

COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

October/November 1995

Blue Earth County Historian

Marian Anderson Releases her New Print, "Closing Time"



*"Closing Time" with artist Marian Anderson, Linda Henry - Director of BECHS
and Shelly Schulz - BECHS board member*

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is grateful to artist, Marian Anderson, for creating as a fundraiser, her newest nostalgic print of Mankato's South Front Street in the early sixties. All proceeds will benefit the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

The new print titled, "Closing Time," is sure to capture the hearts of many as it brings South Front Street alive with warm, inviting colors of store fronts in a winter evening atmosphere at closing time. "Closing Time" also promises to be a beautiful compliment piece to Marian's 1994 print, "Partners in Progress."

The 1995 print, "Closing Time," is available at a cost of \$75 for the main edition and \$140 for the artist proof. Marian Anderson Studio will offer a selected number of frames at a special price with your framed print personally signed by the artist. If you have purchased "Partners in Progress," you may wish to call 388-1793, and register the same print number for "Closing Time." Be sure to plan your holiday shopping early, as over 200 prints have already been reserved!



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.

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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
Closed for restoration

Genealogical Research at the Blue Earth County Historical Society

The research library at the Blue Earth County Historical Society has a wealth of information for the genealogist. The starting point for research is the card catalog. Our extensive index file will lead the researcher to obituaries, biographies, newspaper articles, books, photographs, ect.

Of great value is the collection of obituary books. The books contain indexed obituaries from Mankato and county newspapers dating from the late 1800's to the present. There are some gaps, but volunteers are continuously working on clipping and indexing the older newspapers as well as keeping up to date with current papers.

Another valuable resource is the cemetery transcriptions. All cemeteries in Blue Earth County have been transcribed. Most of these have been entered into the computer and by typing in a name, we can have all the information on the tombstone at our fingertips. The cemeteries currently being entered into the computer are Calvary, Glenwood, Pilgrims Rest, Woodland Hills and Mt. Olivet (Mankato) and Eagle Lake.

The Mankato and Blue

Earth County Directories are a means of tracing histories of individuals and families. Where they lived, by whom they were employed, or what business they owned or operated. With the exception of a few volumes, our collection of Shoemaker's and Polk's directories date from 1872-1992.

Atlases are another source of information, particularly useful in tracing the ownership of farms. Our atlases date from 1874-1988.

Available on microfilm are Mankato and Blue Earth County newspapers, church, cemetery and funeral home records. We have an extensive verticle file with clippings and articles covering subjects from agriculture to Willow Creek.

On the bookshelves are county history books, yearbooks, phone books and much more.

Hours for research at the Heritage Center are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. The library is free to members. There is a \$2.00 user fee for non-members. Photocopies are \$.25 each. For those unable to visit the library, our research fees are \$10.00 an hour plus copying charges.

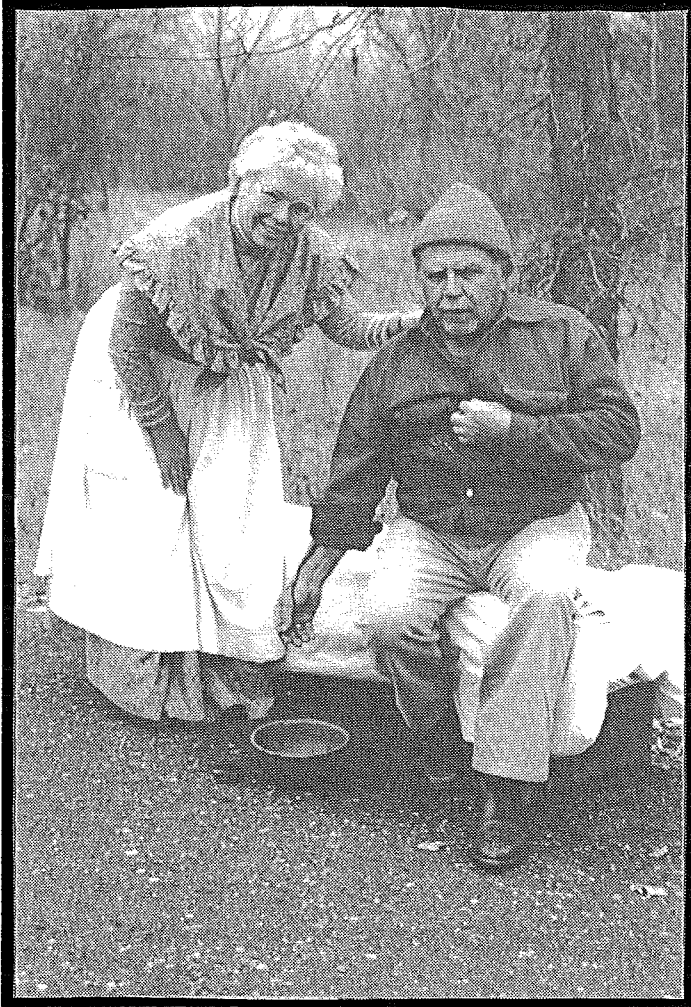
BECHS Member Looking for Ancestor

BECHS member, Harold Leeman of 529 N. Francis Ave., Lansing, MI, 48912, asks if anyone has information on the burial location of his Gr-Gr-Grandfather, William Meeker, who died in 1881. At the time of death Mr. Meeker lived with his wife Betsy at the farm home of their daughter Sibbell (Mr. and Mrs. John Leeman) on the southeast shore of Lura Lake.

While his granddaughter, Eva, was buried at Chase Cemetery in 1879, Betsy in 1885, Sibbell in 1906 and John in 1898, no record can be found as to where William was buried. Mr. Meeker was born July 2, 1804, near Middleburgh, NY. The month and day of his death in 1881 is not known.

Anyone with information may contact Mr. Leeman directly at the above address.

GHOSTS FROM THE PAST



The Blue Earth County Historical Society is hosting "Ghosts From The Past" on Saturday, October 7 and Sunday, October 8. Tours begin at 5:30 each evening at Williams Nature Center, on HWY 68 near Minneopa State Park. Free bus service is available from West High School's front parking lot to the nature center.

This year's "theater in the woods" is sure to be an evening of fun for adults and children alike as they are guided along the nature center's trail encountering a variety of Blue Earth County ghosts from the past. Many new ghosts will welcome you this year and after your tour enjoy cookies and hot cider.

Reservations are required and tickets must be purchased by October 6.

For more information, call the Historical Society at 507-345-5566.

Fifty Years Well Spent

by: Anna M. Wiecking

(Editors Note: This story was taken from the book "As We Once Were," by Anna M. Wiecking, a native of Mankato. The book contains stories about life in earlier times in Mankato and Blue Earth County. Wiecking's book is available for \$4.95 at the Heritage Center Gift Shop [see page 6 for more details].)

In the fifty years following the founding of Mankato, from 1852 to about 1900, the people in our county had achieved an amazing record in the task of bending the wilderness to their will. In 1858 there were not quite a thousand people, but by 1865 there were 9,201, and by 1900, 32,263, of the city, pushing its boundaries out first along the river, then in the hill areas. By 1910 there were sixty additions laid out, making a map in the atlas look like a patchwork quilt.

Changes had come about in the way people earned their living. At first everyone had to raise food if they were to eat, and farming remained an important industry in this bread-basket area of our nation. Our county became a prosperous agricultural area. First wheat was the top crop, then in turn, corn, livestock and dairy products. The railroad increased business greatly from 1868 on, but at first many farmers opposed the railroad, thinking it would take away trade. In 1868 the amount of butter and eggs shipped out was small, but by 1900 there were 840,000 dozen eggs and 400,000 pounds of butter shipped out in a year. In 1898 ten creameries alone shipped out 800,000 pounds of butter when dairying was at its peak.

There were many new industries too. After the fur trading was over, many sawmills sprang up, for wood was used for houses, furniture, barrels, cabinets, butter tubs and so on. There were factories here that made linseed oil, wool cloth, fibre ware and knitted goods. There were several breweries, along with brick yards, stone quarries, cement and gravel plants and iron foundries. As you can see, there were many new ways to earn a living. At first people did everything for themselves, but later they began to want to hire things done, so all sorts of people found employment as barbers, lawyers, teachers, tailors and many other trades and professions.

Changes in flour milling were interesting. The early settlers ground their own meal if necessary, or took their grain to a water-driven grist mill. Then mills began using metal instead of stone rollers. By

the 1880's the Hubbard Mill could grind one and a half million bushels of wheat a year, for by that time they used steam, and later electric power. There were some wind mills too, especially two famous ones. The Seppman mill is now a part of Minneopa Park property. Built in 1862, it could grind 150 bushels of wheat in a day. Its big wings or vanes have come off, but there are plans for restoring the mill.

The other windmill was the Schostag flour mill. The builder, Gottlieb Schostag had erected a saw-mill in a wooded area near Mankato. This had involved tremendous labor of finding and shaping the right timbers by hand. But there were flaws in the structure, and the big trees interfered with the wind. He decided to build a flour mill and find a new location where conditions would be better, so he dismantled his saw-mill and hauled all its parts by ox-team through swamps and woods to Minnesota Lake, where he erected the mill on the shore, to catch the good wind that blew there. This was in 1864. The vanes were thirty-five feet long, the mill sixty-five feet high. People said horses were afraid to go past the mill when the vanes were turning. This mill has since burned down.

There were many changes in transportation during these fifty years. From travel on foot, by oxen, horses, to stage and railroad, from canoe to sailboat and steamboat. In Mankato, the first city transportation was by horse car. This did not last very long, but it was 1907 before we had an electric streetcar. Of course, horses were everywhere, and they furnished many people with the livelihood to supply all the needs created.

In communications, the telegraph came in with the railroad. Telephones were here in 1880 but were not in general use. Postal service was a far cry from the day when a man stepped off a steamboat with a case with pockets in it and gave letters to people standing on the levee. Now there were post offices, and rural mail routes, too. The first rural mail delivery, by horse and cart, came in 1900.

In schools we had gone from home teaching, to log schools, then to frame schools. The number rose from twenty-six log schools and nine frame

ones in 1865, to 133 frame and nine brick schools in 1885 in the county. In the 70's and 80's, five elementary schools were built in Mankato, and a public high school, as well as parochial schools. In 1866 the legislature passed an act and gave \$5,000 to establish the second state Normal School, at Mankato. Daniel Buck put this through the legislature against much opposition. The first class of twenty-seven people was started for a few weeks in the Methodist Church, then moved into the Shaubut store at Main and Front. The Fifth Street site was purchased and work started in 1869 and it was occupied by 1870.

The first public library started in an upstairs room on Front Street, in 1894, and the Carnegie Library was opened by 1903.

Church buildings began early in the settlements. Missionaries of many faiths had been in the area early and had set up missions and schools to help Indians and others. One of the early churchmen in this area was Bishop Whipple, an Episcopalian. He understood the Indians and they considered him their friend. In his cathedral in Faribault there is a window which was paid for by the Indian children who earned money by picking berries. It is called Agnus Dei Window, and the inscription says it was given by "Indian Lambs in Memory of Other Lambs Who Are Asleep."

In 1856 the Catholics built their first church, a wood block building a mile east of Saint Peter and Paul's present site. The Methodists started a church in 1855. Bishop Whipple preached in Mankato in 1860, in a room over a store. The Episcopalians laid the cornerstone in 1867 for their church. Soon the whole county was dotted with church buildings, mostly frame structures. In Mankato, the Presbyterian church used the first log school for ten years. The women collected money to buy a bell for their new church. This bell was used during the Indian wars when it called people together in case of need.

Some of the greatest changes over the years have been in the field of health. From the days of do-it-yourself medicine and the early doctors on horseback, Mankato came, in 1889, to have a hospital, the Tourtellotte, out on the "stone prairie." It was given to the city by Colonel John E. Tourtellotte, a member of a wealthy and

philanthropic Connecticut family. He came here in 1857 as a lawyer, but twice, his law partnerships were interrupted by military and governmental service of very high order. He gave \$8,000 to Mankato for a hospital, which was built of Mankato stone and was located near 1400 Fourth Avenue. Some Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother came from Marshfield, Wisconsin and they operated it until they bought the home of J.A. Willard on North Sixth, and operated it as a hospital. Tourtellotte had not been successful for it had no running water and no sewage system. It was finally condemned and dismantled in 1905. Then in 1899 the Sisters built St. Joseph's Hospital north of and close to the Willard home. Immanuel Hospital was built in 1906. Two early doctors were Dr. William McMahan and Dr. Albon Dornberg, here in the sixties. There were some dreadful epidemics. In 1877 smallpox and diphtheria took forty-nine people, twenty-two in 1880, twenty-nine in 1881.

There were some other disasters. In 1873 came the grasshopper plague, then some cinch-bug years along with prairie and home fires. In 1862 a spring flood wiped out every bridge in the county, wooden ones of course. There was even a tornado in 1880 and earthquake on November 1, 1847. In 1897 a robber's den was discovered under a country schoolhouse. He had furnished the rooms he had excavated there and stayed in during the day, prowling at night. Everyone drove out to see this sight.

From the very beginning our county had much fine musical talent. The Welsh brought their fine signing groups to us, and they developed some good conductors and choral groups as well as bands. The Germans organized signing societies and instrumental groups, and church choirs contributed fine solo voices. Later the Scandinavians also made their mark in music. We had fine voice teachers who taught some Mankato people who were later famous, such as Florence Macbeth, about my age, whom I heard sing opera at the Metropolitan in New York much later. Another singer who was trained here was Clara Gerlich Edwards who made a good contribution with her solo voice and also as a composer of songs including "At the Bend of the River." The Normal School brought fine musical people as teachers as well as musical attractions.

Continued on page 8

New Items in the Heritage Center Gift Shop

As We Once Were - by *Anna M. Wiecking* : This 51-page book gives a picture of life of earlier times in Blue Earth County. It is made up of two collections. One, called, "Looking Back With Pride," deals with the period of settlement from 1850 till the turn of the century. The second, titled, "I Well Remember," is a set of recollections by *Wiecking* and others about Mankato and the county from 1890 to around 1920. **\$4.95**

Mankato Places Coloring Book : This 20-page coloring book offers ready-for-coloring drawings of various historical homes and buildings, including: The Hubbard House, The Cray house, Betsy's house (of the Betsy-Tacy series), the Blue Earth County Courthouse, and much, much more. **\$5.95**

Souvenir of Mankato : A reproduction of an 1897 souvenir book of Mankato. This 15-page book includes pictures of various sites that were in Mankato at this time, such as churches, schools, businesses and street scenes. **\$8.95**

The Treaty of Traverse Des Sioux-July, 1851: A 5x7 inch color painting reproduction of the Traverse Des Sioux treaty in 1851. **\$2.50**

The Pioneer Town of Mankato in the Year 1851 - by *A. Anderson* : A 7x5 1/5 inch water-color painting reproduction of the Minnesota River and Mankato in the early stages of settlement. The reverse side contains a description of the painting and early settlement in the area. **\$2.50**

1996 Blue Earth County Calendar : This 1996 twelve-month calendar contains photos from various spots and times in Blue Earth County, from Main Streets to general stores and more. **\$8.95**

Mail Orders

Please include the item name, quantity, and your name and address along with a check or money order. Make your check or money order payable to the Blue Earth County Historical Society, 415 Cherry Street, Mankato, MN 56001. Include \$5.00 for shipping and handling. Minnesota residents must also include 6.5% sales tax. No COD orders accepted.

Membership News

Thank you to new and returning members

Bernard M. Altenburg	JoAnn Kastner
George Anderson	Earle Koebler
Carolyn Hendrick Baer	Bernadine Kopischke
Charles & Marilyn Barnard	Harold Leeman
Louise Leonard Bradshaw	Laura Linde
Solies Castle	Rita C. Masberg
Dr. & Mrs. David Clause	Renee Mathiason
Crysteel Distributing Inc.	Dr. & Mrs. Donald Meredith
Mrs. J J Doble	Richard Mitchell
Aileen V. Eick	William B. & Marjorie Montag
Damis Epple	Mary Mortier
Fisher Commercial Real Estate	Kelly Nelson
Donna Fostveit	Ruth J. Nuessle
Gislason, Dosland, Hunter &	Patricia Pond
Malecki	Jerry & Judy Reich
Grandma's Store	John Rice
Nancy Hamer	Verona Roberts
Norma Hansen	Save-Mor
Hickory Tech Corporation	Alma Severson
Pat Hoehn	Survey Services, Inc
Norma Holte	Jane Tarjeson
Ray Jackson	Mr. & Mrs. Sylvan Thiesse
Waldo Jaax	Tire Associates
Margaret Jenkins	Dr. & Mrs. Townsend
Marlyss Johnson	Mrs. William H. VanLanen
Robert W. & Margaret Johnson	Corrine VanStelten
Steven & Diana Johnson	Willard & Doris Vetler
Mr. & Mrs. Eldon D. Jones	Vee Williams
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Wayne & Anne Knewtonson	



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Heritage Center

415 Cherry St., Mankato
(507) 345-5566

Exhibit Gallery

Tuesday - Saturday
10-12. and 1-4 p.m.

Research Center

Tuesday - Saturday
10 - 12 and 1-4 p.m.

Hubbard House

606 S Broad St., Mankato
Closed for restoration

Membership Form

Name (please print)

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Membership Levels

- ☐ Individual \$20
☐ Family \$30
☐ Student \$15
☐ Patron \$100

Business Memberships

- ☐ Associate (under 10 employees) \$25
☐ Affiliate (10-50 employees) \$50
☐ Sponsor (over 50 employees) \$100

☐ Sustaining Life Member

This level is offered to those who became life members prior to 1985 for sums of \$10 to \$40, who would like to show their continued support on an annual basis.

Please send a gift membership to:

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Mankato, MN 56001

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Mankato, Minnesota 56001
(507) 345-5566

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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In the early days there were several troupes that traveled about the country giving concerts, plays, and even operas to people who were hungry for culture. One of these troupes was the Andrews family. The father of this family of ten children had come to Minnesota in 1856 and had settled in St. Peter where he was a Methodist minister. To earn much needed additional income, this talented musical family gave much to the musical life of the whole area, including Mankato. One member of the family was Dr. J.W. Andrews, a prominent physician in Mankato for many years. The family finally organized a fine opera company and as a child I heard much of them as they traveled by private train after a long period of hardship and going about in a painted wagon. Ed Andrews, one of the actors in that troupe, spent much of his later life here at the home of his doctor brother.

Some other Mankato natives born in the late eighties and nineties and who lived within a six-block radius of my home have achieved fame far from their home state and town. Maud Hart Lovelace was one. A novelist, and author of the well-loved Betsy-Tacy stories about the Mankato of her early life, she was born and lived a few blocks from my home. Turning from the field of the arts to other areas of endeavor, there was Everett Hughes, son of William Hughes, who became Deputy Commander to General Eisenhower and also worked with Patton in World War II. He was decorated many times. John Ray who lived on Lincoln Street, became vice president and general counsel for AT&T in New York City. Reed Rose, who lived across from the Lincoln Park on Broad, became a nationally known research physicist.

And Paul (Punny) Mickleson became News Director of the Associated Press in New York, one of the top positions in journalism.

There were many other Mankato and county children who have grown up to be well educated and highly productive people. The pioneers who settled here, as well as those who followed them, were in the main, good human beings. They had high ideals, worked hard to educate their children, and were not afraid to discipline and teach them. In return they expected the children to work hard and to help at home. There was little concentration of wealth here, and children's spending money was very little compared with the allowances of children today. Our parents went with us for most purchases, and we children were asked to keep accounts and remain solvent even with our small amounts.

When we are listing the achievements of our county and city for the first fifty years, we must think of the people that were produced, as well as of the more material results of the hard work of the early times. The record of our people is a good one. No wonder they said, on many occasions, "Mankato was a good town in which to grow up."

So, as we look back at our county and city, we may do so with pride, not only for the things we can see and use, but also for the people who settled here and left us a wonderful legacy of courage, hard work, and the will to solve problems. They were willing to wait for what they wanted, and their sense of values was good. We can and should be grateful. These first fifty years were well spent, indeed.

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