

Curation Notes

by Jeff Kroke

In a few months will mark the 50th anniversary of an event which had a great impact on the United States. On December 7th 1941 this country found itself at war, in the Pacific and soon after in Europe. The war changed the United States in many ways. New Institutions developed; generation went to college under the GI Bill and built homes and business with government loans. The cold war and the dominant role as a world power assumed by the U.S. affected us profoundly and still has an impact.

The political and cultural environment which followed World War II is changing and passing into history. As an example, George Bush will probably be the last President who was directly involved in World War II. Before memories of this era fade, we must preserve the contributions made by Blue Earth County and its residents. The legacy of this era which can be collected and preserved include the letters, diaries, stories, and equipment of the members of the armed forces. It is also important to collect and preserve the items from the people who remained behind on the "home front". The resident of Blue Earth county played important roles, both large and small, at home and abroad toward winning the war and we should preserve this contribution. I encourage anyone who has items from this era to consider donating them to the Society so for years to come this important part of our past will be preserved.

Young Historians

Young Historians will meet on October 26th from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., at the Heritage Center. We are happy to have Rose Lotton, a talented local artist, assist the participants with painting their very own pumpkin which they will bring home. Rose will also give a brief history on the origin of Halloween.

To register for the October Young Historians, call the Heritage Center at 345-5566 during business hours.

Membership News

Thank you to the following members

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mr & Mrs Eldon Jones | Alvis & Carol More |
| Patricia & Richard Nienow | Mrs Earl M Peterson |
| Margaret Jenkins | Norma Hansen |
| Bernadine Kopischke | Beverly P Strobel |
| Mrs Ben Geurs | Jim Mead |
| Dr & Mrs Ralph Townsend | Grandma's V Store |
| Dr & Mrs Donald Meredith | Fyrne Haugen |
| Dr & Mrs Anthony Giefer | Frank L Gazzola |
| Tire Associates | J & J Auto Crushing |
| Alice-Maung Mercurio | Delores Ann Wood |
| Mr & Mrs Bud Barnard | Shirley Schaub |
| Hal & Joanne Walberg | Lawrence Barrott |
| Mr & Mrs Dave Hageman | Mary Lou White |
| Paul & Mary Jo Hustoles | Norwest Bank |
| Dennis & Abby Draper | Bess Penn |
| Glen & Helen Erickson | Craig Roberts |
| Dr & Mrs David Clause | James Hardware |
| Norma Brown | Mary Mortier |
| Sylvan & Roslin These | Survey Services, Inc. |
| Polzin Dental | Robinson Appraisal |
| Mr & Mrs Bruce Miller | Ed Sweere |
| Carmelia Doring | Renee Mathiason |
| Mr & Mrs W.E. Campbell | Meyer & Sons |
| Verona Roberts | Miller Auction |
| Mr & Mrs Joseph Farnham | Richard Cogley |
| Mr & Mrs Wayne Knewton | Vee Williams |
| Mr & Mrs Robert Ihrig | |

DONATIONS

Jo Schultz
Art History Club
Doris Pagel
Mankato Women's Club

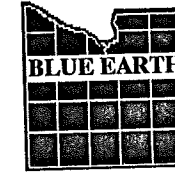
MEMORIALS

*In memory of Clayton Case, given by
Mr & Mrs Harold Natvig*

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mankato, MN 56001
Permit No. 343

Blue Earth County Historical Society
415 Cherry Street
Mankato, Minnesota 56001
(507)345-5566

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

October 1991

Calendar of Events

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| October 5th & 6th | "Ghosts from the Past" |
| October 13th | High Tea given by St John's Episcopal Church at 4:00p.m. at Hubbard House |
| October 26th | Young Historians - 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Heritage Center |

BECHS Notes

Tom Weigt

I would like to thank the many volunteers for Ghosts from the Past. The community involvement of this program continues to grow each year, and we hope for a bigger and even better event next year. We heard many wonderful comments regarding the great job done by the actors, guides, and trail characters. It gives the Society a wonderful feeling to have such a warm response from everyone involved.

BECHS MEMBERS

BY TOM WEIGT

Last month we conducted a special meeting to inform the membership, as best as we could, in detail the financial report of the Society. This report included the present position of the Capital Fund Drive and a six year analysis of our Operating Fund. All in all, for those who attended there was not a lack of information presented to them.

Judging from the feedback generated during and after the meeting we believe the following conclusions were held by our membership:

1. The Society did not have a tight rein on the financial books.
2. The Board of Trustees and various committee members did not have a complete and accurate understanding of the financial picture.
3. The building estimates for the Heritage Center were not accurate.

The board was able to let the members know where we stand in a honest and upfront manner and we hope this will help with your concerns of the Society's future. Although the financial situation is not great, it is better than the local media or rumors would lend one to believe.

The Board realizes it must make some decisions regarding the operating budget for 1992 and beyond, and we will keep everyone informed of these decisions.

I wish to thank everyone who attended the meeting. We greatly appreciate your concerns and comments.

Finally a well deserved thanks to the Financial Task Force for the numerous hours they spent in preparing the final reports. Those individuals involved were:

Janet Morken
Ogden Confer
Jennifer Thompson
Bill Ries

THE MYSTERY OF EMERALD GREEN PARK BY GEORGE TABBERT

The scattered small parks of a city add color and life to an urban landscape. They sometimes appear out of nowhere, brightening up some leftover residential lot or perhaps a fractional block along some well traveled thoroughfare. One such small parkland which existed in Mankato at the turn of the century was "Emerald Green Park." Like other such parks in the history of the Mankato Park System, this park suddenly appeared out of nowhere, and then just as suddenly, disappeared. Emerald Green Park's short, yet explosive story is the subject of the following narrative.

A fight had been brewing during the Spring of 1908 at the junction of Willard and Fulton streets. Fierce bulldogs had been set upon people, others had been sworn at, and poor Mrs. Snow was blocked from entering her property. The Common Council of the City of Mankato had had enough, and on the afternoon of May 22 it decided to investigate what was known as "Emerald Green Park" to see if the many complaints that had been received about it were true.

Little is known about this park except that it was public and not private, and that its location was at the head of Willard and Fulton. It was not listed under the heading of public grounds and parks in the Mankato city directory at the time, and would have been completely forgotten had it not been for Thomas Griff (also known as Thomas Griffen) and the trouble he had been having with park visitors. Apparently Griff, who was listed as living at 335 Fulton in 1908, had been posting the park with signs advertising the sale of hay, banty chickens, and of all things, blooded bulldogs. Reports indicate that he would think nothing of setting his dogs upon park visitors. He had also blocked the entrance to the park with signs and posts.

Griff himself later presented a petition signed by fifty-two people asking the Common Council to preserve the park. The Common Council agreed to Griff's request but made it very plain to him that residents of the city had every right to enter upon such public property. Griff was ordered to remove any signs and posts from the park so as to allow free access to the site. He was then given one final warning: no park visitors were to be harassed by bulldogs.

One report referred to Emerald Green Park as "his park." Had Thomas Griff single-handedly taken care of the grounds? Griff had been known for doing odd jobs around the town such as mowing lawns and spading up gardens;

he was also an avid story-teller.

Taking all the evidence into account, the most probable explanation behind this parkland is the following: Griff lived at the end of Fulton but maintained his yard far beyond the boundaries of the property, and referred to the entire area as a park.

True, the Common Council had not initially become alarmed about a threat to public property, but rather about the harassment of neighborhood residents. However, in the end, Council members openly defended the rights of the public to the park and referred to the area as public property. (Perhaps the city-owned portion of Emerald Green Park was, in fact, a vacated portion of Willard Street).

The hillside adjacent to what was once Emerald Green Park was much later designated an official winter coasting hill by city councilmen. Today, the entire end of Fulton Street (except for the hillside) contains houses.

The actual explanation behind Emerald Green Park may never be known. After a brief mention on June 5, 1908, Emerald Green Park mysteriously disappeared from city records.

Sources

George Lyle Tabbert, "Coasting Hills and Skating Rinks: Early Winter Recreational Areas in Mankato, Minnesota" (Unpublished manuscript, 1990), 3.

George Lyle Tabbert, "The Lost Parks: A History of the Lost and Forgotten Parklands of Mankato Minnesota" M. S. Alternate Plan Paper, Mankato State University, (1990), 29, 191-193

Program Update

by Linda Henry

"Ghosts from the Past" was once again a great success. We increased the tickets available to 600 this year and and still sold out. Our expenses for this program were under \$100.00 and our profit approximately \$2400.00! We would like to thank the many volunteers for their valuable time and wish we could give awards to the wonderful actors. Our large profit would not have been possible without the following support of our community:

Palmer Bus Service

MSU Theater

MSU Student Union

Insty Prints

Kinko's

Randall's

Hy-Vee

Marketown

Perkin's Restaurant

Ember's Restaurant

Happy Chef Systems

Pastry Palace

The Free Press

KEYC-TV

Mankato Chamber of Commerce

Blue Earth County Parks

Mankato West High School

Fisher Commercial Realty

Target

Lewis Eastgate

Baer Well Drilling

Red Cross Staff