

## Program Update

Linda Henry

"Ghosts from the Past" was once again a great success. The weather was beautiful and everyone enjoyed the wonderful vignettes. We have included the story of the history of Minneopa in this month's newsletter. The Society sold approximately 500 tickets and made a net profit of \$2200.00! A special thanks to the actors, guides, greeters, and many other volunteers who helped with Ghosts.

## Craft & Bake Sale at the Victorian Hubbard House

The Society will be hosting a Craft and Bake Sale on Saturday, November 7, from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Hubbard House.

**Wanted:** Craft items and baked goods. Popular items are tree ornaments, embroidered dish towels and pillowcases, breads, cakes, bars, candy, and cookies. Please bring craft items to the Heritage Center by November 4; baked items by Nov. 6.

Volunteers are needed to work at the sale from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m and 12:00 - 5:00 p.m. Be sure to call Linda at the Heritage Center (345-5566) if you can help!

## Young Historians

November Young Historians will feature a workshop on making Christmas ornaments. This workshop will be held on Saturday, November 21, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Heritage Center, 415 Cherry St., Mankato. Young Historians is open to 3rd thru 6th grades. This class is free to members and \$1.50 for non-members. **Please be sure to register for this class by Friday, November 13. We must have registrations for Young Historians in order to have an adequate number of supplies.** To register for this class call 345-5566.

## Membership News

Thank you to the new and renewing members.

Wayne & Anne Knewton  
John Palmer  
Patricia Pond  
Mary Lou White  
Robinson Appraisal Co  
Norwest Bank  
Stelter's Inc  
Edward Sweere  
Joseph & Malda Franham  
Marilyn Birbeck  
Hal & Joanne Walberg  
Mary & Rick Hanna  
Miller Auctions  
Sharon Miller  
Marion Lichtenberg Family  
Joyce Wenner  
James Hardware  
Mary Honetschlager  
Charles C. & Barbara Johnson  
Craig Roberts  
J R Starkey  
C A "Gus" & JoAnn Johnson  
Carmelia Doring  
Bruce L Larson  
Perry & Jolene Brown  
Arly Paulson  
Leon & Delores Tacheny  
Orv & Mary Ann Jensen  
Evelyn Mikkelson  
Vernon & Norma Carstensen  
Lynell Pemble  
Edward Frost  
Herbert & Marie Arnold  
Mr & Mrs E D McLean  
Eddice Barber  
Quintin & Karen Pettigrew  
Dr. & Mrs. Ben Geurs  
Winston & Shirley Grundmeier  
Arlo & Sonja Swanson  
Diane Folsom-Kortz

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

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## November 1992 Calendar of Events

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Nov 3  | Election Day  |
| Nov 7  | Craft and Bake Sale - 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Hubbard House. Please bring craft items to the Heritage center by Nov. 4; baked goods by Nov.6. |
| Nov 11 | Veteran's Day   |
| Nov 21 | Young Historians- Make your own Christmas decorations 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Heritage Center. Materials provided by the Society.           |
| Nov 26 | Thanksgiving - Office Closed  |
| Nov 27 | Office Closed   |

Heritage Center  
415 Cherry St., Mankato Hours:

Exhibit Gallery 1:00-4:00 p.m.  
Tuesday-Sunday

Research Center 1:00 -4:00 p.m.  
Tuesday-Friday

Hubbard House  
606 S Broad St., Mankato Hours:  
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
Sat and Sun Only

# THE HISTORY OF MINNEOPA

*The following is a transcript of the vignette, "The History of Minneopa Park" as performed for Ghosts From The Past*

We're here to tell you about the city that's right over that hill. The town of "Minne Inne Nopa." It was later shortened to Minneopa because it was easier to pronounce.

Meanings vary. The Dakota meaning is "water falling twice," but the Winnebago meaning is "water where the elks play." An Indian village was located right across the creek. The Indians called this area "Makatosa," which means "the goose." They last lived here in 1862.

The first white settlers were a group led by Pierre Le Sueur, they arrived in 1700. They were here because they mistook the blue-green clay for copper. They only spent one winter here. (Our first Minnesota snowbirds.)

The departing explorers hid their picks and shovels in a cave along the Blue Earth River. They placed a skeleton in the cave to prevent the Indians from venturing in. The cave was covered by a landslide about 1855.

Buffalo roamed here in great numbers. According to their journals, the explorers ate 400 buffalo the first year. The last surviving buffalo was killed by a Civil War soldier at the head of this creek in June of 1863.

One of the more famous settlers came here in 1853, his name was Isaac Lyons. His nickname was "Buckskin" because of the clothes that he wore. He built a saw mill and named the creek "Lyons Creek." This was the first saw mill west of the Blue Earth River. There cabin was on a bluff on the west side of the creek next to the ancient Indian village. It was also next to a large artesian well. The well was large enough that it never froze over. It was used by the whites and Indians alike. There is still a saw mill today.

Isaac also had several sons who lived in the area during this time. His son John was the first white person to be buried in Blue Earth County. He died in September of 1854, and is buried in Minneopa cemetery. Minneopa is the oldest cemetery in Blue Earth County. It's the resting place of our most famous historian, Thomas Hughes, who was a very important in the development of Minneopa Park.

Just a year prior to this there had been a few problems in the Indian village near the town of Minneopa. There was a cave beneath Minneopa Falls where Chief "Red All Over" hid his sister. Her husband, who was also a chief, was trying to divorce her. The custom was to cut off the end of her nose. She hid in the cave for a few days until the dispute was settled. The cave collapsed about 1900. There still are parts of it left. Many of you have walked next to it and carved your initials in the sandstone walls.

Settlers also began arriving from Wisconsin and toured much of the surrounding area. Many Welsh settlers from Wisconsin settled along the Minneopa Creek. They got their first view of the Minnesota River Valley at Bunker Hill--the present day site of Main St. Hill.

There was no road down the hill, so they let themselves down the steep incline by cutting down huge trees and dragging them behind their wagons. The logs acted as brakes. It took them a week to get all the wagons down the hill.

Soon after they had conquered Main St. Hill, they met another challenge in the woods around Minneopa Creek. One spring a "Cinnamon" bear roamed in the thick woods. One morning, Owen Herbert, who lived along the bluff of the Minnesota River, heard one of his pigssqueal. He saw the huge bear pick up a 350 pound sow, lift it over a fence, and carry it off to the falls about two miles away. About 50 to 75 men armed with muskets and hunting dogs tracked it down. The bear was shot below the Great Falls and the meat was divided among all the families in the area.

This was the largest Grizzly ever shot in Blue Earth County. The claws are on exhibit in the Blue Earth Historical Society's Gallery.

Later that same year, there was another uprising of a different sort. In the Spring of 1857, the first Indian uprising occurred. They were on the warpath in Fairmont and Lake Okoboji. Residents in Faribault had heard rumors that Mankato and Minneopa had been captured and burned down. The townspeople of Minneopa built a community log cabin and every night the residents would meet in their fort for protection, taking turns standing guard and sleeping.

At any moment the residents expected to hear war whoops from their Indian neighbors. Suddenly, in the still of the night, they heard something. Someone was

outside the cabin. Next, a sudden noise right at the cabin window. An excited grandmother shouted, "The Indians have come...good people what should we do?"

It turned out to be a neighbor's dog looking for his master.

Minneopa also had other, more famous townsfolk that survived the attack of the "Killer Dog." The most famous resident of Minneopa was D.A. Alden, better known as the "Shortest Man On Earth." He was a half inch shorter than Tom Thumb. At the age of 22, he was 35 inches tall and weighed 35 pounds. He spent his life working in the circus.

Garden City is the site of the oldest fair in Blue Earth County. The first fair in Blue Earth County was held in Minneopa. Back then it was called the Blue Earth County Horticultural Society. Its first meeting and fair was held in the autumn of 1859. The next year it was moved to Garden City where it has been held for over 130 years.

The first fair may also have been visited by other famous, but unwelcome guests.

Jesse James and Cole Younger hid here from posses. They could have possibly hid in one of the several caves that are along the creek below the Great Falls. They had to pass through Minneopa because it had the only open road that led to Madelia.

It's assured that they didn't stay long. You see, this area was a very popular resort. Train loads of as many as 250 people would stop regularly. There were also picnic retreats held here with as many as 5,000 people attending.

Not everyone in Minneopa was famous for their bank robberies, though. Some people became famous for their gas.

In the 1880's, William Williams -- Williams Pipeline -- hired a company to drill a well and look for natural gas. The well went to a depth of 1,200 feet. Nothing but artesian wells were found. This area is now Williams Nature Center.

Mr. Williams may not have known it at the time, but he was living in an area that would be a rather large town for this time period. The city was officially drawn up in September, 1870. Streets were named after their surrounding trees, hills and summits. There was even a Park Street.

There were several buildings throughout the valley where they could fit them next to the creek. A fire

destroyed some of those buildings in March, 1881.

The area was well known for its hospitality. The hotel was very luxurious and it became well-known throughout the area for its fine accommodations. They also built wooden walk-ways around the falls, planted flowers and cleared the brush. It was a get-away.

This area acquired a reputation as an oasis. The area was so beautiful that the railroad ran summer specials where a lad and a lassie could ride roundtrip - Mankato to Minneopa - for just 10 cents. Adults paid 20 cents. So many people came that the train ran four times daily.

The railroad decided to build its depot here in Minneopa. They chose this area over the town of South Bend, spelling the doom for this neighboring town.

Just after Minneopa became established, its fate soon became settled.

Several reasons spelled the demise of this town, including the Civil War and the Indian unrest. But probably the most interesting was the grasshopper plague. It lasted three summers. The locusts were so thick that they ate up all the green vegetation. Can you imagine how dreary this place would be with no leaves or green grass? By the time the grasshoppers were gone, so was the town.

Boomtown or not, this area will always be known as Minneopa. For those of you with slick tongues - Minn Inne Opa. Imagine what it was like to be a part of the adventure of discovering the new frontier. The next time you visit the park don't only see the falls, think of all the history. This place is full of it!

*"The History of Minneopa Park"*

*Played by Megan Dorn, Katie Kelly, Gene Braam, Slade Thompson, and Brandon Braam*

*Research: Gene Braam*

*Source: History of Minneopa State Park: Thomas Hughes, 1932*