you can become involved with the Historical Society. Other opportunities include:

Committee Service	Marketing and
Exhibit Research and	Communications
Design	Office Work
Graphic Design	Photography
Light Construction	Writing and Research
Living History Events	

NOW HIRING: Hubbard House Staff

Two part-time employees to operate the Hubbard House for the 2017 season. Positions begin on or before May 1. For more information or to apply, contact the History Center at 345-5566.

BECHS Donors, Members & Sponsors

January - March 2017

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History Heroes help save and preserve our past through financial support by ensuring the continuation of engaging exhibits, high-quality educational programs for all ages and preservation of our irreplaceable artifacts.

You can be a History Hero by:

- Making a financial contribution
- Signing-up for the Monthly Giving Program and your automatic donation will provide support throughout the year.
- Becoming a BECHS Member

Around Blue Earth County

Rapidan Heritage Society

At the annual meeting held in March, RHS was fortunate to re-elect two board members, Liz Madsen and Daryl Lachmiller. Author and historian Curtis Dahlen presented on the Uprising of 1862. His talk included pictures and the story of Rapidan Township's Jewett family, a reminder history *is* in our backyard.

Memorial Day Services will be held May 29 beginning at 9 a.m. at the Memorial Park in Rapidan. We are honored to have the North Mankato American Legion presenting the Colors. This service will be followed with coffee, a speaker and a sloppy joe lunch (freewill offering).

In 1947 a monument at Memorial Park was dedicated and since then the park has honored all the men and women who have served in the military. The park was once the spot of the first business in Rapidan Station – a store/post office built by Olaf Olson in 1880. In 1888 Olson sold the store to W.O. Dustin and Co. and Noah Webster became postmaster. William T. Just was storeowner and postmaster in 1895. Dan and William Bosin purchased the store in 1907 and added a hardware section. When the Bosin store burned in 1934, it contained a barber shop, pool hall, store house and two places of residence. The lot sat forlorn until 1945 when it was purchased by the newly created Memorial Park Association “for a suitable park to be equipped with a flag pole, a plaque and such other markings as would be suitable in commemoration of the boys and girls who served in World War I and World War II.” Additional plaques have been added to honor everyone who has served in the military from the Rapidan area.

The Depot will be open Sundays from 1-4 p.m. from June 4 through September 3.

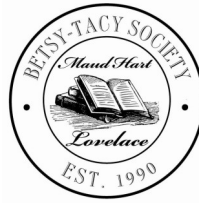
Maple River Heritage, Inc. invites you to



June 9-11, 2017

While you're in town, enjoy the quilt show, a town walking tour and historical displays at the Post Office, St. Teresa's Catholic Church, Public Library and Maple River Heritage Museum. New this year is a special historical military display at VFW Post #5338, located at 211 Main Street East.

For a full schedule of the weekend's events, visit www.mapletontownandcountrydays.com



Betsy-Tacy Society Julie Schrader

Spring is here and the Betsy and Tacy houses have opened after a long winter's break. The National

Literary Landmark houses, interpretive center and gift shop are now open every Saturday from 1-4 p.m. until December. We're also open for tours by special appointment. To schedule a special tour, call 507-345-9777 or email BTSMankato@gmail.com.

The 125th birthday of author Maud Hart Lovelace, who was born in Mankato on April 25, 1892, is being commemorated with two special events. On April 29, the BTS hosts "Betsy's Birthday Party" complete with old-fashioned games, story time, birthday cake and more.

The BTS partners with St. John's Episcopal Church (302 Warren Street) for a special concert on Sunday, April 30 at 2 p.m. Popular vocalist Maud Hixson, accompanied by her husband Rick Carlson on the piano, will perform a selection of songs from her CD, *Listening For Your Song: A musical companion to the Betsy-Tacy books by Maud Hart Lovelace*. This CD is a collection of songs from the 1890s through WWI that were referred to in Maud Hart Lovelace's series of books about growing up in Mankato at the turn of the century. Fans of the Betsy-Tacy books will recognize St. John's Episcopal Church. Characters *Julia* and *Betsy* join the Episcopal Church to sing in the choir. Special guest soprano Maria Jette will join Hixson in singing Rossini's "Cat Duet." Advance tickets are encouraged as seating is limited. Tickets are available for purchase online: www.betsy-tacysociety.org or call 507-345-9777.

The annual Deep Valley Homecoming, a celebration of Maud Hart Lovelace and the Betsy-Tacy books, will be held June 24-25. Event activities include: guided tours of the Betsy-Tacy houses, children's games and crafts, horse-drawn narrated trolley rides, living history actors, programs, speakers, re-enactments, Victorian Tea, music, Betsy, Tacy & Tib look-a-like contest, young writer and artist contests, and more. Fun for the entire family! For more information, visit our website at www.betsy-tacysociety.org.



Calendar of Events April - July 2017

APRIL

- 20 History Bits & Bites: History of the Mankato Airport**, Noon-1 p.m., History Center, *3rd Thursday*
- 21 Artist Reception: *Recent Work* by Brad Widness and Ann Kronlokken Widness**, 7 p.m. History Center Art Gallery. Exhibit runs through June 30, 2017.
- 22 *Married in Style: Blue Earth County Weddings* exhibit opens**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., History Center
- 27 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS Update on *Talk of the Town*
- 28 Surrounded By History: Blue Earth County On the Move**, 6 p.m., MSU, M Centennial Student Union Ballroom, annual fundraiser for BECHS. Tickets must be purchased by April 21.

MAY

- 2 Remember When Coffee Club: Wedding Preparations**, 10 a.m., History Center, Free, *1st Tuesday*
- 2 Watch KEYC News 12** at Noon for monthly BECHS Update
- 6 Hubbard House Opens for the Season**, open weekends in May 1-4 p.m.
- 10 Water-based Monoprinting Class with Rachel James**, 6 p.m., History Center. Space is limited, call to reserve a spot.
- 11 Historic Preservation Commission Bus Tour: Mankato's Transportation Heritage**, 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Space is limited, call 311 or 507-387-8600 to reserve your place
- 13 Young Historians: *Ag Life***, 10 a.m.-Noon, History Center; Please pre-register by 5/11/17. *Final Young Historians of the school year*
- 17 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS Update on *Talk of the Town* (*note different day*)
- 18 History Bits & Bites: History of the Newman Center and the Coughlin Family**, Noon-1 p.m., History Center, *3rd Thursday*
- 27 History Center Closed**; Memorial Day Holiday Weekend; Hubbard House Open

JUNE

- 3 Victorian Lawn Party**, 1-4 p.m., Hubbard House Lawn, Free
- 6 Remember When Coffee Club: Favorite Pets**, 10 a.m., History Center, Free, *1st Tuesday*
- 6 Watch KEYC News 12** at Noon for monthly BECHS Update

- 14 Hubbard House Gaslight Series—Wedding Woes and Whims: Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something Missing...**, 7 p.m., Hubbard House
- 15 History Bits & Bites: Wedding Traditions and Superstitions**, Noon-1 p.m., History Center, *3rd Thursday*
- 20-23 Awesome Women in History! Summer Camp**, 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. each day, History Center. See page 5 for more information
- 21 Tune in to KTOE 1420-AM** at 1 p.m. for BECHS Update on *Talk of the Town* (*note different day*)
- 29 "The Ku Klux Klan in Minnesota" with author Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle** at 6 p.m., History Center. In partnership with Lifelong Learners. \$10 Adults, Free for BECHS and/or pre-registered Lifelong Learners members

JULY

- 4 History Center Closed**; Independence Day
- 8 *Illuminating the Word: The Saint John's Bible* exhibit opens**, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., History Center
- 11 Remember When Coffee Club: Parks, Picnics and Food**, 10 a.m., History Center, Free. (*note different day*)
- 11 Watch KEYC News 12** at Noon for monthly BECHS Update
- 11 From Inspiration to Illumination, an Introduction to *The Saint John's Bible***, 7 p.m., History Center, *tentative date and time*
- 12 Hubbard House Gaslight Series** *more information to come*
- 20 History Bits & Bites, Mankato's Street Cars**, Noon-1 p.m., History Center *3rd Thursday*

Three easy ways to stay up-to-date:

- Check out www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com for full event details and updates!
- Sign-up for our free monthly e-news to receive updates between *Historian* issues at www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Connect
- Follow BECHS on Facebook and Twitter.

Answers to Blue Earth County Trivia on page 13:

1. 1855 2. 1864 (the same year as Seppman Mill)
3. Madison Lake

Membership Makes a Difference

Did you know BECHS members are saving one of Blue Earth County's most priceless treasures - our history! Your member dues to the Historical Society save history by supporting ongoing preservation of local history. Your support also makes it possible for residents and visitors to have access to that history year-round through exhibits, tours and research opportunities.

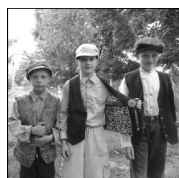
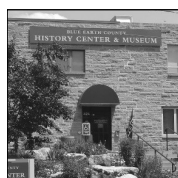
In addition, your membership is your annual pass to the History Center, Hubbard House and many great programs and events.

Annual membership starts at \$35 for individuals or \$50 for households. Join today!

To renew or to become a member, visit www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/join or use the form below.

Attention Business Owners and Managers

BECHS Business Membership provides annual support to the Historical Society and some great benefits for your business. Join today and receive recognition on our website and social media, as well as admission passes to share with your employees and a window sticker to show your support of BECHS. Fill out the information below or visit our website.



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 _____

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Membership Levels

Individual Senior (62+) \$30

Individual \$35

Household \$50

Contributor \$75

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Advocate \$500

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Please send this form and check to:

BECHS Membership
424 Warren Street
Mankato, MN 56001

OR

Complete your membership form online at
www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/join

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

SURROUNDED BY HISTORY

Blue Earth County on the Move
From Wagon Trains to Four Lanes

DINNER • PROGRAM • LIVE AND SILENT AUCTION

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2017

6:00 p.m.

Centennial Student Union Ballroom
Minnesota State University, Mankato

\$50 per person (\$30 of each ticket is a tax deductible donation.)



For reservations, please call
507-345-5566.



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com



Blue Earth County Historical Society

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