

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May/June 1993

## *Blue Earth County Historian*

### **From The Desk of BECHS Director ...**

*Linda Henry*

A special thanks to all the members who supported the Society by attending its Heritage Dinner honoring the Palmer Family. It was the largest dinner the Society has ever sponsored and a total of 224 tickets were sold. Mankato State University Dining Services catered the dinner and deserve to be complimented on a super job. We're still hearing about the wonderful meal served at the Palmer Dinner. It was an exciting night for the community of St Clair and especially the St Clair School. Mr Palmer has expressed his appreciation and is happy about the

positive reaction the dinner has had in the St Clair community.

I'm sure all of you are ready for warm weather and sunshine. Thoughts of spring mean it's once again time for the Society's Annual Meeting. We are doing things a little different this year by holding the meeting on the first floor of our building in the Summit Center. I am happy to report Barbara Feezor-Stewart, coordinator of American Indian Studies at Mankato State University, will be our guest speaker. I urge you as a member to take an active role and attend your Society's Annual Meeting.

The Hubbard House will also be getting a new look this spring. Plans are being finalized for restoration of the servant's quarters on the second floor of the house. The first projects will be restoring the servant's staircase and putting back original walls that have been taken out over the years. We'll be sure to keep you updated on these projects.

The Blue Earth County Historical Society and the Minnesota Valley Regional Library are co-sponsors for a series of lectures during April and May. We have had three lectures of the six scheduled and attendance has been incredible. On April 15, Dr. LaVern Rippley spoke on

the "Ethnic Settlement of Blue Earth County and the Mankato Area". The Heritage Center's Orientation Room was bursting with 100 people. What a nice feeling to witness such a great success.

The Society has purchased a new Cannon copier with monies from the Andreas Grant. As a result, several print jobs that were once sent out can now be done right in the office, including the newsletter. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped fold, staple and label the newsletter. If you would like to help with the newsletter in July please call the office at 345-5566.

We need volunteers to work at the plant sale including cooking hotdogs and serving food. If you would like to volunteer for the plant sale please call the Heritage Center office.

As of May 1, Hubbard House and Heritage Center will both be open from 1-4 p.m. Tuesday thru Sunday.

We are in need of quilts for our Second Annual Quilt Show which will be held July 1-31. We would like to have the quilts at the Heritage Center by June 15 so we can organize the display. Please bring a short description of the quilt with you.

#### **Blue Earth County Historical Society**

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## 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.**

**Tuesday thru Sunday**

## Riverside Railway Hub

*Jeffrey Braun*

(The following is an excerpt of a larger work in progress.)

Exiting four lane U.S. 169 at Mulberry Street and crossing east over the Minnesota River, it's hard to picture Mankato as a booming railway hub to the western prairie.

Looking south from the river bridge, some of the city's old skyline is still visible to the astute observer. The courthouse, post office and parts of the old business district still remain. Just past the bridge is the old Union Depot.

A few railroad tracks lead past the depot and off into a maze of yard tracks and the old Omaha roundhouse, barely visible in the distance. If one were to look off the other side of the bridge to the north, he or she would see the old

Hubbard mill, another small railyard and various industries. The mainline curves left and out of sight and another seldom used track follows the riverbank.

Mankato is still a busy railroad town. At least two daily local crews switch the mills and other industries in town. The Chicago and Northwestern is the main railroad in town and a few mainline trains pass through each day heading for the Twin Cities or Sioux City, Iowa.

Trains of the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern also pass through on their way to Rochester or Rapid City, SD.

The C&NW roundhouse is busy with railcar repair and the depot is home to the division's track gang.

While today this may seem like a lot of activity, it's just a faint shadow of past Mankato railroad action.

### Membership News

*Thank you to the new and renewing members.*

Lucile Fitzsimmons  
Thomas Schweim  
Leona Schweim  
Jean Carlstrom  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Marshall  
Joseph Dobie  
Jerry & Delilah Keenan  
Mr. & Mrs. John Norman  
G. M. Hoxie  
Susan & Richard Chambers  
Mr. & Mrs. William Bassett  
Wendell & Vernice Wessman  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Thompson  
Lester Anderson  
John & Ann Christenson  
Palmer Bus Service  
John & Victoria Carver

Walter & Nancy Solie  
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Barbara Starboard Rivera  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Mc Tighe  
Charles & Carol Ries  
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Tom & Julie Frederick  
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Iris Nigg Lundin  
Dr. Raymond A. Sanford  
Dr. & Mrs. Larry Gaarder  
W.A. & Barbara Maher

## Mankato 1894

No less than four railroads serve the growing river town. There are at least 18 passenger trains in and out of town daily as well as countless freight trains. Mankato actually has two passenger depots and at least three freight houses.

The CStPM&O or "Omaha" as it's often known, has its depot on Fourth Street and the main track runs right through downtown, (much to the concern of the city council).

Downtown on the levee, the Winona and St Peter Railway has a passenger depot (its second, built in 1885-86) as well as a freight house and locomotive facilities including a roundhouse. It also has a railyard there. The Chicago, Milwaukee and St Paul Railway (Milwaukee Road) also uses the new W&StP depot but has its own freight house further south.

The Chicago Great Western and Milwaukee Road come into town on the same track, following the riverbank. The W&StP parallels their line a bit to the east. Near West Vine and Madison Avenue the CGW has its own roundhouse. Icing platforms and an ice house for refrigerator cars, and the Hubbard mill are just north of the W&StP depot.

An interlocking tower controls movement of the many trains through the maze of downtown yard trackage and a crossing guard is on duty nearly 24 hours a day at the Main Street Bridge crossing to protect pedestrians and wagons from passing trains.

The Omaha and Milwaukee Road lines went north to the Twin Cities and southwest out of Mankato. The CGW went east to Red Wing and the W&StP to Winona. The CGW line ended at Mankato while the W&StP continued west.

The rails of the St Paul and Sioux City Railroad had reached Mankato from the Twin Cities in 1868. The W&StP wasn't far behind, connecting Mankato with Winona in 1870.

The StP&SC reached downtown via Fourth Street and actually ran its rails down the street for some of the way. Obviously this wasn't an ideal situation and as the town grew in size, the city finally convinced the railroad to move in 1896.

By then the StP&SC had become the Omaha and the four main railroads in town built a new Union Depot, downtown on the levee.

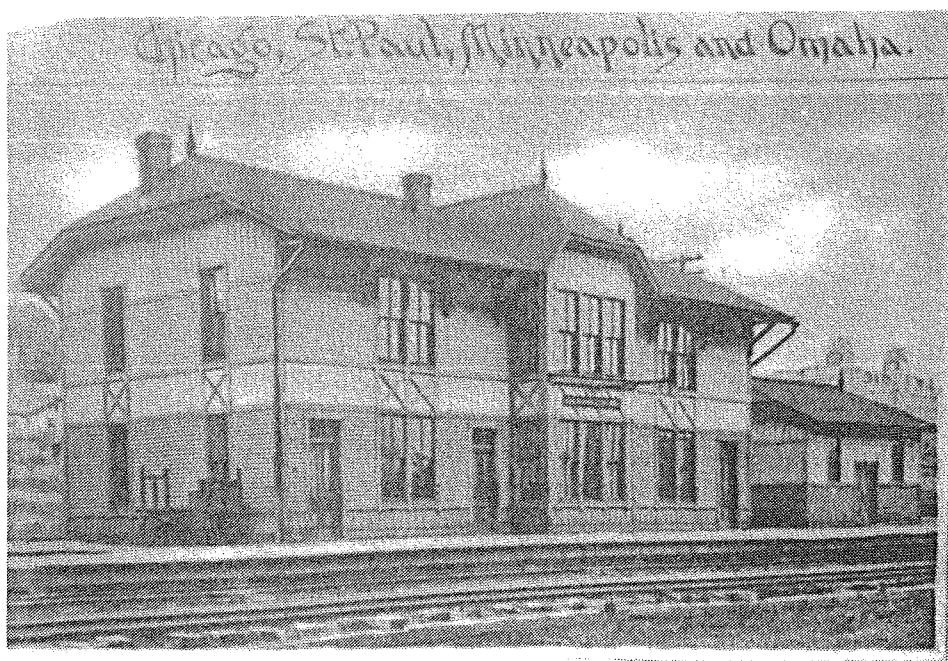
The same depot is still standing today.

By the mid 1970s, the old CGW line had been consolidated with the Omaha and W&StP lines under the ownership of the C&NW. C&NW preferred the CGW grade east out of Mankato and realigned its track from the W&StP right-of-way to meet up with the CGW.

The abandoned portion of the W&StP is now a bike trail.

The track between Mankato, St Peter and New Ulm on the W&StP was also ripped up. The bridge piers of the old W&StP, crossing the Minnesota River at St Peter, can still be seen east of U.S. 169. A newer branch connects the old Omaha track with the W&StP from Mankato to New Ulm.

No longer much of a rail hub in the Chicago and Northwestern System, Mankato can still be called a railroad town.



A heavily retouched photo of the Omaha's depot on Fourth Street. The railroad closed this depot and moved to the present one by the river in 1896. (BECHS Collection)

# Tourtellotte to Immanuel-St Joseph

## Mankato Hospitals

*Julie Schrader*

In the spring of 1888, Blue Earth County's first hospital was made possible by an \$8,800 gift to the city by Colonel John Tourtellotte, a Civil War veteran. Tourtellotte came to Mankato in the late 1850s, established a law practice there and entered the United States Army during the Civil War. After the war he returned to Mankato but soon re-entered the Army and served with General William T. Sherman. Although he lived in Washington D.C., Col. Tourtellotte frequently visited Mankato. His generous donation made the building of a facility to "care for the sick poor" possible.

The hospital was built on what was known as the stone prairie. Construction began that same year at 1400 4th Ave., between Maxfield and Spruce streets. It consisted of two stories and had 20 rooms.

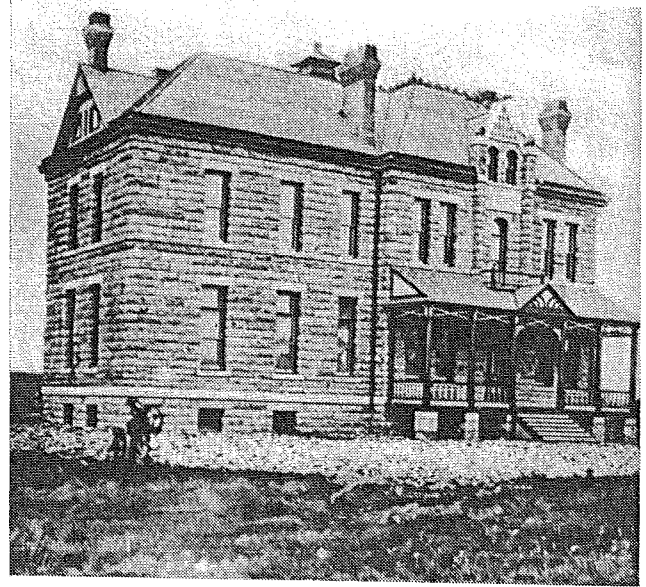
The city council soon found that the hospital's operating costs were draining the city treasury. Help was sought from the Sisters of Sorrowful Mother of Marshfield, Wisc. who arrived in Mankato in 1897. They agreed to operate the hospital and for their services they were to receive \$1,000 the first year. After the first year of administration under the Sisters, the hospital was operating in the black.

Money was only one of the problems the hospital faced. Because it was outside the city limits, the hospital had no running water or sewage disposal facilities. Water had to be pumped to a tank on the roof, and the tank leaked frequently. By this time Mankato had 10,000 residents and the hospital could only accommodate 20 patients.

In 1898, the Sisters purchased the John A. Willard home on Sixth Street and opened a second hospital there on July 1, 1898. They continued to operate the Tourtellotte Hospital until 1903 when the property was returned to the Tourtellotte heirs.

After purchasing the Willard home on Sixth Street, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother used the building as a hospital in addition to the Tourtellotte Hospital. The Willard building accommodated 22 patients and though it was not much larger than the Tourtellotte, its facilities were better.

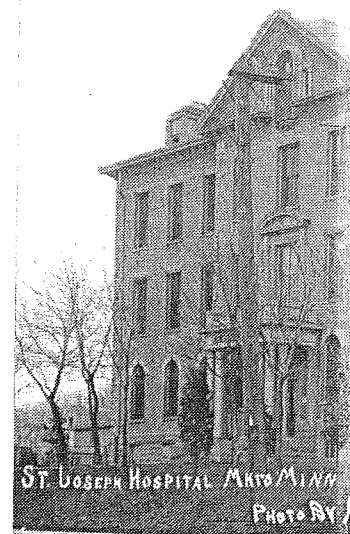
During the fall of 1898, plans were made for a new building in the same block, near the corner of Fifth and Washington streets. The building was completed in 1899 at a cost of \$35,000 and was dedicated Dec. 5, 1899. At this time there were 17 doctors practicing in Mankato and 10 in the adjoining communities.



Tourtellotte Hospital located at 1400 4th Ave., circa 1888.  
(Julie Schrader Collection)

the population of Blue Earth County at that time was 25,000 and 16,000 for the City of Mankato.

A statue of St Joseph was donated by Frederick Kron. The statue was purchased in Paris, France on Aug. 31, 1900. Delivery to Mankato took three months. The statue was 9 feet 6 inches tall, made of cast iron and weighed 3,500 pounds. To install the statue on the building, the elevator was lowered to the basement and the statue was tied to the top of the elevator from the first floor with rope and chains. With



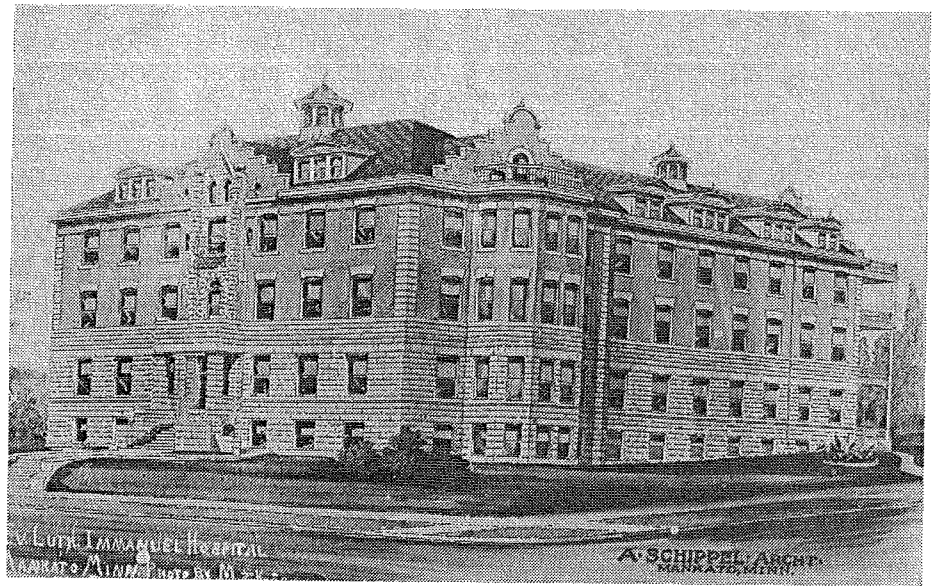
St Joseph's Hospital on the corner

the aid of ropes and pulleys, four horses outside raised the statue to the roof of the hospital. A New Ulm, Minn. painter painted the statue.

In 1913, a two-story addition was built onto the hospital. The addition gave the hospital new rooms for patients, a large operating room with an adjoining anesthesia room, dressing rooms, two recovery wards and a new chapel. The Willard building was then used as a home for the aged. In 1937 it was turned into a home for sisters.

By 1926 additional rooms were needed to give proper service to people of the area. A fund drive was launched and within a month the returns were so promising that the work on the \$200,000 addition was begun in June. The hospital was remodeled in 1944, raising the capacity to 142 beds.

Immanuel Hospital had been built in 1906 and even with



Immanuel Hospital on the corner of Washington and Fourth streets, circa 1910. (Julie Schrader Collection)

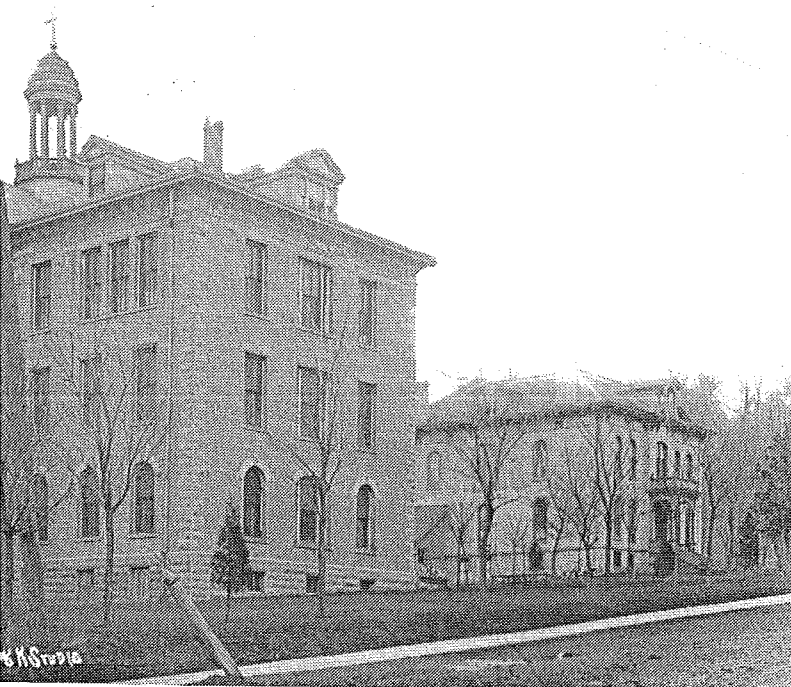
two hospitals serving the community, the need was seen for expansion. In 1950, ground was broken for the new St Joseph's Hospital on Garden Boulevard. The old St Joseph's Hospital on Fifth Street became Mother Frances Rest Home, a home for the aged. This home was closed in 1967 and eventually the building was razed.

The Immanuel Hospital was built in 1906 and was sponsored by the Immanuel Lutheran Church Conference. Other sister churches in the area co-sponsored the hospital. Property was purchased on Washington

and Fourth streets in Mankato, the former site of the Chicago, St Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad Company's roundhouse and turntable.

In 1905 the city offered the property to the church for \$1,500 provided the church finished construction of the hospital in a year and permanently operated it as a hospital. The hospital board didn't want the strings attached property and held off buying the site. Later the same year it negotiated again for the property. This time the hospital board offered to pay \$2,500 for the property with no strings attached. It was sold the land with clear title.

Construction for the new hospital began in 1906 and was completed the same year, giving Mankato an additional 30 hospital beds. Just six years later the board discovered the size of the hospital was inadequate and an annex was built. This gave the hospital a capacity for 65 beds.



Immanuel Hospital on the corner of Fifth and Washington streets, circa 1899. (Julie Schrader Collection)



Another addition was built in 1952 at a cost of \$350,000 and was financed by contributions from members of the community.

In 1968 Immanuel Hospital consolidated with St Joseph's Hospital. The old Immanuel Hospital building was converted into the Gus Johnson Apartment building.

It was in 1967 that the first moves toward consolidation of Immanuel and St Joseph's Hospitals were made. Board members of both hospitals were looking for areas in which they could co-operate, such as sharing laboratory and x-ray facilities. Merger would avoid all duplication and concentrate on health personnel, but consultants said they had never seen such a merger work between community and religious-oriented facilities. In fact, it had never been done with a hospital under the sponsorship of a Catholic Order.

In November 1968, the consolidation was approved, combining the 236-bed capacity of St Joseph's with the 125-bed capacity of Immanuel. In 1989 work was begun on a 45,000 square foot addition. The \$6 million project was completed in 1990 and included expanded emergency and outpatient surgery facilities and a new cancer treatment center.

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The preceding story and photos are taken from the book *The Heritage of Blue Earth County, Minnesota*, published in 1990.

This limited edition, 950 page book is still available. Contact Julie Schrader at (507) 625-8056 for more information.

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## BECHS Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 18, 1993

An assistant professor at Mankato State University, Barbara Feezor-Stewart will speak Tuesday, May 18 at the Annual Meeting of the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Feezor-Stewart's concentration is in Native American history and culture. Her focus May 18 will be the Dakota Indians.

Feezor-Stewart earned her bachelor's degree in Native American Studies at the University of California, Berkley in 1987.

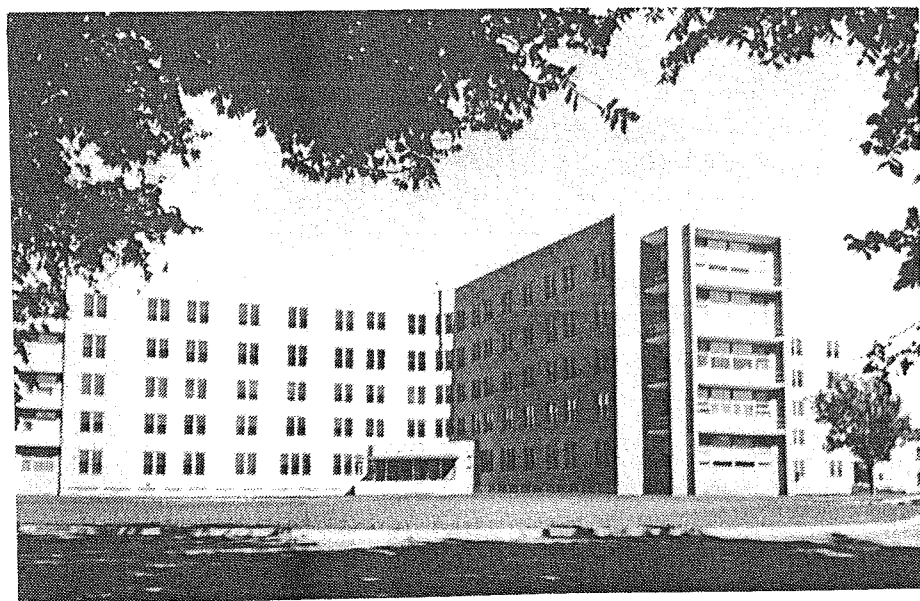
By 1989 she finished her master's degree in American Indian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles and began her doctorate there in 1991.

Feezor-Stewart has been an assistant professor in Mankato State University's Ethnic Studies and Anthropology departments since July 1991.

She also organized a May 1992 MSU symposium featuring accomplishments of American Indian Women.

Feezor-Stewart has received many awards and scholarships since 1984, her most recent being an Institute of American Cultures Fellow from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

She has had at least 10 publications since 1989 as well as several lectures and presentations, primarily focused on Native American Women. Feezor-Stewart is also a member of several



Immanuel-St Joseph's Hospital on Garden Boulevard, circa 1970.  
(Julie Schrader Collection)

groups at Mankato State University including: the Summer Awards Committee for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, American Indian Counselor Search Committee (Cultural Diversity Services Center) and the American Indian Advisory Council.

Feezor-Stewart also belongs to the Dakota Society, Bloomington, Minn. and several American Indian Studies groups at the University of California, Los Angeles.

She has been active in the American Indian community nationwide and an advisor to the American Indian Student Association at Mankato State University since 1992.

The annual meeting is being held at **Summit Center** this year to accommodate a larger crowd.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 18.

## Mother's Day Plant Sale

Mother's Day is just around the corner, why not swing by the Blue Earth County Historical Society's annual plant sale Saturday, May 8 and get mom something special?

The annual plant sale is a major fundraising event and sale proceeds benefit BECHS.

Refreshments will also be for sale, coffee and muffins in the morning, and pop and hot dogs in the afternoon.

Besides plants, "grab bags" from the gift shop will be available from \$.50 to \$2.50.

Hours of the plant sale are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hubbard House, 606 S Broad St., Mankato.

## Summer Hours

Both the Hubbard House and Heritage Center will be operating on summer hours after May 1.

Hours of both facilities will be: 1-4 p.m. Tuesday - Sunday.

## Bus Tour

There's still room left on the bus for the tour of the new Minnesota Historical Society facilities in St Paul April 28. Call 345-5566 now for your reservations.

## Grandma's Attic Sale

Mark June 5 on your calendar. BECHS will be having a "Grandma's Attic Sale" at Hubbard House from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Besides interesting items for sale from "Grandma's Attic," Grandma will have lots of baked goodies from her kitchen for sale too!

## Lecture Series on TV

**Struggle and Stability**, the regional history discussion series sponsored by BECHS and the MVRL during the months of April and May will be telecast on CCTV channel 13.

The lecture series features various topics in 19th century Blue Earth County history.

Unfortunately, the broadcast schedule wasn't available before publication of the newsletter.

## Calendar of Events May/June 1993

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>April 28</b>  | <b>Bus tour</b><br>Minnesota Historical Society's new facilities, St Paul  |
| <b>May 6</b>     | <b>Regional History Discussion Series -- Literature of Southern Minnesota/Poetry of the Dakota Conflict -- Town and Country Leisure Center</b><br>304 2nd Ave NE, Mapleton, 7 p.m. |
| <b>May 8</b>     | <b>Plant Sale</b><br>9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Hubbard House, 606 S Broad St   |
| <b>May 15</b>    | <b>Young Historians</b><br><i>Minnesota Becomes a State</i><br>2-4 p.m. Heritage Center  |
| <b>May 18</b>    | <b>Annual Meeting</b><br>7 p.m. at <b>Summit Center</b> featuring Barbara Feezor-Stewart as guest speaker  |
| <b>June 5</b>    | <b>Grandma's Attic Sale</b><br>10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Hubbard House, 606 S Broad St  |
| <b>June 19</b>   | <b>Young Historians</b><br><i>Flags</i><br>2-4 p.m. Heritage Center  |
| <b>July 1-31</b> | <b>2nd Annual Quilt Show</b> , Heritage Center   |

### Heritage Center

415 Cherry St., Mankato

Hours: (After May 1)

**Exhibit Gallery** 1-4 p.m.

Tuesday - Sunday

**Research Center** 1-4 p.m.

Tuesday - Sunday

### Hubbard House

606 S Broad St., Mankato

Hours:

1-4 p.m.

Tuesday - Sunday

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

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## Young Historians

May 15 Young Historians will focus on the 135th anniversary of the state of Minnesota. Linda Henry, BECHS director, will give a brief history of the state of Minnesota and it's first governor, Henry H. Sibley.

Participants will also receive handouts featuring the Minnesota state seal, tree and bird which they may take home.

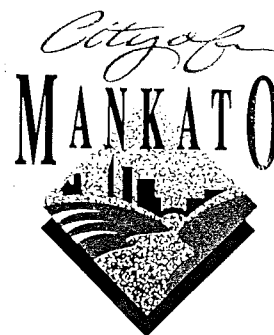
June 19 Young Historians will feature flags. Activity plan-

ning is still underway but children will learn about various flags and make a flag of their own.

Young Historians will meet Saturday, May 15 and June 19, from 2-4 p.m. at the Heritage Center, 415 Cherry Street, Mankato.

The programs are free to family members of the Society and \$1.50 for non-members.

Please call 345-5566 for reservations. Space is limited.



CELEBRATING 125 YEARS  
OF SERVICE  
1 8 6 8 - 1 9 9 3

