July/August 1994

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Blue Earth County Historian*

# The Wieckings: As the Twig is Bent...

*By Shirley Grundmeier*

Many children in Mankato and surrounding areas know the name of Anna Wiecking from reading her marvelous stories about pioneer life in Blue Earth County. And generations of students who have attended college in Mankato know of the legendary Anna as teacher, and her equally legendary sister, Emma, as librarian. The building on the Mankato State University campus, formerly known as Wilson Campus School, was named Wiecking Center in their honor.

As we come to the end of another school year, it is fitting to highlight the sisters, their siblings, and their parents. It was indeed a family of achievers, beginning with their German immigrant father, whose plans and hopes included himself as well as his future children. Hermann Rudolph Wiecking was born in a village near Osnabruk, Germany, in 1858. (This was the year that Minnesota became a state and Mankato was incorporated as a village.) He came to America with his family in 1875, and eventually settled in Iowa in 1879. Anna would later write in her book, *As We Once Were*, that there were "many reasons why people were leaving Europe." Major were the lack of land, high taxes, a class society, famine, religious persecution, and beckoning America, whose "doors were wide open, (with) naturalization papers easy to secure, a great need for labor, and relatives and friends urging to come."

Writing in the *BECHS Newsletter* in November, 1984, Inella Burns tells us that H.R. came to Mankato in 1882 to start a branch of the cigar manufacturing business that his family had begun in Iowa. The *Free Press* reported that the newcomer "has on hand a choice stock of cigars of his own make, which he will dispose of at reasonable figures. Mr. Wiecking is a young man, ambitious to build up a business here that will be credit to the city, and should receive the support and encouragement of all."

**H.R. Wiecking Family - 1934**

First Row (Standing): Harold C. Woodworth, Mrs. Ernest H. Wiecking, Hermann R. Wiecking, Jr., Mrs. Hermann R. Wiecking, Jr., Harry C. Woodworth, Anna M. Wiecking.
Second Row (Seated Adults): Ernest H. Wiecking, Emma Wiecking, Mrs. H.R. Wiecking, Sr., Martha (Wiecking) Woodworth, Mrs. H.C. (Alice) Woodworth.
Children: Roy Woodworth, David K. Wiecking, Kathryn Wiekcing, Marjorie Wiecking.

The new establishment was located on South Front Street, in a building which had been the site of the Mankato Normal School (now MSU) in 1868-70, and in 1887, it would be the birthplace of Anna Wiecking in the family's quarters on the second floor. Later the building was converted to a clothing store and today, it will soon form part of the emerging Civic Center. The Margarita Cigar Factory, named for H.R.'s mother, Margaretha, soon became "the most prominent in the area" with its products "noted for the excellent quality." Emma later recalled going by horse and buggy with her father to sell his products and noted, "We could take out payment in trade, so we had oranges, bananas and candy from grocers, bakery goods from Eichorns, and dress goods from Klages store on North Front."

At H.R.'s death in 1914, the *Free Press* stated that, although he had retired from business in 1907, Wiecking was "progressive and kept in close touch with local affairs. (He) was the soul of honor and integrity (and) possessed a most cordial and genial nature which made him many warm friends wherever he was known." H.R. was a member of the Odd Fellows, the Sons of Herman, and the Masonic Lodge, where he was a Master Mason.

*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*

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Newsletter Committee:
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Please direct any inquiries or submissions to the Newsletter Committee:

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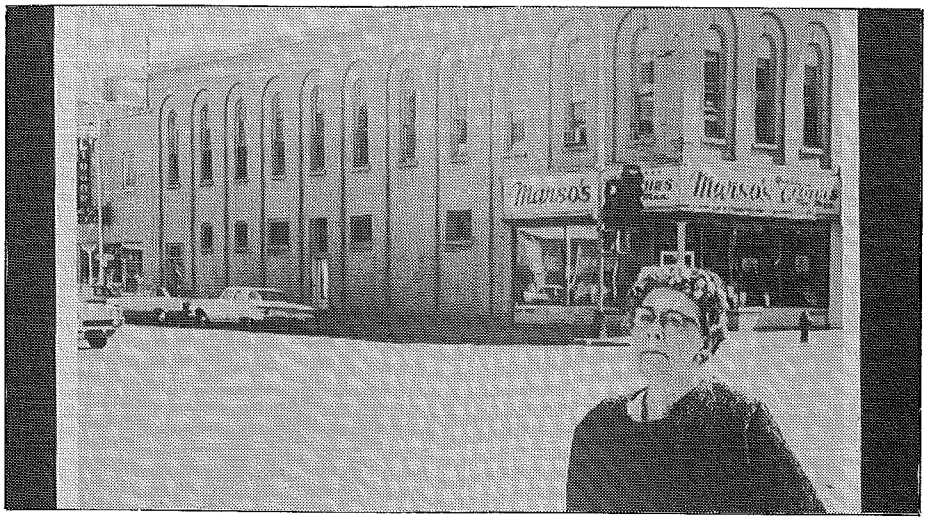
BECHS also operates the historic R. D. Hubbard House. Built in 1871 by Rensselaer D. Hubbard, founder of Hubbard Milling Company, the elegant mansion and nearby brick carriage house contain many displays and artifacts which are open to the public.

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 - Sunday**



Anna Wiecking in front of her birthplace. May, 1968.

In 1886, Wiecking married an Iowa girl, Emma Kerndt, who proved to be the equal of her husband. Born of pioneer parents, she not only raised their five children but was prominent in welfare, civic, and social activities in Mankato and Blue Earth County. She would outlive her husband by thirty years and was active until her death. In 1894, just a few months after Emma, the third child, was born, a *Free Press* headline read, "Mrs. H.R. Wiecking Gives Her Husband a Birthday Knock-out." The article described the surprise 36th birthday party to which Mrs. Wiecking invited 30-40 lodge friends, members of Odd Fellows Lodge No. 15. She "invited all to partake of the sumptuous repast which she had prepared in her splendid way. The remainder of the evening was spent in card playing (while) those habituated to the use of the 'weed' smoked to their heart's content."

Shortly before H.R.'s death in 1914, he was presented with the I.O.O.F. jewel in honor of his 25 years of membership, and this time Mrs. Wiecking "served a splendid lunch to the men. There were about 100 present and they enjoyed the happy occasion."

Emma Kerndt Wiecking was a charter member of the Rebekah Lodge, a member and past worthy matron of the Eastern Star, charter member of the Blue Earth County Health Association, and an organizer and board member for life of Mankato's YWCA. She served for ten years with the county's child welfare board and was a Zetetic club member. Just before her death at the age of 80, she had announced plans for the coming Christmas Seal drive of which she was chairman. That she set an example for her children is apparent in the recounting of her appearance before the city council in 1926. As chairman of the child welfare board, she asked that the city's curfew laws be enforced, stating that "an organized gang of young women (some 14 girls) made the rest room in the city hall a rendezvous and meeting place for 'wild parties,' 'petting parties,' and 'booze parties.'" She pointed out that "you all know things are pretty loose, the youngsters are going pretty wild, " and that "the most attention should be directed to the real young girls, who if given the right direction at an age when their characters, ideals as well as standards, were plastic, good results would be obtained."

After the birth of eldest child Anna, the family moved to the house at 506 Byron St. in Mankato, which was still the family home when the last living child, Emma, died in 1992. Second daughter Martha was born in 1890, shortly after the Saulpaugh Hotel and County Court House were built and just before the High School and the YMCA's first location. Emma followed in 1894, the year the Public Library opened, and Ernst in 1900, the year Rural free delivery began. Within a few years after the birth of the last child, Hermann Jr., in 1903, Minneopa Park, Immanuel Hospital and two more educational institutions, Bethany College and Good Counsel Academy, were part of the Mankato scene. All of the Wiecking children would become college graduates and two would attain their doctorates; all would live into their eighties and two into their nineties.

Through her writings, Anna left us the

most information about her family. In her book, *As We Once Were*, she tells of her early school life. "I went to the Pleasant Grove School (now Lincoln), the same school that Maud Hart Lovelace attended. There were no gymnasiums... we had a good recess, (but) what we played with we brought from home. There was no library. Each of us bought our own textbooks at the bookstore downtown. We never went on a field trip. (Years later, when she was teaching, Anna noted, 'In my first school I took my first grade out one day to visit a creamery (and) people stopped to stare at us. I heard one man say 'What is she doing? I thought we hired her to teach school.')

"Many people from foreign countries had come to Mankato to live and there were some children who hadn't learned to speak English well. I spoke mostly German before I went to school. Our parents wanted us to learn all we could. They had no patience with children who wasted their time in school or made trouble."

Later, Anna was also to say, "Although schools today have become more beautiful, better taken care of with many wonderful books, maps, films, and cafeterias, unless a boy or girl works and tries, all these things do not matter. We are very lucky to live in a free country where education is for everyone who will do his part to learn."

Anna graduated from Mankato High in 1907, received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in 1914, her Master's degree from Columbia University in 1915, and her doctorate from the University of Iowa in 1933. She taught public school in Amboy from 1907-09, in Mankato from 1910-12, was elementary supervisor at the State Teachers College from 1917-32 and principal of the college elementary school from 1933-52. Finally, she was professor of education at the college until her retirement in 1956 after 39 years on the Mankato State College faculty. She was the author of many published articles for educational journals and nine books on education and history, as well as countless articles, newspaper accounts, and speeches for local consumption.

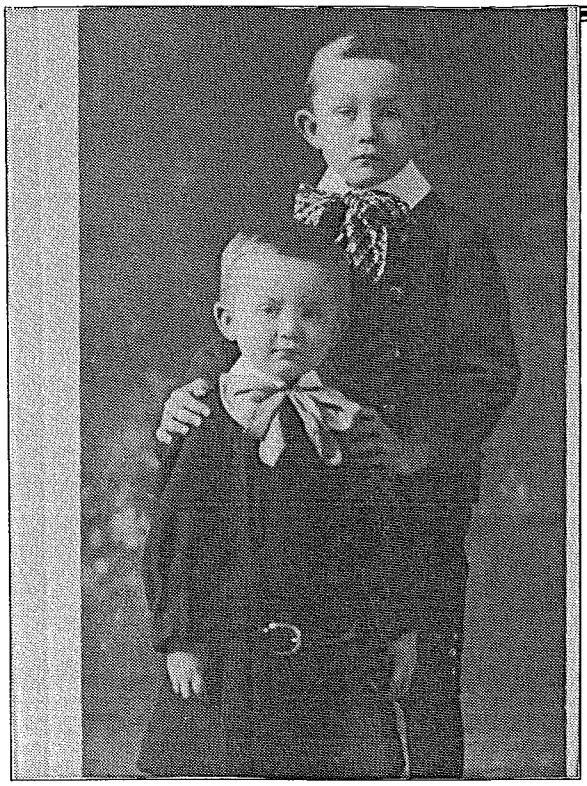
In her volume entitled *Education Through Manual Activities*, published in 1928, Anna Wiecking stressed the importance of encouraging elementary age children, both at school and at home, to learn to use their hands in the expression of ideas such as weaving, sewing, clay-modeling, woodworking, etc. She took her mother's views a step further in discussing her book published in 1960, *Helping Children to be Better Citizens*, where she said, "The elementary teacher is in a strategic position to help stem the tide of irresponsibility and moral laxity of today's children before they become teenagers."

Anna, Martha, and Emma Wiecking

Long before her death in 1973, Anna Wiecking was a Mankato legend. She was a founder and 50-year member of the local AAUW, board member of BECHS and the Red Cross, and many more. When she died, her fellow educator, historian and friend, Bert Burns, had this to say about her, "Anna was not one to promote the status quo. When something required doing, her sense of urgency and need came to the fore and those who could or should take action were gently, tactfully but firmly nudged along... Few people have the sense of continuity, the perspective of time and place which were first nature with Anna. And even fewer have her energy and drive to put such attributes into action."

Martha, the second Wiecking daughter, was also a college graduate and teacher, but was the only one of the sisters to ever marry. Martha graduated from Mankato High in 1908, then from the two-year elementary program at Mankato Normal. She taught kindergarten at Wells for two years and then went on to complete her bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota in 1914. She married fellow teacher, Harry Woodworth, in 1915, and they lived in Wells until 1921. They then moved to New Hampshire, where Martha raised their four children and Harry was a college professor for 35 years. Following his death, Martha returned to live with Emma and Anna in the family home. All three sisters were instrumental in donating valuable antique toys to the BECHS Museum and MSU's Children's House; later, Emma and Martha worked with MSU programs located in the Wiecking Center, Children's House, and Upward Bound. Martha died in 1981.

Emma Wieking's life lasted an amazing



Ernst and Hermann Wiecking

and productive 97 years. Born in 1894, she graduated from high school in 1912 and at the two-year program at Normal in 1914, then taught for two years at Mapleton. After the next two years as an assistant at the Mankato Public Library, she achieved a B.A. degree in education at the University of Minnesota in 1920. She became a librarian in New York City, but returned to Mankato State as head librarian in 1922, a position she held for 37 years. In 1928, she earned her Master's degree in library science from Columbia. Typical of her family, she had strong feelings about students and how to deal with them. "We tried always to keep it quiet in the library (because) we thought it was a place to study; sometimes students had other ideas. We didn't have trouble like everyone did in the late '60s (because) we did have manners. We did have fun though. Someone was always taking Lincoln's head and hiding it somewhere. Today all we (would) have to do is show interest in young people, to be concerned about them as individuals, and things would be better."

Emma retired in 1959 but remained active until her death. She enjoyed retirement because it gave her "time to do more of my favorite things. I'm probably the only person in town who doesn't own a television set. People think I'm behind the times, but I don't want it interfering with my life." She was a 50-year member of AAUW, lifelong member of BECHS, member of the Symphony Guild and the YMCA.

When their father died in 1914, the two Wiecking sons were merely 14 and 11 years of age, but they soon proved their mettle. In 1917, the family, including Mrs. Wiecking, now 54, Anna and Emma and the two boys, accomplished what *The Review* called "probably the longest autotrip undertaken by anyone from Mankato." Ernst at 17 was the sole driver and Hermann at 14 was the navigator as the family traveled 4,400 miles to Glacier National Park and back, mostly on dirt roads and fording innumerable streams. Plus they made a hiking trip into Canada on which they all walked another 225 miles. They were gone two months, and Anna noted that their expenses totalled $205 per person.

Ernst graduated from high school in 1917, from the University of Minnesota in 1922, and did graduate study at Harvard. For 46 years, he was an economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, and lived in Alexandria, Va., where he was a hospital board member. On a trip back to Mankato in 1952, Ernst authored a lengthy *Free Press* article, in which he spoke of the excellent local school system and the role Mankato State had played "during its long history of supplying so many well trained teachers to the schools... the pioneers and their successors built well in their insistence on good schools." He also noted that "Mankato is a good place to have grown up in." Ernst died at the age of 85 in 1985.

Hermann Wiecking, Jr. graduated from high school in 1920, then attended Columbia University and the University of Minnesota, from which he graduated in 1924. He was sports editor for the Mankato *Free Press* from 1925-27, then with the Associated Press in the Twin Cities until 1933. He was co-publisher and editor of the *Winona Republican-Herald* before returning to St. Paul in 1944, where he joined the public relations department of the Great Northern Railway. Retiring in 1955, Herman died at 81 in 1984.

Thus, the thread of education and service to community ran through the Wiecking family from its very beginning. Each and all led lives of great merit. In the forward to her book, *Helping Children To Be Better Citizens*, Anna Wiecking was speaking to and of elementary teachers. But her words apply to her own familiy as well as all children and all teachers. "What kind of people, humanly speaking, will all children, now small, or yet unborn, become? They are the ones that will make the world better or worse. And however well they may succeed, academically or economically, and important as these successes are, there will be no good or decent life for anyone unless there are people who have developed strong characters, high ideals, attitudes of sensitivity toward other humans, and mature ways of thinking and working.

"This book attempts to point out to elementary teachers, the tremendous contribution they can make to our society by assuming a strong though understanding leadership in the area of human relations, in values, and in habits. For elementary teachers are inexcapably laying foundations, along with the home, the church, and the community.

"In the opinion of who has spent a working lifetime with the concerns of the elemenatry school, there could be no greater contribution to our society than the acceptance by elementary teachers of this challenge to exert dedicated but sensitive leadership to influence children for good, in these times when some of the ideals that made our country great have been submerged."

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*"The Anaconda Tightens," cont. from pg. 6*

not be used, and so forth. Some of the goods were used by Sherman's own troops in order to live off the land, but much of the booty was deliberately destroyed. The path of destruction of Sherman's Army cut between Atlanta and Savannah was sixty miles wide in places. When he arrived in Savannah on the Georgia coast on December 22, he telegraphed news to Lincoln, who had been completely cut off from contact since the march started. Sherman presented the city as a "Christmas gift," which Lincoln gratefully accepted.

Confederate General Hood tried to create a diversion in order to draw Sherman away from his invasion of Georgia by recapturing the city of Nashville, Tennessee,

*"The Anaconda Tightens," cont. pg. 8*

# The Anaconda Tightens: 1864 in Review

*Bryce O. Stenzel*

The anaconda is a large snake; a snake whose means of survial depends on its instinctive ability to capture its prey by wrapping itself around the intended victim and slowly squeezing it tight. The prey dies by suffocation, after which time the snake proceeds to swallow it whole. The anaconda was a derogatory metaphor used by contemporaries of the era to describe a type of military strategy proposed during the American Civil War.

Specifically, the "Anaconda Plan," as labeled by Northern newspapers, was an idea that originated in the mind of Union General-in-Chief Winfield Scott at the outbreak of the war in 1861. Although Scott had no idea of the Civil War's ultimate magnitude and duration, he predicted that it would last longer than most Americans, at that time, believed. Northerners and Southerners alike were under the delusion that the "War Between the States" would be a short affair. The common boast that one Rebel could whip ten Yankees with one hand tied behind his back and vice versa was rampant, leading to overconfidence and unpreparedness on both sides. Even the military and political leaders of both sides succumbed to the prevailing attitude of the time. Three month military enlistments were the rule; many men rushed to the recruiting depots to sign up so as not to be left out of what they perceived as being a great adventure. Many were turned away as the regiments filled. Those that got themselves registered in time waited impatiently in training camp, hoping that the war would not be over before they got a chance to fight. Newspaper headlines, urging "On to Richmond" and other slogans, only added fuel to the flames of popular sentiment that urged the capture of the enemy's capital city and, if absolutely necessary, the "crushing " of the army that protected it.

Scott's Anaconda Plan advocated the defeat of the Confederacy through the strategy of "envelopment." He called for a naval blockade of the Conferderate coastline from the mouth of the Potomac to the mouth of the Rio Grande Rivers. His stragedy also called for a fleet of gunboats, protected by soldiers dug in the banks of the Mississippi. In this way, the Confederacy would be cut off from its food supplies west of the Mississippi and from any foreign aid that might come from either England or France. In effect, the South would be strangled to death by the Union Anaconda.

Although he was a Unionist, Scott was a Virginian by birth, who did not wish to see his native soil or the rest of the South devastated by conquest, which would be its fate if it was to be invaded. His plan was limited in that it madated only direct Union action along the edges of the Confederacy; the interior was left to collape upon itself. However, the idea that the war would involve coordinated moves against a series of enemy positions in different geographical regions, instead of simply one all-out attack against Richmond, was an accurate prediction, in view of what happened. It was ironic that instead of preventing invasion, the Anaconda Plan, in a modified form, encouraged it. The South was invaded from several directions during the war, through a series of coordinated attacks by land, the naval blockade of the Confederate coastline, and the gunboat control of the Mississippi. In the process, the Union commanders were forced to gradually adopt the strategy of 'total war.' Because of this, thousands of soldiers' lives were sacrificed, property was destroyed on an unprecedented scale, and the nation's interior was forever altered. In the end, because the Confederacy had no resources left, it was forced to surrender unconditionally.

Popular demands for a quick, easy victory prevented the Union government from implemeting the Anaconda Plan as an official policy. It took too long to acquire enough ships to make the naval blockade effective or time enough for the government to build gunboats and train men to operate them. It was through the process of trial and error, namely the failure on the part of the Northern Generals to achieve victory, that forced Lincoln to adopt a modified version of Scott's Anaconda Plan.

The first two years were full of Union mistakes as one general after another tried to take Richmond, only to be turned back in defeat and retreat. When the North did win victories, as it did at Antietam and Gettysburg, the Army of the Potomac failed to follow up in its successes by destroying Lees' Army of Northern Virginia. Instead, the emphasis was placed on either capturing or defending specific geographical points, rather than annihilating the enemy's army and resources, and with it, the enemys' will to resist.

Lincoln realized early in the war that the South was stronger than the North had anticipated. He also realized that the Confederacy's huge geographic area, with access to abundant raw materials, made capturing Richmond alone useless. To defeat the South, the North would have to invade it after all and break the peoples' will to resist. Lincoln knew he would have to find generals that supported his views. He finally did in 1864. From that point on, the Anaconda tightened its grip.

On March 9, 1864, General U.S. Grant assumed command of all Union field armies. His successes in the western theater of war, particularly the capture of Vicksburg the previous summer, so impressed Lincoln that he promoted Grant to the rank of lieutenant general (last held by George Washington) as well as giving Grant the title of general in chief. In additon, Lincoln chose General William T. Sherman, a close personal friend of Grant, to succeed him as commander of the Western Army of the Cumberland. Lincoln also appointed General Philip Sheridan, another western officer, to take charge of the Union cavalry in the east. Instead of spending the majority of his time in Washington, Grant decided to make his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac and remain in the field.

Lincoln greatly admired Grant's fighting spirit, tenacity to win against all odds, uninvolvement in partisan politics, and unquestioning obedience. In an earlier engagement in the West, when critics claimed that Grant should be fired for allowing too many men to be slaughtered because his judgment was impaired by heavy drinking, Lincoln refused, saying, "I cant' spare this man--he fights!" Lincoln continued to support Grant long after many others had denounced him as a butcher. For his part, Grant took orders from Lincoln and never questioned the President's authority

or his wartime policies.

Grant's no nonsense philosophy, implemented throughout most of 1864, was the perfect realization of the anaconda concept. Northern armies, in coordinated attacks, drove against the Confederacy from all directions, forcing the enemy to exhaust its rapidly diminishing supplies of power in an effort to defend every square inch of its territory. The human cost of this war of attrition, as Grant called it, was enormous. In order to apply the necessary pressure, it was necessary for many lives to be sacrificed. Grant reasoned that despite the losses, a war of attrition was cheaper in the long run, because it would bring the war to a final conclusion more quickly. He hoped that war weariness, coupled with the loss of its power, would force the South into submission.

Grant began his war of attrition in May of 1864, by crossing the Rapidan River in Virginia. In an effort to get his army between General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and Richmond, he brought a force of 118,700 men. Grant's army clashed with Lee's army in a dense tangle of thick forests and heavy underbrush, known as the Wilderness, on May 5. Neither side's cavalry or artillery could be effectively used in such heavy vegetation. With the smoke from the black powder guns and the darkess caused by the presence of the dense foliage, the infantry men were forced to shoot at enemies they could not see. Sparks from the muskets ignited the dry leaves on the forest floor: the wilderness became a roaring inferno. After two days of this living hell, and losing 17,666 men, Grant broke off the engagement. Instead of retreating, Grant pushed east to launch a new offensive. He lost another 18,000 men, but was determined to push on. He said, "I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer."

Grant's next encounter with Lee was at Cold Harbor. On June 3, 1864, Grant ordered three corps to make frontal attacks on fortified Confederate positions. The Union troops made fourteen assaults, but none of them were successful. Over 7,200 of Grant's men were killed or wounded in a single half hour at the beginning of the battle. It was by far Grant's worst defeat. From Cold Harbor, he moved to Petersburg, which had been fortified by Confederate defenders. Grant laid siege to the town when he could not dislodge the Confederate force under General G.T. Beauregard, who was eventually reinforced by Lee. Grant remained here the rest of the year, slowly starving it into surrendering. With Petersburg being the gateway to Richmond from the south, the Confederates had little chance of retaining their capital. It would have to be evacuated and abandoned.

Lee desperately tried to divert Grant's attention away from Petersburg by ordering General Jubal Early to attack Washington in July 1864. Grant sent reinforcements to defend the Northern capital while he kept the pressure on in the trenches at Petersburg. Early's force was outnumbered and he retreated. Grant ordered Sheridan to replace the inept General David Hunter who was supposed to keep the Shenandoah Valley clear of Confederate forces such as Early's. Sheridan's men laid waste to "the breadbasket of the Confederacy" in a classic campaign of scorched earth warfare.

On July 30, 1864, one of the most unique battles of the entire Civil War occurred: The Battle of the Crater. Coal miners from the 48th Pennsylvania offered to dig a tunnel underground behind the Confederate works southest of Petersburg. The point of it was to plant 8,000 pounds of gunpowder, which when detonated, would not only kill and maim those directly on top of it, but would also create such confusion that the Northern Army could drive through and breach the Confederate lines. The explosion took place as planned; the crater measured 170 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 30 feet deep. But Union troops failed to achieve their objective. Many became trapped and died after they jumped into the huge hole to battle trapped Confederate soldiers in the bottom of the crater.

Events in the western theater of operations were no less significant than those happening east of the Appalachians. General Sherman marched his 112,000 veteran troops from their base at Chattanooga, Tennessee, toward Atlanta along the railroad that connected the two cities. The further away from Chattanooga Sherman's Army marched, the more and more valuable the railroad became as a source of supplies. Sherman was opposed by about 60,000 Confederate troops under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston was noted for being a defensive genius. By allowing the invading Union troops to push his army toward Atlanta, Johnston hoped to trap Sherman and his army somewhere in the Georgia mountains. Johnston hoped that Sherman would become impatient and order a direct assault, thus forcing his hand. On June 27, 1864, Sherman did just that: a fierce battle, known as the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, ensued. The Union troops fought well, but they were no match for entrenched Confederates fighting on their own soil. Sherman suffered 3,000 casualties to Johnston's 500-700. Sherman resumed his forward march, driving Johnston's troops into the trenches surrounding Atlanta in early July.

Had Johnston remained in command, he could have made things much more difficult for Sherman, perhaps even forcing the latter to retreat back toward Chattanooga out of frustration. But as it turned out, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and other politicians in Richmond did not like the fact that Johnston had allowed Sherman to get so close to Atlanta. Thus, Johnston was replaced with General John B. Hood. Hood proved to be a poor replacement. He tried going on the offensive against Sherman in an effort to drive the army out. All Hood accomplished in the Battle of Peachtree Creek was the slaughter of 2,500 to 3,000 irreplaceable Southern troops. Two days later, he sustained another 8,500 casualties. By the end of August, Sherman's Army was able to cut the last rail line linking Atlanta to the outside world. On September 1, the Confederates evacuated Atlanta. The next day, Sheman's Army took possession of the city.

The capture of Atlanta was a decisive victory for the Union cause. The bloody slaughter incurred by Grant's troops in Virginia uplifted sagging morale. Atlanta's fall ensured the reelection of Lincoln and other Republican leaders in November 1864. These leaders' goal was to carry the war to a successful conclusion. Prior to this, many Northerners had denounced Lincoln's policies of restoring the Union and emancipating the slaves as being unattainable. Now they had certain hopes that the Union could be saved and the slaves freed.

Atlanta served as a springboard for Sherman's famous March to the Sea, beginning in November of 1864. Sherman, more than any other Union general, was a disciple of "total war," the idea that the civilian population was as guilty of aiding and abetting the rebel cause as the military was. Therefore, it was his intent to destroy whatever could be used to help the Confederate cause: food, clothing, unharvested crops, and buildings. Sherman wanted "to make Georgia howl." And he did. Sherman's troops, or "bummers," burned crops, killed livestock and horses, burned homes, stole family furniture, bent railroad rails into "Sherman's Neckties" so they could

*"The Anaconda Tightens," cont. pg. 4*

# JULY EVENTS

## Anaconda Battlefields Slide Show

July 29, 7:00 pm

Heritage Center's Orientation Room

Everyone is invited to come and see a slide show presentation of the Anaconda Battlefields.

## The Anaconda Tightens

July 30-31, 1:00-4:00 pm

Sibley Park's "Grand Lawn" area

Hear Dr. Lewis H. Croce and local Civil War Historian, Roger A. Norland, tell about the Anaconda.

## Grandma's Treasures

Come to the Heritage Center Gallery and see a wonderful display of local women's history. Quilts, tablecloths, napkins, petticoats, and many more items used by our grandmothers are on display.

## Chest of Dreams

During July, the Heritage Center Gallery is hosting a display of many treasured items that might have been found in a bride's chest of dreams. This chest, once called a dower chest, was a trunk in which a woman stored linens, clothing, and other personal belongings in preparation for marriage. Chests were often made of pine or oak.If the chest was made of pine, it was generally unadorned and possibly indicated a lower class status. Oak chests, suggesting a higher class status, were more elaborate, and often had carvings, molding, and ornamentation. Today, this chest is often called a "cedar" or "hope" chest. Many families use these chests for storing heirlooms and personal belongings. By recording information about family values and the importance of the items placed inside, the chest is elevated to the status of a family time capsule. Like the tattered book, the hope chest represents somethings that has both historical and personal value.

## Membership News

*Thank you to the new and renewing members.*

Bernard M. Altenburg
Roberta Bartholdi
Mr. & Mrs. William Bassett Family
John & Ann Christenson Family
Glenn & Marcia Cotton Family
Jeanne M. Dauer
Paul Dobratz
Susan Duane
Betty J. Een
Gwen & Gregg Griffin
Dr. & Mrs. J.J. Heimark
Hickory Tech Corporation
Alice Hollingsworth
Drew Kamrath
Linda Karow
JoAnn Kastner
Bonnie A. Kincaid
John Lambrecht
Dr. William E. Lass
Aloysius Leiferman
Mantronics Mailing Systems
Theresa McLaughlin
Cindy Miller
Phyllis Mullin
Jim Murray
Mrs. Garnet Nelson
Larry Norman
Don & Mary Northwehr
Ruth Nuessle
David Pederson
Robert & Glee Robinson Family
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*"The Anaconda Tightens," cont. from pg. 4*

in December of 1864, but to no avail. Grant ordered General George H. Thomas to defend Nashville. In the two day battle (December 15-16), Thomas was able to achieve "one of the most smashing victories of the war." Hood's army was destroyed; never to fight again.

Among the Northern regiments that fought at Nashville was the Fifth Minnesota, which was later immortalized by painter Howard Pyle. In a scene painted in 1907 for the newly completed Minnesota State Capitol, Pyle depicted the fearsome struggle and the grim determination of the soldiers involved. One of the soldiers of Company K, Fifth Minnesota Infantry, was Wilhelm Urban, a German-American from rural Minnesota Lake. He was the great-great-grandfather of this article's author. Urban had only been in the Union Army since November 19 , attacks1864, but he had served in the Prussian Army before coming to America. He survived the war and returned to his family. He became an active member of the local Grand Army of the Republic Post in Minnesota Lake, the veterans' fraternity for returing Union soldiers.

Another regiment from Minnesota that participated in the battle was the Ninth. One of the soldiers from Company D was Loren Cray of Mankato. He was the victim of a cannonade, in which the canister shot used hit him in the shoulder. Young Cray was forced to lie in the mud until his comrades were able to carry him into Nashville to a hospital in the Masonic Temple. Cray survived and recovered. He became a prominent judge in Mankato and builder of Cray Mansion, adjacent to the R.D. Hubbard House. Altogether, Minnesota sustained its greatest number of casualties on December 15. In the Battle of Nashville, 302 were either killed, wounded, or missing among the four Minnesota regiments. They were among the thousands of soldiers that aided the Union cause in carrying out its Anaconda Plan.

The Blue Earth County Historical Society will once again be presenting a special Civil War commemoration, entitled "The Anaconda Tightens: The Campaigns of 1864." It will be held July 30-31 from 1-4 p.m. in Sibley Park's "Grand Lawn" area. Featured speakers for this event will be Emeritus Professor of History, Dr. Lewis H. Croce and local Civil War historian, Roger A. Norland. Both Dr. Croce and Mr. Norland will be speaking each afternoon; Dr. Croce will speak at 2 p.m., followed by Mr. Norland at 3 p.m. Also included in the commemoration will be Civil War era re-enactors, whose purpose it is to depict what life was like for the soldires and civilians involved in the war. There will also be exhibits highlighting both the significance of the year 1864 and artifacts used by Blue Earth County soldiers during the war which are part of the Historical Society's collections.

A special slide presentation will be given on the evening of July 29, at the Heritage Center by Mankato State graduate students, David Grabitske and Bryce Stenzel. The purpose of the program is to prepare the audience for the commemoration by showing them the actual battlefield sites where the action took place and putting the campagins of 1864 into the proper historical context. The slide presentation will begin at 7 p.m. in the Orientation Room. Plan now to attend!

Sources

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