

Curation Notes

In mid-April Audrey Burmeister-Hicks made a difficult decision to leave her position as Archivist-Curator of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. We are all aware of the dedication that Audrey had to the collections area of BECHS, where she worked for over ten years. The staff and membership of BECHS greatly appreciate all that Audrey accomplished, and the growth that occurred in the collections area under her supervision. Audrey has decided to return to college to finish her Master's Degree. We wish Audrey well in her future endeavors!

Summer Hubbard House Hours

As you may have noticed, Hubbard House is no longer open to the public on weekdays. This decision was made in February because of the lack of weekday visitors to the house. It has, however, remained open on Saturdays and Sundays. We would very much like to have the house open on weekdays during the summer months. Past history shows us that most of the visitors to the Hubbard House come between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Limited funding does not permit us to hire a paid staff person to work at Hubbard House during the week, so we are exploring the possibility of using volunteers to staff the house.

If you are interested in volunteering for one or two 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. shifts each month at the Hubbard House, or would like more information on this volunteer opportunity, please contact Kathy at 345-5566.

Young Historians

This month's Young Historians will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 6:30 p.m. at the Heritage Center. Bruce Pettibone, a Native American artist, will instruct the group on birch bark crafts. For more information on the May Young Historians, contact Jane at 345-5566.

From the Gift Shop

New in the Gift Shops are the Mankato Area t-shirt and sweatshirts. The shirts are 50-50 cotton/polyester and feature a multi-colored collage of Mankato landmarks, including our own Hubbard House. We also stock Vern Lundin's most recent release, At the Bend in the River.

Keep us in mind for Mother's Day and Father's Day gifts. Remember, gift memberships and gift certificates for admission or gift shop purchases are never the wrong size!

Membership News

Welcome to the following new and renewing members

Tom and Julie Frederick, Mankato
Mary H. Johnson, Mankato
Barbara River, Eureka, CA
Roger and Gail Norland, No. Mankato
Aileen Eick, Mankato
Robert J. Buscher, Mankato

Thanks to the following for their donations to the

Blue Earth County Historical Society
Gloria Frederick, Mendota Heights
Judson Township
Medo Township

Memorials

In memory of John W. Turner, given by
Wynn & Elizabeth Kearney
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Snilsberg

In memory of Charles Butler, given by
Mildred G. Thro
Mr. & Mrs. Lyle Bosacker

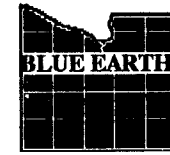
In memory of Ed Fredrickson, given by
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L. Richards

In memory of Ed Dunlop, given by
Mr. & Mrs. David Lindenberg

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BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

May 1991

Calendar of Events

- May 1 - 28 *Boys in Blue - an exhibit of Civil War artifacts and artwork. At the Heritage Center Exhibit Gallery.*
- May 21 *Young Historians - 6:30 p.m. at the Heritage Center*
- May 23 *BECHS Annual Plant Sale - 3:00 - 8:00 on the Hubbard House grounds.*

Heritage Center Hours:

Exhibit Gallery 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday - Sunday

Research Archives 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday - Friday

Hubbard House Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday

BECHS Notes

Kathy S. Kremer, Interim Executive Director

The month of May will be a busy time at the Blue Earth County Historical Society. In addition to the many programs and activities detailed in this newsletter, we are also very busy with school tours, bus tours, and visitors to the Hubbard House and Heritage Center.

I invite you to participate in the many programs that BECHS has to offer, and thank you for your continued support of the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

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Boys in Blue...

"Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation." - Abraham Lincoln, speaking of the Civil War.

The American Civil War continues to dominate our imaginations and our intellects, and is one of the most popular topics of books and movies. It is important to remember that Minnesota soldiers, and troops from Blue Earth County had a considerable impact on the outcome of the "war between the states".

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when the Confederate forces around Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, opened fire on Fort Sumter. This was the last remaining Federal installation in the immediate area and the most significant Federal fort still being held by the United States government in Confederate territory. Aside from its military importance, the fort served as a reminder of Federal authority; a condition intolerable to pro-Confederate South Carolinians. They wanted these "foreigners" be removed at once; and when they weren't, the South Carolinians cut off all supplies of food in an effort to starve them out. Having pledged "to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government", President Lincoln refused to give up the fort without some show of authority. He sent a note to the Governor of South Carolina, letting him know that the mission was one of peaceful intent. The Governor contacted the Confederate authorities, who responded with an ultimatum; either leave or be bombarded. When the Union Commander refused, the bombardment came and the War began. The shelling lasted for two days. On Sunday, April 14, Major Robert Anderson lowered the American flag, and the fort surrendered.

Within twenty-four hours of the April 12th attack, word of the bombardment had reached Blue Earth County. Word travelled by telegraph to newspaper, by riverboat, and by word of mouth from travelers through the county. Flags were raised, and patriotism was a

primary topic of public conversation.

On April 15, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 militia for a term of three months. Even before the proclamation was issued, Minnesota was one of the first states to pledge its loyalty to the Union. In fact, it was the first state to offer troops to crush the rebellion. It was by coincidence that Governor Alexander Ramsey was in Washington on business when the news of Sumter's siege reached him. On April 14, he hurried to the War Department to meet with Secretary-of-War Cameron, where he pledged, in writing, Minnesota's support. He did this without consulting people back in Minnesota. Ramsey was taking a calculated risk, but he felt that the people of Minnesota would support him. He was correct. When news reached the frontier villages and farms of Minnesota, there was a flurry of activity. Young men flocked to the enlistment centers to sign up and become soldiers. It is remarkable when one considers Minnesota's population at the time of the Civil War, and the fact that it had only achieved statehood three years before the outbreak of the War. Minnesota was still very much a frontier region.

On May 3, 1861, President Lincoln called for the increase of the regular Army to ten regiments of 22,714 men, for 42,034 three-year volunteers, and for 1,800 seamen. This brought the Army's total to 156,861 men and the Navy to 25,000. National Armories went into full production along with factories that made guns, ammunition, food, clothing, and other war equipment.

Back in Minnesota, and Blue Earth County, men had rushed to join militia companies. First to enlist in Blue Earth County was James Cannon on April 29, 1861. Cannon was the proprietor of a small Mankato paint shop. He joined a military company as a volunteer, but later was one of a few Blue Earth County men who travelled to St. Paul to enlist in Company I. Most Blue Earth County men joined Company H., 1st Minnesota Regiment of Volunteers.

On July 6, 1861, the 1st Minnesota Infantry left St. Paul for Harrisburg, PA, Alexandria, VA, and beyond. It was in this manner that Blue Earth County men entered into the activities and conflicts of the Civil War.

The Civil War was a long and costly struggle, and one that lasted for four years and claimed the lives of 600,000 Americans. Blue Earth County soldiers distinguished themselves in such places as Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Nashville. One soldier from Blue Earth County, Isaac Sherman, helped lead what seemed to be the impossible victory at Missionary Ridge. Although he received five bullet wounds, he continued in battle until the Union troops were victorious. Many other Blue Earth County men joined the Union Army throughout the War - some volunteers, and others through the draft. These soldiers, primarily young farm men, were often not prepared for the gore that accompanied the glory of war. Even after the harsh realities of war set in (often detailed in the letters soldiers sent to their families), Blue Earth County continued sending its men and boys to fight. By the end of the war, we had provided 707 Boys in Blue to the Union effort.

Information for this article provided by Bryce Stenzel, MSU Graduate Student in History, and by the staff and volunteers of the Blue Earth County Historical Society

Sources:

Blegen, Theodore, Minnesota: A History of the State.

Norland, Roger, in Heritage of Blue Earth County

Thomas, Benjamin, Abraham Lincoln

Welsh, Douglas, The Civil War

Welsh, Douglas, The Civil War: A Complete Military History

April and May, 1991, mark the 130th Anniversary of the start of the American Civil War. To commemorate the events of the War and the participation of Blue Earth County soldiers, an exhibit of Civil War artifacts and artwork will be on display in the Heritage Center. Included in this exhibit will be a series of battlefield prints depicting the role of Minnesota troops (reproductions of the original oil paintings that hang in the rotunda of the State Capital). Also included in the exhibit are many items that Blue Earth County men brought home from the War, including firearms, and a Civil War drum. This exhibit will be on display until May 28th.

Exhibit Gallery Hours: 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday through Sunday.

Program Update

Jane Kolars

Heritage Dinner

A heartfelt thank you to all who volunteered time and talents to help make the 6th Annual Heritage Dinner on April 16 such a wonderful success. The Frederick Family was very pleased with the program and the family booklet. The evening was also a successful fundraiser for the Society.

A special thank you goes to Betty Cords who spent many hours collecting Frederick Family memories for the Homestead Players presentation and the family booklet.

Plant Sale

Don't forget BECHS Annual Plant Sale coming up Thursday, May 23, from 3:00-8:00 p.m. on the Hubbard House ground (606 South Broad Street, Mankato). Annuals, perennials, and potting soil will be on sale. Master Gardners will be on hand to answer your questions and give advice on a variety of horticultural subjects. We encourage you to bring your patio and cemetery urns to be planted while you wait. Plan to attend and bring a friend.

Tour of Homes

Plan to spend a fascinating day touring homes in the Mankato area at the BECHS Tour of Homes, Saturday, June 29, from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. At this point we have four homes to tour and we are looking for two more homes to add to the tour. We are particularly interested in finding another home on the way to Good Thunder. If you are interested please call Jane at 345-5566

CAN YOU HELP?

As you are thinning out your perennial gardens this spring, remember BECHS is looking for clips of perennials for our plant sale. Would you be interested in donating some annuals or potting soil? We also need volunteers to help out at the Plant Sale on May 23, and the Tour of Homes on June 29. If you can help out in any of these areas, please contact Jane at 345-5566.