



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March/April 1993

Blue Earth County Historian

From the desk of BECHS Director ...

Linda Henry

The Membership Committee's main goal for 1993 is to increase membership and public awareness.

Our first objective was to produce a new look for the newsletter. Judging from the many encouraging calls we received, we feel this was a success. Please keep your comments coming.

The second objective is to present more incentives for becoming a member such as: more member discounts for Society events and to begin offering bus trips.

Another objective is to network with organizations like Mankato State University. We currently have two MSU interns. Jeffrey Braun does an excellent job on the newsletter and Mike Gunderson astounds us with his enthusiasm in the archives area.

Just a quick reminder that the Annual Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 8. As you thin out your perennial gardens this spring, think of BECHS. If you would like to volunteer for this event call Linda at the Heritage Center.

I'll close leaving you with pleasant thoughts of warm weather and Spring. Hope to see you soon!

Blue Earth County Historical Society

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Betty Henry	<i>Museum Aide</i>

Young Historians

Young Historians is available to students in grades 3-6. The program is free to family members of the Society and \$1.50 to non-members. Space is limited. Please call 345-5566 for reservations.

The theme for **March** Young Historians will be "**Native Americans**." Mankato State University graduate student, Bryce Stenzel, will present a slide show to the children.

In addition to the slide show of the Society's Native American artifacts, Stenzel will give a short talk on Native American history.

Young Historians will meet from **2-4 p.m. on March 13** at the **Heritage Center**, 415 Cherry St., Mankato.

Refreshments to follow.

April Young Historians theme will be "**May Baskets**."

BECHS archives aide, Carol Oney will talk to the children about May Day and May Baskets. The children will also have a chance to make their own May Baskets.

Young Historians will meet **April 24**, from **2-4 p.m.** at the **Heritage Center**.

Refreshments will follow.





Blue Earth County Historian

The *Blue Earth County Historian* is published bimonthly by the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is a non-profit organization and has been collecting and preserving artifacts of historical value to the people of south central Minnesota since 1901.

BECHS is the only organization or institution entirely dedicated to the collection, preservation and exhibition of Blue Earth County History.

Blue Earth County Historian Staff

Editor **Jeffrey Braun**
(Mankato State University Intern)

Newsletter Committee:

Lucille Fitzsimmons
Dr. Bert & Inella Burns
Lona Falencykowski
Marge Oelerich
Gail Palmer
Linda Henry

Please direct any inquiries or submissions to the Newsletter Committee:

Blue Earth County Historical Society
Heritage Center
415 Cherry St.
Mankato, MN 56001

BECHS also operates the historic R. D. Hubbard House. Built in 1871 by Rensselaer D. Hubbard, founder of Hubbard Milling Company, the elegant mansion and nearby brick carriage house contain many displays and artifacts which are open to the public.

The Hubbard House is owned by the city of Mankato and has been operated by BECHS since 1938.

The Hubbard House is being readied for restoration and is listed on the State Historical Record, as well as the National Register of Historic Places.

Hubbard House
606 S. Broad St.
Mankato, MN
1-4 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday
only

Blue Earth County History Series

During April and May, the Minnesota Valley Regional Library in conjunction with the Blue Earth County Historical Society will be presenting a lecture/discussion series on Blue Earth County and Mankato history.

Speakers in the series come from several area colleges including Mankato State University, St Olaf College and Bethany Lutheran College.

The series will focus on a variety of historical viewpoints and will encourage public participation as a means to understand and enjoy regional history.

The series is made possible through a \$5,715 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission as well as a matching \$5,012 from the City of Mankato, Blue Earth County Historical Society,

Minnesota Valley Regional Library and the Friends of the Minnesota Valley Regional Library.

Dr. William E. Lass of the MSU history department will be the keynote speaker of the series. Lass has taken an active role on the Grant Advisory Committee. His areas of expertise include: Minnesota history, United States frontier history and Blue Earth County history.

Lass is also serving as a consultant for a historical booklet being written for the series by Carlienne Frisch. Her 48 page book, "Centennial History of Public Library Service" will focus on the influence of the public library on the development of the Blue Earth County area. (1993 is also the 100th year of public library services in Mankato.)

David Brostrom of the Minnesota Valley Regional Li-

Membership News

Thank you to the new and renewing members.

W.C. Ries
Mary Mohr
Lyle and Kay Jacobson
Kelton and Dorothy Gage
Don Kvasnicka
Luella M. Rose
Hugh Belgard Family
Carolyn Shrewsbury
Braam Accounting
Carlyn Severson
L.W. Andreas
Richard Huettl
Duane Dubke
Gary Schweim
Joyce Schoettler
Mildred G. Thro
Doris Berger
Jack & Shirley Higginbotham
Nadine Brown
Lyle LaFavor
Claire Faust
Security State Bank
Carl Peterson
Glenn E. Bartsch
Karin Merkert
Michael Scullin
Glenn E. Bartsch
Joanne Bierbauer DeWitt
Neal & Kay Lund
Mrs. Karin Merkert
Mr & Mrs Arnold Meyer
Shirley Schaub
David P. Lamm Family
Joanne Nelson
Sally E. Baringer
Mr & Mrs Gleamon Cansler
Ida B. Dodge
Mrs. D. H. Freeman

Frost Benco Electric
Robert T. Junge
Mara Kalvig
Catherine A. Klugherz
Frank & Judy Kraft
Lola M. Kvitek
Dell & Flo LaHann
John D. Laurisch
Robert Layman
Ethel R. Medalen
Mr & Mrs Harley Mohr
Ruth Nuessle
Henry & Ann Quade
Jack & Carol Regan
James L. Spenger
Helen A. Wiedenheft
Eleanor G. Cole
Dr. and Mrs. J. J. Heilmak
Rev. W. C. Gullixson
Louis Kitsis
Dr. Paul & Janice Rozeboom
Mrs. Gordon W. Johnson
Florence Standfest
Carolynn Allen-Evans
Lorraine Wolverton
Jim Murray
Glenn & Marcia Cotton
Edward and Dianne Olson
Edward McLean
Mr & Mrs Richard Mitchell
R. Wynn Kearney Jr.
Rachel Wigley
Elizabeth Borchardt
Arn & Margaret Kind
Aloysius Leiferman
Christine & James Deike
G. W. and Dena Fischer

brary will be the project director. Brostrom is the Assistant Director at the library and has experience moderating book discussions, humanities programs and general library programs.

The series is open to the public, free of charge and each session will be followed by an opportunity for the audience to "pull up a chair" and dig deeper into the subject.

The discussions will be moderated by Brostrom, with assistance from Lass.

The schedule for the series will be as follows:

Thursday, April 1

"History of Blue Earth County and the Mankato Area" -- Dr. William E. Lass
Minnesota Valley Regional Library-Mankato

Thursday, April 8

"Dakota Heritage" -- Dr. Chris Cavender
Mankato State University -- Centennial Student Union Room 204

Thursday April 15

"Ethnic Settlement of Blue Earth County and the Mankato Area" -- Dr. La Vern Rippley
Blue Earth County Heritage Center -- 415 Cherry St., Mankato

Thursday April 22

"Transportation History of the Blue Earth County and Mankato Area" -- Professor Glenn Reichwald
Bethany Lutheran College -- Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center Recital Hall

Thursday April 29

"Alienation of the Heartland" -- Dr. Mary Dooley
MinnStar Bank Social Room -- 202 N Main St., Lake Crystal

Thursday May 6

"Literature of Southern Minnesota/ Poetry of the Dakota Conflict" -- Professor John Rezmerski
Town and Country Leisure Center -- 304 2nd Ave. NE, Mapleton

All series begin at 7 p.m.

For more information call either the Blue Earth County Historical Society - (507) 345-5566 or the Minnesota Valley Regional Library - (507) 387-1856.

If anyone would like to donate a pan of bars for these series please call Linda at the Heritage Center.

Women's History Month

Calendar of Events

March 18

Nawal Maki -- "Women in Iraq" -- **Heritage Center**, 415 Cherry St., Mankato, **7 p.m.**

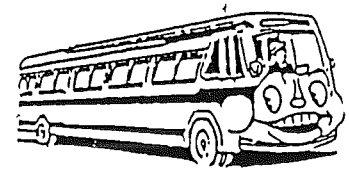
March 24

"Discover A New World: Readings from American Indian Women's Literature" Presenter: Gwen Griffin , **7:00 p.m.** at the **Heritage Center**, 415 Cherry St., Mankato.

Cost is \$2.00 per lecture. Please call 345-5566 for ticket information.

Thank You

A special thanks to Noell Webber, Executive Director of Summit Center and her staff for helping sponsor the Chamber of Commerce Breakfast.



Day Trip to St Paul

Come and enjoy a tour of the Minnesota Historical Society's new home, Wednesday, April 28.

This special hour and a half guided tour will take you behind the scenes to archives, research areas and other places not normally open to the public. After the tour, you'll be served a delicious lunch in the Historical Society's elegant new dinning room. For lunch we'll be having, smoked turkey croissant, pasta salad, dessert and beverage .

We will board the bus at 1:30 p.m. and continue on to the Alexander Ramsey House where we will also have a one hour, guided tour of this magnificent home.

Meet at **Belle Mar Mall**. The bus will leave for St Paul at 8:45 a.m. and return to Mankato by 5:30 p.m.

Cost is \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members. Tickets may be purchased at the Heritage Center or by sending a check to the **Heritage Center, 415 Cherry St., Mankato, MN 56001**.

Please make checks payable to the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Save on this tour and many other events by becoming a member of BECHS. Don't forget about our gift memberships!

A Man And His Dream

Gail Palmer

James Ray Tinkcom was somewhat of a dreamer. Tinkcom was born in Mayville, NY in 1821 and began studying medicine when he was 20 years old. He studied for two years and for a time, manufactured certain medicines.

At age 35, Tinkcom arrived in Mankato in 1856, only four years after it had been established. He soon formed a partnership with A. F. Hawley and opened a new general merchandise store on Front Street. Four years later, he opened City Drug (which he ran himself) and owned a second store operated by Jason Wickersham.

In 1873, at age 52, Tinkcom bought 180 acres from Anton Jacobi in the valley at the end of Byron Street. He platted the land for 240 residential lots and the area became known as Tinkcom's addition.

A good share of the valley was owned by three Jacobi families, Anton, Franz and Henry C. According to an August 8, 1893 Mankato Free Press Daily obituary, Anton Jacobi emigrated from Germany in 1854 and settled in Mankato.

Tinkcom built a beautiful tan, brick house on the corner of James Avenue and Fairfield Street for his family, which now included a daughter, and the area soon became known as Tinkcomville.



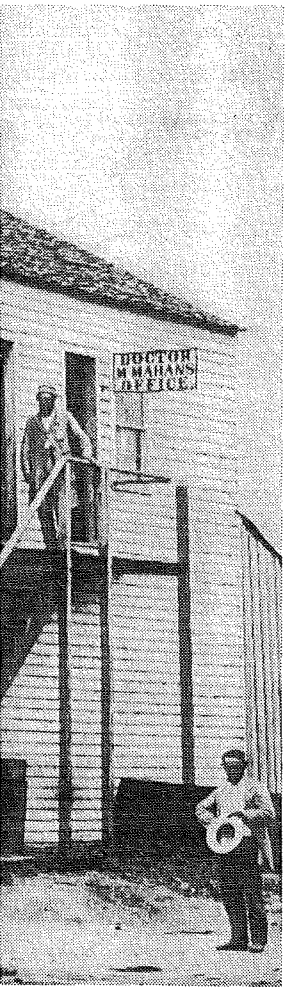
J.R. Tinkcom operated City Drug after coming to Mankato in 1856. The man at the top of the stairs is believed to be Dr. William McMahan, one of Mankato's first physicians. The store was located on the corner of Hickory and Front streets. (BECHS Collection)

The August 23, 1874 Mankato Review extolled the virtues of Tinkcom's Addition:

One of the busiest portions of our city at the present time is Tinkcom's Addition located on the old Anton Jacobi farm. The main thoroughfare -- James Avenue -- has been graded for three-fourths of a mile and all cross roads have been improved. The addition has been platted exclusively for residences and lots are roomy ranging from one

fourth to one half acre each. The price is exceedingly liberal averaging \$300 with liberal terms for payment.

At the terminus of James Avenue is a 40 acre plot of timber which Mr. Tinkcom generously proposed to donate to the city for a park on the condition that the city improved it by fencing it and constructing roadways through and around it. There is a beautiful ridge running through the entire length and we know of no finer location



for that purpose so convenient to the city which can be obtained as this would be. It is a generous offer and is precisely what the city needs.

So this was Tinkcom's dream. Two hundred and forty lots with attractive homes plus a beautiful city park at the end of James Avenue.

Did he fulfill his dream? Few homes

were built and the city did not accept the land or build a park.

Why did Tinkcom's Addition fall short of its owner's plans? People probably felt the area was too secluded. Many people wanted to be near downtown, its stores, opera houses, theaters and churches. Byron Street was the only access and it was a narrow street cut into a steep sidehill with sharp curves at the top and bottom. Families with children felt Tinkcomville was too far from Mankato schools. Also, people with means seemed to prefer to build homes in the Lincoln Park area where other large Victorian style houses had been built. Fi-

nally, the Ibach Brewery on James Avenue had burned to the ground in 1887. With the fire stations located downtown, people were uneasy about the length of time it took horsedrawn fire engines to reach the edge of town.

Only two homes were built in Tinkcomville, Tinkcom's and the Joseph Ibach mansion, Chateau De Amour (Country Home of Love). In Tinkcom's bitterness and disappointment, he built an 8-foot wrought-iron fence around his property and padlocked the gate!

Anna Wiecking lived at 506 Byron St. just two blocks from James Avenue. As a young girl, she and her sisters often walked to the top of the hill overlooking the valley they called Tinkcomville.

In her book, "As We Once Were," she described the Tinkcom family as she remembered them from her youth.

Mr. Tinkcom was a well-to-do man. He had a fine open carriage drawn by two fine horses. The people could sit facing front and two facing back. The coachman sat high in the front. Everything about the horses and the people seemed elegant to us. If we saw the carriage coming up or down the street we ran out to watch them going by our house.

According to Wiecking, most Tinkcomville residents were easterners or European immigrants. In the early 1900s, several

families emigrated from Syria to Mankato. They left because of famine or poverty and hoped to find a better life in the United States.

Naiff Abdow was one of the first Syrians in Mankato. Arriving in 1892, he lived on N 4th Street and ran a small store from his home. He learned Tinkcom had several vacant houses and bought one at 127 James Ave. Abdo also moved the store to his new home.

Other Syrian families joined Abdo in Tinkcomville seeking companionship of those from their native land. Before long they were building homes, raising vegetables and getting jobs in Mankato.

Maude Hart Lovelace set two of her "Betsy-Tacy" books in Mankato. She referred to James Avenue as "Little Syria" and the valley in which Tinkcomville was located, "Pleasant Valley."

Tinkcom passed away November 14, 1908 without completely realizing his dream for Tinkcomville; and its future now rested with its newest residents.

The 1910 Mankato City Directory listed ten Syrian families living in Tinkcomville: Abdo, Abraham, Buckley, Fahro, George, Izen, Ramy, Saba, Shama and Corey.

Charles Ramy opened a general store at 111 James Ave. and operated it from 1914 to 1920.

Ramy moved his store to 332 S Front St. in 1920 and began selling seeds. His new store grew into the large, Ramy Feed and Seed Company.

An undated Mankato

Review article referred to Ramy and his store:

The Lebanese in Minnesota belong to a term "the new migration." One such immigrant was Charles Ramy who at age 15 emigrated from Furzul, Lebanon to the United States just before 1900.

When he grew to adulthood he began a general store on James Avenue where he sold dry goods, shoes and groceries. Many things came in bulk -- beans, sauerkraut, pickles, crackers, vinegar ...

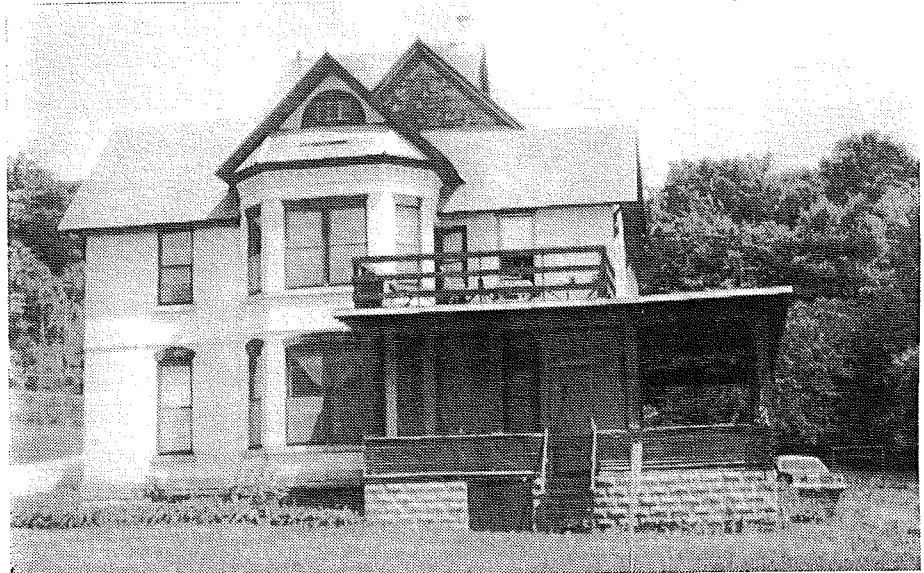
Naiff Adbo married his second wife, Fadwa in 1929. She was born in Zahle, Lebanon and moved to the United States in 1911. The two of them operated Abdo's store at 127 James Ave. until his death in 1956 at age 86. Fadwa continued to run the store until 1980 when ill health forced her to close it. The Abdo store had faithfully served the area for 70 years! Neighborhood children affectionately called Fadwa "Granny."

By 1950, only four Syrian families were listed in the City Directory as living in Tinkcomville and the area was changing once again.

Mankato School District No.77 decided to build a new elementary school in 1958 and chose a plat of land bordered by James Avenue and Fairfield Street. The old Joseph Ibach mansion and brewery had been located there at one time.



Naiff Abdo Store and house, June 12, 1992. The left side of the house is the old store and is being remodeled into living space. The store operated from 1910 to 1980.



The Tinkcom home June 12, 1992. The wrought iron fence, barn and buggy shed have all been torn down. (Both photos, Gail Palmer)

The school opened in 1961 to 400 students living in the immediate area.

People began settling in Southview following the school's opening. Stoltzman Road was built to connect Pleasant Street with the Southview area and Stadium Road branched off to the MSU campus. Many homes

were built in Tinkcomville as well as a health care center and several large apartment buildings.

Would Tinkcom be pleased if he could see the area once called Tinkcomville and would he feel his dreams of 120 years ago had been fulfilled? Looking over the area from atop Byron Street hill, to the left is the

Jefferson school. On the corner of James Avenue and Fairfield Street his beautiful brick house stands, but the iron fence, barn and buggy shed are gone. There are many houses on the side streets from Fairfield to Lilly streets and the Southwood Terrace Apartments cover a full city block between Lilly Street and Stadium Road. Beyond Stadium Road is the attractive Mankato House Health Care Center.

Abdo's store and house still stands on the right side of James Avenue and almost all the James Avenue lots are filled with houses and apartment buildings.

Rasmussen Nature Woods is located on the old Henry Jacobi farmstead, west of James Avenue. It includes a BMX track for bicycle riding thrills. To the north of the nature center is the beautiful Vietnam Veterans Memorial which was dedicated Nov. 11, 1988 to servicemen of Nicollet and Blue Earth counties who lost their lives in the Vietnam

War. Stoltzman Road is also named for the first serviceman from the two counties killed in the war, George Stoltzman.

Yes, it would seem that James Ray Tinkcom's dream for Tinkcomville has finally been realized beyond his greatest expectation, 120 years after he first envisioned it.

Andreas Grant

The Historical Society is grateful to Mr L.W. Andreas for a \$7000 advertising grant. The grant monies will be used to continue to educate and inform our county residents of the purpose, functions, and benefits of the Historical Society. We consider this program to be highly instrumental in expanding our membership and program participation.

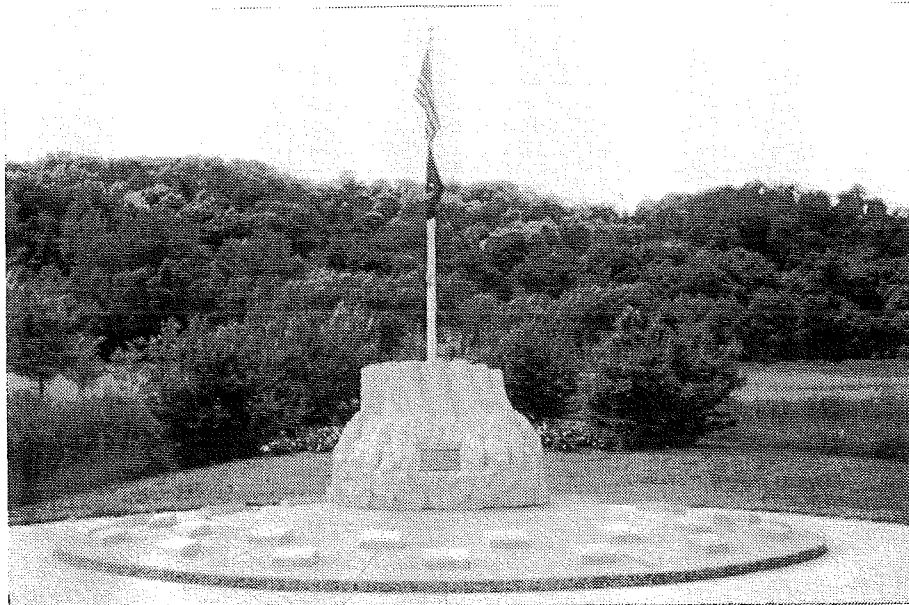
Heritage Dinner

This year's recipient will be the Floyd Palmer Family of St Clair. The dinner will be held on Monday, April 12, at the St Clair School.

When talking with Palmer he said, "It is important to me to continue my support of the St Clair community because they gave me a chance when I first started my bus service in 1974." He has certainly been true to his word. He has been a member of the St Clair school board, local church board, and is currently on the city council. In 1991 Palmer led a fund-raising effort that brought \$30,000 in donations for the Uncle Albert's Cafe of St Clair. Floyd Palmer and other members of the city council studied the prospect of a new subdivision for St Clair. In June of 1992 it became a reality as a new housing development was started. This could increase the number of homes in St Clair by more than 25 percent.

Floyd Palmer has made significant contributions to the St Clair, its school, local churches, and senior activity programs. These are only a few of the accomplishments of this fine man. We encourage you to attend this dinner in honor of the Floyd Palmer Family. It will be a fitting tribute to a man who has given so much to the community.

Tickets will be sold at the Heritage Center (345-5566) or you may purchase them at the St Clair Bank. Cost is \$12.50 each for members and \$14.50 each for non-members. Please RSVP by April 2.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Rasmussen Nature Park, June, 1992. (Gail Palmer photo)

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

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Photo Search

If anyone has photos of passenger trains in Mankato from the 1880s to 1960s and they would like to share them, please contact Jeffrey Braun at the Historical Society.

Photos of the Chicago & Northwestern *Minnesota 400* and *Dakota 400* from the 1940s and 50s would be especially appreciated. I would also like to find photos of Chicago Great Western and Milwaukee Road activity from the same era. Thanks for your help!

