

PROGRAM UPDATE

Linda Henry

The month of March was National Women's History Month and BECHS was happy to offer two different lectures on this program. Our groups were small and it gave everyone ample time to ask their questions and enjoy each others company. A special thanks to Dr Melodie Andrews and Joelle Million for giving us such an entertaining evening.

The Girl Scouts Birthday Party was quite a success! We had a total of 125 Girl Scouts and their leaders come to view the exhibit and enjoy a birthday treat.

Reverend Al Thompson and his wife, Ardie, were kind enough to demonstrate Ukrainian Egg painting. We were all apprehensive as to what we would end up with for designs on our eggs, however, much to our amazement we all turned out with a beautiful egg! The most ornate egg was designed by our talented member, Margaret Schwankl. A very special thanks to Rev Thompson and Ardie!

EASTER WONDERLAND

We hope you will take time to visit Easter Wonderland at the Hubbard House! Many of our volunteers have been hard at work helping to make decorations for this event, and the program committee has been busy in the kitchen making goodies that will melt in your mouth. There will also be a unique chicken collection and an adorable bunny collection on display.

The gift shop has some new items that would make nice Easter Basket Stuffers!. Kelly Reuter has also made some lovely pictures of memorabilia of the Maud Hart Lovelace Era.

APRIL CRAFT CLASS

Karen Volling and Barb Bennett will demonstrate how to make a lovely candle centerpiece for your Easter table. This class will be held, Monday, April 13, from 6:30- 9:30 pm. at the Heritage Center. The cost of this class will be \$9.00. Please bring a short handled Phillips screwdriver with you. Call 345-5566 to register for this class.

HERITAGE DINNER

The Blue Earth County Historical Society will be honoring the Carlstrom Family, at the 7th Annual Heritage Dinner. This major fundraiser is to be held on April 29, 1992, at the Best Western Garden Inn, North Mankato. Social hour will begin at 5:30 pm. with the dinner and program to follow at 6:30 pm. Dinner will be served with your choice of either chicken breast or boneless pork chop. Tickets are \$22.50 each and must be picked up at the Heritage Center by April 22. We have also enclosed a ticket for your convenience.

Membership News

Thank you to the new and renewing members

Mavis Wieland

Realty World

William Bassett

Karla Jansen

Gleamon Cansler

Elmer Goodrich

Louis Kitsis

Iris Nigg Lundin

Helen A. Wiedenheft

Dr & Mrs John Norris

Mankato Area CVB

Ken & Irene Thompson

Glenn & Marcia Cotton

Elizabeth Borchardt

Arn & Margaret Kind

Donna Sandon

Mankato Free Press

Julie Cole

Catherine Clugherz

Eleanor S. Kurdle

Lois M. Kvittek

Irene Nydahl

Toy Blethen

Wynn Kearney

Jane & Michael Thompson -Gergen

Chuck and Janet Morken

Eihel Medale

Glenn Bartsch

Frost Benco

Tom & Carol Frederick

Jack & Shirley Higginbotham

A. R. Leiferman

Richard & Sandra Mitchell

Rev W.C. Gullixson

Daniel Weir

Mrs Paul Radichel

Marguerite Johnson

Dr & Mrs J.J. Heimark

Gail Palmer

John & Phyllis Votca

Ruth Nuessle

J.D. R. Laurisch

Sally Baringer

Gordon W. Johnson

Edward F. McLean

Mara Kalvig

Leona Gordy

Hershel Siebrass

YOUNG HISTORIANS

Jeff Kroke

The April Young Historians program will be a Ukrainian Egg painting class presented by Sally Geary of St. Peter. The program will be Saturday, April 11, from 2:00- 4:00 pm., at the Heritage Center, 415 Cherry. Ukrainian Eggs are a colorful way to celebrate the Easter season. Join us as we learn more about this interesting art and experience the fun of creating your own Ukrainian Egg. The program is free to members and \$1.50 to non members. Space is limited to fifteen so please reserve your place by calling 345-5566.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

April 1992 Calendar of Events

- | | |
|----------|--|
| April 5 | Easter Wonderland - Hubbard House
1:00 - 4:00 pm. |
| April 11 | Young Historians - Heritage Center
2:00- 4:00 pm. |
| April 13 | Adult Craft Class - Heritage Center
6:30 - 9:30 pm. |
| April 29 | Heritage Dinner - Best Western Garden
Inn, North Mankato. |

BECHS NOTES

Linda Henry, Executive Director

The next few months will be a busy time at BECHS. In addition to preparing for the Heritage Dinner, school tours are increasing and we have been working on developing some new programs and exhibits.

We have started a craft program for adults and the response has been great! Everyone agreed the Ukrainian Egg Painting Class was a fun time and were eager to take their kit home and do more. Be sure to sign up for the Candle Centerpiece class in April. It's a wonderful opportunity to have a good time and meet new people.

During the months of May and June a traveling exhibit from the Minnesota Historical Society will be on display. Jeff will offer more information on these exhibits in the May and June Newsletter. July will offer a beautiful quilt display.

I would like to remind you to reserve your tickets for our Annual Heritage Dinner. This year's program honoring the Carlstrom Family promises to be an evening to remember! We hope to see you there!

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THE CARLSTROM FAMILY HISTORY

Blue Earth County Historical Society is proud to announce that the Annual Heritage Family Dinner will honor the Carlstrom Family. The Carlstrom Family's involvement in construction has contributed greatly to the economic and cultural development of our area.

Johann and Johanna (Melkerson) Carlstrom arrived in Mankato in 1891. They followed their sons, Peter and Gustav, who had left Sweden in 1888. When they arrived in Mankato, the Carlstroms, Johann, Johanna, and their children, Eric, Robert, Hilma, and Mary settled in North Mankato in the home Gustav and Peter built for them. Johann and his sons soon established themselves as brick masons, stone workers and eventually general contractors. It was Johann's sons and grandsons who were to make the biggest impact on the development of this area.

Carl Gustav, the eldest son, was born in Sweden in 1865. He and his brother Peter came to America in 1888 and worked for a short time in South Dakota before moving to North Mankato. In 1900, Gustav married Justina Anderson and together they had seven children; Helen, George, Ruth, Luther, Lester, Robert William and Mary Virginia. Gustav worked as a stone and brick mason and a general contractor until his death in 1927 at the age of 64.

Gustav's children continued in the construction trade and two contracting companies were organized by his children. George Sr. in 1919 at the age of 18, formed his own construction firm. According to Jon and Lee Carlstrom: "The only problem was-- George did not quite understand how to go about making a bid. Another contractor by the name of J. B. Nelson had his office on the main floor of the Odd Fellows Building on Jackson and Second Street, and since it was summer the windows were usually open. Well, George thought that if he could get a look at some of the estimate sheets -- maybe he could figure out how to go about making a bid of his own. So-- he rounded up his little brother Bob and together they went over to the Odd Fellows Building to look things over. They waited until no one was around and then went over to where the window to J. B. Nelson's office was. George then boosted Bob up on his shoulders and had him reach in and grab the papers off the desk! So George "borrowed" those papers for a while and then after studying them carefully, finally figured out how to break the costs down in order to make a bid--once he understood that there was no stopping him!" Many ex-

amples of work undertaken by the George Carlstrom Sr. Construction Company exist; the Citizens Telephone Company Building, Mankato State University Centennial Student Union, Mankato Golf Club, Bethlehem Church, and nine buildings at Gustavus Aldophus College in St Peter including Christ Chapel. In 1964 King Gustav ordered the Swedish Council to grant George Sr. Knighthood in the Order of Vasa. This was in appreciation for his services rendered at Gustavus.

George Sr. married Gladys Sebey in Ecko, MN in 1928 and together they had three sons who have carried on the family tradition in the construction business; George Jr., Steven, and Bradley. In all, George Sr's business expanded to include George Carlstrom Sr. Construction Company, New Ulm Quartzite Quarries, and Carlstrom Steel Supply and all of them are carried on by his sons.

Robert William Carlstrom, George Sr.'s nine year old accomplice in acquiring the estimate sheets also followed in the family trade. He was born in 1910 and in 1940 he married Jean Madole. They had four children; Lee, John, Abbey (Draper), and Jane. Robert W. began his work in the construction business as Superintendent of his brother George's construction firm. In 1945, Robert struck out on his own and formed the Robert W. Carlstrom Construction Company. Robert was very active in the community as President of the YMCA, a member of the Hospital Board, the Mankato Builders Exchange, and a trustee of the Centenary Methodist Church.

Gustav's son, Lester, was born in 1910. Lester worked as a bricklayer for his brothers companies and currently lives in Minnetonka.

Peter John Carlstrom arrived with his brother in 1888 and worked with him in South Dakota before settling in Mankato in 1891. Peter was born in Sweden in 1867 and was a bricklayer by trade. He married Anna Erickson in 1892. Peter and Anna had six children; Aurora Pauline, Harriet (Stemper), Joella (Hanson), Clarence, Alva, and Gladys. Clarence followed his father's vocation as a bricklayer and continued to work until his death in 1955.

Eric August Carlstrom was the third Carlstrom to make an impact in the local contracting community. Born in Sweden in 1874, he arrived in the United States with his parents in 1891. Eric's early life was influenced by a pioneer Nicollet County farmer, Mr Pelton, for whom he worked for four years. In 1906 he became a mason and soon expanded into the general contracting business. Eric married Albertina Anderson in 1902 and together they had four children; an infant daughter who died at birth, Wilbur Eric (died at sixteen due to a heart attack), Eleanor (Severson), and Sumner. Eric was known to enjoy fast cars and in 1930 he and two other men were killed in a car accident. Prior to his death Eric was very involved in community affairs as Director of the Building and Loan Association, on

the Board of Directors for the YMCA, Vice President of Security State Bank of Mankato, and founder of the Southern Minnesota Chapter of the Northwest Branch of the association of General Contractors.

After Eric's death Sumner stepped in to fill his fathers shoes. Sumner was born in 1906 and learned the contracting trade from the ground up. As early as age ten, Sumner was operating a horse drawn elevator. By the time Sumner began college, he had achieved journeyman status as a bricklayer.

Under the directions of Eric and later Sumner, The Eric A. Carlstrom Construction firm flourished. The firm built many buildings in the area. The Northwestern Bell Telephone Building in Mankato and the Greiner Building in Mapleton were built by this company. The Mankato State University Campus Performing Arts Building was also built by this firm.

Many local school buildings were built by the Eric A. Carlstrom Construction Firm, including: Lincoln, Franklin Jr. High, Roosevelt, Union, Mankato East High, Pemberton, Rapidan, and Blue Earth Schools. Sumner has now retired from the construction business and currently lives in North Carolina.

Johann and Johanna's youngest son, Robert Emmanuel, was born in Sweden in 1879. Robert immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1891. He married Hildegard Honeke, whom he met in Worthington, MN, in 1912. Their only child, Bette, married Hugo Koeppen. Robert E. remained with family tradition and worked in his brother Eric's construction company.

The Carlstrom's can be said to have built South Central Minnesota. Many buildings which now house local businesses, schools and public offices were built by one of the various Carlstrom Construction enterprises. From humble beginnings in Sweden as bricklayers and stone masons, the Carlstrom family immigrated to America and realized the dream which drew many Europeans to this country. America provided the opportunity for those with the intelligence and desire, along with hard work to succeed. The success the Carlstrom family realized is an excellent example of an immigrant family who took advantage of these opportunities.

written by Jeff Kroke

Curatorial Notes

Jeff Kroke

I have received a number of phone calls in the past few months concerning the care of antique clothing such as wedding dresses and quilts. This month I will share with you some simple guidelines for the care of antique textiles. The first step is to identify the fabric. Different fabrics require different care.

If the item is silk avoid washing at all costs. If it really needs cleaning, dry clean only.

If the item contains wool dry cleaning is the preferred method of cleaning but in some cases it can be washed.

If the item is cotton or linen it is possible to wash the fabric. But, as with all textiles, test for color fastness before washing the item. To test for color fastness put a drop of water on the fabric and squeeze with a tissue. If the tissue is stained with the color it will wash out. If there is no stain repeat the procedure with diluted soap and water. If the tissue again does not stain it is probably safe to wash.

The safest method of cleaning a dusty or mildly soiled item is to use a vacuum with a piece of nylon over the nozzle. The nylon will prevent parts of the fabric from being sucked into the nozzle yet allow the dirt and dust to be removed.

The following are some points to remember when handling antique clothing:

- Support the item evenly, especially when it is wet
- use the softest water possible, the best water to use is distilled
- do not agitate the item being washed
- air dry on a nylon mesh or flat padded surface
- do not iron
- if the type of stain is unknown, leave it, attempting to clean it may damage the article more.
- do not bleach

For storage constant heat and humidity are important. A temperature of 70 degrees F. and relative humidity of 50% is the best. Items such as quilts and tapestries should be stored rolled while dresses should be stored flat. At all times avoid creasing the fabric. If the item needs to be folded do not crease it but pad the edge so that the fold is rounded. Remember that the fibers of the fabric are damaged by creasing and the fibers may break.

Wooden or plastic hangers should be used and padded with a muslin cloth. Hanging items should also be padded at the shoulders and in the arms to support the fabric. These are just some general guidelines for the care of textiles. If you have any further questions or need advice on a certain item please call me at the Heritage Center.