

BLUE EARTH HISTORIAN

Blue Earth County Historical Society

Mankato Art History Celebrates Centennial

Written By: Inella Burns

In the 1890s, a woman's place was generally in the home, but the women who founded Mankato Art History Club opted for cultural enrichment. Although their purpose was the study of art and artists, they were dedicated to the betterment of community life as well.

This year the organization celebrates a centennial that stretches from the days of the late Victorians to the present age of technology. Looking through the club's records is a journey through a hundred years of cultural and social history.

According to the minutes of the first meeting, the Mankato Art History Club originated when "Pursuant to a call, five ladies presented themselves at Mrs. L.P. Hunt's on October 5, 1896. Mrs. Hunt, an ambitious and energetic organizer, had previously written a club constitution. It was readily adopted at this meeting by the other

charter members:

Mrs. J.W. Andrews, Mrs. J.H. James, Mrs. Grace Fox, Mrs. D.S. Evans, and Mrs. W.J. Morehart. (No first names were used in the early records.)

The Art History Club had the strong leadership of Mrs. Hunt as president for the first seven years. Lucy Pope Taylor, a close friend, said of her, "She never tired, never weakened. A project once undertaken was carried through."

Known as Lizzie to her friends, Mrs. Hunt, wife of the *Mankato Free Press* publisher, was a building contractor, and the houses she built were completed under her supervision to the last detail. "People were afraid of her," wrote Taylor, "she liked that."

Her interest in art led her to rallying school children throughout the state to send pennies for the bronze statue of Hiawatha at Minnehaha Falls. She was also

(...continued inside)



Art History Club members of 1946 celebrate their Golden Jubilee in 1890s costumes.

R.D. Hubbard House

The R.D. Hubbard House, built in 1871, is celebrating its 125th year. The Second French Empire style House and elaborate brick Carriagehouse is open for tours Sat. & Sun., 1-4 pm. Other tours are available by calling 345-5566.

The Hubbard House just underwent a two-year restoration project. Over \$300,000 and countless hours of volunteer time and effort has restored the inside of the House to a 1905 period. Beautiful silk, tapestry, and hand-screened wall coverings; woodworking; floor coverings; handpainted ceilings, and original furniture are among the many exquisite sights.

The restoration project is not finished, and additional projects inside and outside are needed. However, funds are limited. If you are interested in making a donation to the restoration of the Hubbard House, please contact the Blue Earth County Historical society at 345-5566.

Additional items needed are: plant stands, lace round tablecloth, piano stool, inkwell, and nice items dated to the 1905 period.

Visit the Museum & Gift Shop

*Marian Anderson's "Closing Time" print

*Betsy-Tacy books and collectables

*Heritage of Blue Earth County Publication, a limited number of editions remain

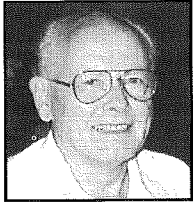
Members receive 10% off purchases

Volunteer Opportunities

There are currently many opportunities for you as a volunteer to assist the Society. Any amount of time is truly appreciated. There are a variety of tasks within the organization including; filing, tour guiding, committee members, board members, light house cleaning, and artifact labeling.

The Hubbard House is currently open for tours and we need additional tour guides on Saturdays and Sundays from one to four p.m. You will be instructed as to the information needed to guide an informative tour.

Meet Your Volunteers... Orv Jensen



Orv has been the volunteer curator since 1988 and is responsible for accessing all donations and keeping accurate inventory of certificates as well as assisting with exhibits or other use of artifacts. In the future he will be emphasizing on keeping accurate inventory within the Heritage Center & Hubbard House.

Orv was a professor at Mankato State University from 1962-1988. Prior to that, he taught in a one-room country school in Thief River Falls. He was only six months older than one of his students.

Orv's first wife Joyce (Hemmetstvedt) died shortly after his retirement in 1988. He has a son, Joel; and a granddaughter, Angel, age 18.

Orv remarried in 1991 to Mary Ann (Morness), the mother of five children. The combined family has 10 grandchildren.

Orv enjoys restoring old trunks and furniture, gardening, and traveling. Orv toured China 1 1/2 years ago.

We would like to thank Orv for his hard work, time, and donations made to the society. He is truly appreciated.

[] Yes, I would like to become a member of the Blue Earth County Historical Society in order to preserve and promote the history of Blue Earth County.

Enclosed is my tax deductible membership.

___ Student	\$15
___ Individual	\$20
___ Family	\$30
___ Patron	\$100

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

___ Associate (less than 10 employees)	\$25
___ Affiliate (10-50 employees)	\$50
___ Sponsor (over 50 employees)	\$100

Gift Memberships also available

Please make checks payable to:
Blue Earth County
Historical Society

New Exhibit - - - Gallery

Stroll through the museum, located at the Heritage Center, and relive the past of Blue Earth County. Several exhibits display artifacts and history from the early pioneers through industrial development.

The gift shop is open to browse and select momentos of your visit.

Visit a new exhibit this summer titled "The Spirit of '96".

The history of the decades from 1777-1996 unfolds before you.

Research Library

Visit our library for an extensive collection of resources including:

- *Cemetery listing -- All cemeteries in Blue Earth County have been transcribed and indexed on computer. Information listed is name, birth & death date, cemetery, location of plot, and any military service.
- *Genealogy Research
- *Obituary listings
- *Micro-film -- Newspapers dated as early as 1857, through 1990.
- *City Directories
- *Extensive photo collection
- *Vertical file subject & biographical newspaper clippings.
- *County & Community listings, Maps, and Plat Books.

Heritage Center, Gallery/Museum

Tuesday - Saturday 10-12, 1-4

Adults	\$2.00
Students	\$1.50
6 & Under	N/C
Members	N/C

Hubbard House/Carriage House

Saturday-Sunday 1-4

Adults	\$2.50
Students	\$2.00
6 & Under	N/C
Members	N/C

*Other tours available during the week by appointment, 345-5566.

Combined Discounts: Heritage Center/ Hubbard House

Adults	\$4.00
Students	\$3.00

Archives Library - Heritage Center
Non-member \$2.00

influential in making the Showy Lady Slipper the state flower.

Mrs. Hunt's club constitution was specific and rigid. The schedule of meetings was precisely set forth with a Guest Day and President's Day as special occasions, the latter sometimes an elaborate dinner with husbands attending. Members, limited to 15 and later to 25, were chosen by ballot, one blank slip signifying rejection. Dues were 50 cents, and any member delinquent in dues or having three unexcused absences was dropped from the club.

An account of the consequences of these rigid rules appears in a history of the club's first 50 years, arduously compiled by Lucy Pope Taylor, Harriette Barney, and Mary Salinda Foster: At one meeting in the Andrews home, Mrs. J.W. Andrews noted that her sister-in-law's name had been omitted from the roll call. "With some embarrassment, it was explained that 'they' had talked it over and Mrs. Hunt had said 'the constitution must be upheld.' Mrs. J.C. Andrews had three unexcused absences." Charter three unexcused absences." Charter member Mrs. Morehart was also dropped for non-payment of dues. This caused a great stir and a large attendance at the next meeting to amend the constitution to using fines as penalties.

Another early constitutional problem was the designated office of "art critic," for which Mrs. James was chosen. She was of Mayflower ancestry, a former school teacher and missionary, who was a real stickler for correct pronunciation. The office caused "trouble, tears, and threatened resignations until it was legislated out."

Yearly programs were planned around the art of a country, period,

or style of art. "Early Italian Art was studied the first year," wrote the historians, "with such names as Tintoretto and Caravaggio and the like keeping Mrs. James and her pronouncing dictionary active."

Architecture, sculpture and other art forms were also designated subjects with topics assigned. More recent members have broadened programs to include an occasional mix of such subjects as food, travel, Minnesota minerals, water conservation and industrial therapy, along with the study of art.

In 1898 the Mankato Art History Club joined the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, and with this affiliation came more civic projects. Members studied the city charter, the controversy over the servant girl's position and accommodations in the household, and Dr. Madge Timmerman Holman's concerns about tuberculosis prevention.

But the major project in which the Art History Club members assisted was the providing of a public rest room, as no such facility existed at that time. The rent was paid by the city, and all expenses in setting up the room were contributed by the women's clubs and private citizens, with club members delegated as matron at specific times. In addition to helping with funding, Mankato Art History Club paid for years of magazine subscriptions.

The rest room was opened March 8, 1911 at 118 Hickory St. and was well patronized from the start. On one day 133 visitors from 28 other towns registered. In another project the same year, the club launched a survey of rural schools to determine the need for a circulating library.

Membership News

Thank you to the following individuals who have renewed their membership.

Roberta Bartholdi
Bert & Diane Anderson
Cheryl Guentzel
Nancy Hamer
Hickory Tech Corporation
Waldo & Jean Jaax
Walter O. Jones
Theresa McLaughlin
William & Marjorie Montag
Katie Payton
Mrs. Earl M. Peterson
Marilyn Ringheim
Julie Schrader
Shelly Schulz
Harry & Marjorie Barnard
Dr. & Mrs. G. W. Fischer
Mary Ellen How
MGA/Home Magazine
Kelly Nelson
George & Mary Smith

BECHS welcomes the following new members:

Pat Linder
Elaine Anderson
Richard Nienow
Marilyn Nisja
David Nelson
Gerald Smith
Joyce Wenner
Elaine Lee
Cathy Schmidt
Charles Hawley
Mary Borrett
Debra Koenning
Dennis Timm
Jeff Spindler

Blue Earth County Fair

August 8th-11th

The Historical Society will be making & selling Kettle Korn during the Fair. Volunteers are needed to assist throughout those days. Contact the Heritage Center, 345-5566. **Thank You**

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The Blue Earth County Historian will be published quarterly by the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Any articles, stories, or information can be submitted to:

BECHS
415 E. Cherry
Mankato, MN 56001

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.

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 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.

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Article created and submitted by:
Inella Burns

Dear BECHS Members and Friends:

As your new Executive Director, I would like to introduce myself and say "hello." It is very exciting to become part of this wonderful organization. The splendid heritage and individuals who contribute time and energy enable the collection and preservation of Blue Earth County for present and future generations.



This year brings new and exciting events to the Historical Society. After a lengthy restoration project, the Hubbard House is open for tours,

new volunteer opportunities, additions to staff, and a strategic plan to increase the growth and success of the Society. These goals include: fund raising, staffing, marketing, membership, and preservation.

I invite every member and friend of the Society to visit the Heritage Center and Hubbard House. I challenge members to become more involved with your Society and to share these opportunities with other individuals.

Have a wonderful summer!
Liz Brown, Executive Director

Donations

The Blue Earth County Master Gardeners and Twilight Garden Club take care of and work the spectacular gardens at the Hubbard House. They are in need of a few donated items to assist their efforts. Needed are: a wheelbarrow, hoses, rakes, shovels, and any other gardening tools. These can be used items, but need to be in working condition. Donation items can be brought to the Heritage Center.

Orv Jensen - \$64.73 in shelving
Medo Township - Bobbie Schweim - \$250
Kenneth L. Thompson - \$30
Mary A Todnem - \$10 memorium
Lyle LaFavor - \$25
Anonymous Donation - \$5430 - (Mrs. Hubbard's Bedroom)
Glenn Bartsch - East Lake Furniture, Hubbard House Bedroom Set - \$2700

... Centennial article continued.

One of the most daring projects in which Art History Club joined was the Pure Foods Campaign in which housewives investigated restaurants, kitchens, and stores. One restaurant, unable to win the "white list" rating, was almost run out of business though he soon regained his patronage.

Civic projects claiming the attention of club members in 1913

were city sanitation, social hygiene, motion picture supervision, and various crusades following an address by Judge W.L. Comstock in which he berated the demoralizing effects of public dances on young people. Inspired by member Mrs. J.E. Brandrup, a former practicing physician and surgeon, birth registration enforcement also began that year.

"Club women finally grew tired

of civic righteousness," wrote the historians, "and in February 1914, it was suggested that we drop civic meetings and study opera."

And they did! Mrs. Paul Barney's widely varied program the next year included four Wagnerian operas as well as studies of Spanish painters, the Walker Art Gallery, the Louvre, Oriental rugs and lace makings from the 16th century to Minnesota lace. But soon the club returned to civic projects, this time the Americanization work in Tinckomville to teach English to Syrian mothers unable to attend night school. Women's suffrage and child welfare were also active interests.

During WWI, Art History Club members were engaged in the war effort making surgical dressings, quilts for hospitals and soldier scrapbooks as well as sewing for the Red Cross and donating money to war causes. In WWII, they also engaged in wartime sewing and Victory Gardens.

In 1944 dues were raised to \$3 to cover the war fund. In another war-related cause, the club lent support to Mrs. Barney and the Mankato Garden Club in their Victory Highway beautification project, the planting of roadside trees to honor the county's men and women in the armed forces.

Throughout the history of

the club, references are made to political activity. Several letters were sent to Congress, the Minnesota State Legislature, and the Mankato City Council supporting or opposing bills, among them Gov. Youngdahl's mental health bill, a request for a woman member on the City Planning Commission, and a letter opposing a projected city dump site.

Besides working for civic improvement, the Art History Club has regularly contributed to a variety of worthy organizations as well as promoting the arts, among them the Blue Earth County Historical Society, the American Field Service, CARE, Indian welfare, Radio Free Europe, and the Carnegie Art Center.

In the course of a century, a great number of books were given to the Mankato library as memorial gifts. They have also given paintings to schools and sponsored art contests for high school students. In 1972, they contributed to Fine Arts, Inc. for cataloguing and describing Mankato's 1890s homes and mapping a walking tour. For their work in promoting art, the Art History Club was awarded paintings five times by the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs.

Today, the Mankato art group focuses more on its original purpose: the study of art and artists. Mrs. Hunt's format for meetings, Guest Day, and President's Day are still observed, although altered and more informal.

Gone are the rigid membership and attendance rules as well as the club's affiliation with the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, but the Mankato Art History Club continues an interest in promoting art and in contributing to worthy causes.

Of today's 17 members, four represent a second generation in the club: Mary (Fazendin) Dotson, Joan (Barnhart) Pengra, Helene (Beaudette) Thomas, and Patricia (Barnhart) Youngs. Other members are Inella Burns, Dorothy Florine, Wilbur Frink, Barbara Hogan, Julie Karp, Marjorie Karson, Ann Kough, Ginny McNear, Cindy Miller, Georgia Rettmer, Helen Trost, Cynthia Wyberg, and Jean Williams.

Sources: Art History Club Secretarial Records, 1896-1974; Blue Earth County Historical Society Archives; Lucy Pope Taylor, Harriette Barney, Mary Salinda Foster, *First Fifty Years, Mankato Art History Club, 1896-1946*; *Mankato Free Press*, December 9, 1903; October 22, 1913; March 6, 1946; March 11, 1983.

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

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