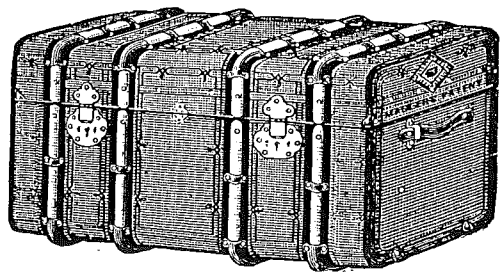


The Blue Earth County Historian

Blue Earth County Historical Society. Winter 2000



Pioneering With Grandmother

This essay was the winner of a contest sponsored by the Blue Earth County Historical Society in 1934. Roberta Warnke won first place with this essay about her family during the early days of Blue Earth County. It is one example of the treasures we have in our research files waiting to be discovered. It is reprinted here as it appeared in the Mankato Free Press in 1934 with only a few corrections.

"In the making of the early history in Blue Earth County I like to think that my great grandparents and my grandparents had a small yet vital part.

When listening to the stories my grandmother tells of those days I realize something of the courage and perseverance required to develop a new country.

In the year 1861 my great grandparents, John and Elisabeth Rath with their children, Henry and Augusta, aged four and two respectively, emigrated from Germany. They traveled by sailship taking nine weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Arriving at New York, they came by rail to Wisconsin, where they located at Elm Grove, a small village near Milwaukee. Here they lived for three years, but hearing of the fertile lands to be obtained so cheaply in the Minnesota valley they came westward. One of the vivid recollections grandmother (then five years old) has of the journey is crossing the river at LaCrosse by ferry. The railroad reached only as far as Rochester and from there they traveled by stage, arriving in the fall of 1864 at Mankato, which at that time was only a small village.

Moved to Beauford

The family lived in a home owned by a man named Voght until the spring when they moved to Beauford Township locating a mile east of the present village.

Mr. Voght with his team and wagon brought the household goods, great grandfather, and the children by way of Tivoli which would now be considered a round about way but at the time was perhaps the easiest route to travel. There were no bridges and the only time great grandfather and the children were allowed to ride was when fording the rivers.

It was the first of May, not a typical 'May Day' but cold and raw ending with rain and snow which thoroughly soaked and chilled the two small children pioneers in the group. Feeling that it was impossible for the children to travel farther, great grandfather left them at the home of some people named May living a few miles from the present town of St. Clair. The people were entire strangers, but grandmother recalls how kind the lady was to them, providing dry clothing, popping corn, and doing everything in her power to make these small guests happy; but grandmother, frightened and homesick for mother refused to be comforted and cried herself to sleep that night.

Next day broke bright and sunshining. Mr. Brown from whom great grandfather bought his land came to get the children. He too was an entire stranger but without questioning, little Henry and Augusta whose every muscle ached from the long walk and exposure of the previous day, followed him the five or six miles to their new home. Often they lagged far behind stopping to pick flowers or rest. Then their new friend would wait for them to catch up, only to have the same thing repeated over again.

Pioneering continued on page 3

***Happy New Year
to All Our
Members and
Contributors
from BECHS!***

The Blue Earth County Historian
Winter 2000

The Blue Earth County Historian is published quarterly for the members of BECHS. BECHS has the mission of collecting, preserving and publishing material relating to the history of Blue Earth County.

Board of Trustees

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Join Us!

Please consider joining BECHS. Members receive free admission to the Heritage Museum, Free access to the research center, Free admission to the R. D. Hubbard House non event tours, reduced admission for special events, quarterly newsletter, discount on many items in the museum shop, and the ability to help preserve the heritage of Blue Earth County!

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
Phone _____

Membership Levels

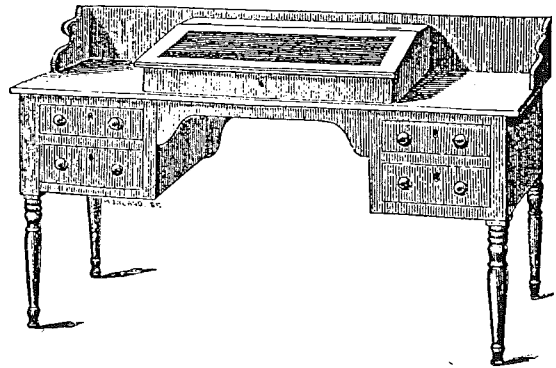
Student: \$15.00
Individual \$20.00
Household \$30.00
Patron \$100.00

Business

Associate (less than 10 employees)	\$25.00
Affiliate (10 to 50 employees)	\$50.00
Sponsor (over 50 employees)	\$100.00

Make checks payable to BECHS and return with this form to
415 East Cherry Street, Mankato MN 56001.

Thank You!



From The Executive Director.

Winter has once again arrived in Minnesota. As I look at the white blanket of snow that covers our fine state and the start of a New Year, I look forward to the opportunities for BECHS as well. The BECHS Board of Trustees has scheduled a retreat session to look at the short and long term projects as we meet our mission of the preservation of Blue Earth County history.

There are many ways that BECHS can fulfill this mission. We will be looking at every area and forging ahead to provide the best services to our members and visitors. We encourage our members to become involved in this process. We would appreciate your input either by writing us a note with your ideas or if you have the time, offering to sit on a committee or volunteer a little bit of time and talent. We need all kinds of people with all kinds of skills to help us out.

BECHS has several standing committees. Some of the current committees include Collections, Exhibits, Finance, Membership, the Museum Store, Programs, Publications, and Restoration. These committees work under the guidance of our Staff and our Board of Trustees to fulfill the goals of BECHS.

Our Programs and Exhibits committees are especially in need of a few more people. So if you want to help out the worthy cause of preserving and sharing the history of Blue Earth County, please consider how you can make a difference.

James Lundgren
BECHS Executive Director

Coming Soon! The Southern Minnesota Vietnam Veterans are working hard to prepare our new exhibit on Vietnam Veterans. Look for the exhibit grand opening coming late this winter!

Led Cow from Mankato

In the meantime great grandmother, who led a cow, walked alone from Mankato following a trail located about where trunk highway 39 now lies. She forded the LeSueur River near the Ady home where she stayed over night. Incidentally a boy was shot by the Indians at that crossing the same day. However great grandmother and the cow reached the new home safely, just in time to welcome the children whom we left trudging slowly but hopefully on toward home and mother.

Strange as it may seem they stopped on the very spot which is now my home. This place was then owned by Mr. Brown who was speculating in land, buying from the United States government at two dollars and fifty cents per acre and reselling for five thereby making a fine profit. Great grandfather bought ten acres and later fifty more and I am told that the original deed to this land bore the signature of Abraham Lincoln then president of the United States.

While great grandfather was logging up a cabin, the family stayed with the Browns who had only a one-room house but were always glad to welcome guests. Mr. and Mrs. Brown were very much afraid of the Indians. The Sioux Massacre was still a vivid and terrible memory; the Indians had been driven out but some had returned and the settlers, few in number, lived in constant fear of attack.

At night every conceivable weapon of defense, knives, axes, saws, clubs, and guns were laid out ready to hand. Great grandmother couldn't sleep for fear that Indians might come and kill her children, but one night a husky Irishman from the prairie country to the south came up to get wood for fuel, and the one roomed home welcomed still another guest. Declaring he was not afraid of the Indians, he flung himself down in front of the door and soon was snoring peacefully and that night great grandmother slept unafraid.

Cabin Had No Floor

Soon their new cabin was ready to move into. The roof of this cabin was made of boards sawed at a nearby saw mill, floor there was none, except the bare earth, and grandmother says they became quite agile stepping over the logs laid as joists for the prospective floor to be put in the following autumn.

Great grandfather then walked to Owatonna to obtain work where a railroad was under construction; and spent

the summer moving dirt with a wheelbarrow, that he might earn enough money to feed his family through the winter.

Now Great grandmother and the children were alone living among dense timbers. At night she hung a blanket over the one window that no stray Indian might see her light. One evening going outside she discovered that the light shown through the cracks between the logs. She had no time to harbor fear, for there was much to do. The cabin must be plastered between the logs and this she did with clay, using her bare hands. She cleared the brush from the ground, where the cabin logs had been cut, and spaded and planted it to beans and potatoes.

The cow was turned loose to graze and it was small Henry's job to find her in the evening, which was not so difficult as it would seem in such a forest, for he soon learned her favorite feeding grounds.

First Winter Hardest

The first winter was the hardest. Their diet consisted chiefly of beans and pork. Bread was a luxury for wheat must be hauled by ox-team to Mankato to the mill to be ground. One spring in the month of March great grandfather and Henry went to the mill driving an ox-team hitched to a sled. When crossing the LeSueur River they noticed the ice was cracking. When they returned they found four feet of water on top of the ice. Knowing they must cross somehow great grandfather drove the team into the water. The oxen and sled swam while great grandfather reached over onto the sled box and held onto the sled thus keeping the box from floating away. Once one of the oxen fell through a hole in the ice so that he went completely under the water but miraculously he recovered his momentum and they reached the home shore safely.

For several summers great grandfather worked on the railroad while great grandmother and the children carried on at home. With his earnings he was able to buy more land.

Using a walking plow and an ox-team this was gotten ready for crops. The corn was planted and cultivated with the hoe, the grain was broadcast by hand, cut with a cradle, and later with a reaper, and bound by hand, in which our grandmother, as a girl, became quite efficient. Great grandfather later had the distinction of owning the first wire tying grain binder in the neighborhood. This binder attracted much attention. A so-called 'expert' came out to set it up and people gathered in to see it work.

Grandmother, however, would not have us think that pioneering was all hardships for their pleasures though simple were many.

They gathered wild fruits such as grapes, plums, dew berries, raspberries, strawberries, and wild crab apples; butternuts, walnuts, and hazelnuts could be had for the taking; fishing and swimming were open to every boy; and great uncle Henry had one sport of which he never tired and that was hunting and trapping. Rattlesnakes were a menace, but this barefoot boy, with others of his kind, sought them out in their lairs along the river and considered it sport to kill them.

Visits Were Pleasure

Visits to the neighbors were always a pleasure. Fine foods might be lacking but hospitality was not. Grandmother remembers as a little girl being invited to a neighbors for dinner. The meal consisted of boiled potatoes and fried onions but these in abundance. The lady kept filling and refilling grandmother's plate until in desperation, she whispered to great grandmother "I can't eat any more".

These neighbors had a large family and were poor. Each child had only one outfit of clothing and in summer this outfit gradually wore out until finally the boys had no clothing at all but were running through the woods untrammelled. In the fall they were gradually clothed again.

What about school in that early day? A little log cabin near the river furnished the school room; the teacher had perhaps an eighth grade education; if the small children grew tired she sent them out to play in the sand; if the older ones grew restless she stopped work and had the whole school take a hearty laugh; if the large boys became unruly she used the rod; and though books were scarce, in some way she managed to teach them something about reading and writing and arithmetic.

When grandmother pictured pioneer days to me I said grandmother I'd like to go back a hundred years and drop in to see you. She laughed (she's only seventy-four) and said, 'It's not quite that long ago'.

The log cabins have disappeared, the primeval forests likewise. No longer do little children sleep under the eaves so close that they scratch their hands on the nails in the roof (as grandmother did), no longer are they lulled to sleep by the timber wolf and the cry of the hoot owl; but who shall say that those pioneer children did not enjoy a fuller richer though simple life than we with all our modern conveniences.

Our pioneers are passing one by one. To us they leave their heritage of their achievements. May we be worthy to carry on and like them endeavor to build a greater and better Blue Earth County."



From the Archivist-Librarian

Greetings and HAPPY NEW YEAR from the desk of Carol! The last 3 months of 1999 have been busy. With visiting researchers, averaging from 60 to 70 visitors a month. Some days we have had a full house and then some. Personally, I think many of these people were trying to finish their family histories in order to be given as Christmas gifts. This doesn't even count the 25 visits by a mother and daughter team who are meticulously transcribing the 1880 U.S. Census for the 4 wards of Mankato City. The object to gather data for the daughter's Master thesis. What a job trying to read the old handwriting! I am quite often asked to help decipher this name or that county.

As always, we have letters to answer and phone requests to fulfill. One interesting request was to copy from microfilm, an entire issue of the *Lake Crystal Tribune*, for the day the patron's parents' wedding announcement was published. This was a Christmas present to his parents from a very thoughtful son. If any of you are interested, this can be done for birthdays or anniversaries. It just depends on the newspaper and how it will copy.

Donations have been coming in from various past or present Mankato residents. People are realizing that they should call on us before tossing many interesting family treasures. My favorite donation was the suitcase of dolls donated by Mary Pay Johnson's daughter, Mary Jo Hey. Oh, what stories these little dolls could tell us about the "good old days". Not knowing what to expect, or to uncover, can make this task seem like an adventure or an extra special "Christmas present". Should any of you be out and about, please come and visit us at the archives library. Until next the newsletter.

Carol Oney
Archives-Librarian

ARCHIVES AND ARTIFACT DONATIONS

OCTOBER—DECEMBER 1999

Mary Jo Hey, Wauwatosa, WI: Campfire Girls ceremonial gown, brass baby crib, assorted dolls of all sizes, shapes, and descriptions, papoose in back carrier and some native artifacts, 2 2-piece gowns in red and peach.

Alvin Olson, Waseca, MN: Five-volume set of History for Ready Reference & Topical Reading; 4-volume set of History of the World, Nation; 4-volume set of History of the World, People; 1 box of assorted books, 1978 telephone, plate stand, 2 police uniforms from Mapleton Police Force, c1970s.

Donald A. Johnson, Edina, MN: Eagle Lake High School Band cape and cap, c1937-38.

George Sugden, Mankato, MN: Wooden case containing 9 roll-down wall maps, c post-wars, 1940s.

Evelyn Hatfield, Mankato, MN: A b/w postcard of students from Mankato Commercial College standing in front of the Blue Earth County Courthouse, c1911.

Glenn Bartsch, Mpls., MN: Five b/w photos of the Rapidan/Bartsch Garage and a 1903 Cadillac owned by Ed. Tarjeson.

Patricia Ireland, Mankato, MN: Photocopy of the Mapleton School of 1907, several newspaper clippings featuring 'The Good Old Days in Mapleton', July 27, 1991 issue of the MFP noting "100 years of school days".

Julie Schrader, Mankato, MN: Three color photos of Maud Hart Lovelace gravesite and memorial, book Netting Your Ancestors: Genealogical Research on the Internet.

Marlys Black, Sherman, IL: Five b/w photos & negatives of the 1951 Flood.

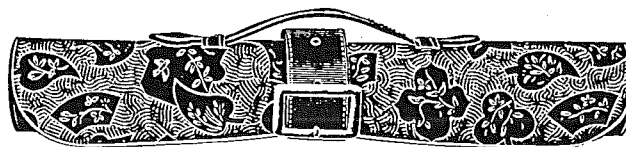
Betty Lou Cords, LeSueur, MN: Bits of Local History of Marysburg, Cleveland, and Madison Lake. A scrapbook of Ted Roemer's writings from 1967-1988.

Patrice Johnson, Good Thunder, MN: The Red Jacket Trail: A History, by Roy W. Meyer. 1998.

Jane Tarjeson, Good Thunder, MN: Understanding Textiles, 1987.

Richard Steele, North Mankato, MN: Seventeen-volume set Little Masterpieces C 1902, 1924 Otaknam, book of Machinist's Questions, 1941, 3 Cookbooks

St. John's Lutheran Church, Mapleton, 'Quilting Ladies Group': hand woven apron worn by Mrs. William Proehl, Sr. which was brought from Germany in 1868.



The Calendar for Travel Like Bert Tours

Our tours, called "Travel Like Bert", were designed as a salute to Bert Burns, long time BECHS Volunteer and Board of Trustees member. Bert loved to travel to out of the way places and share his experiences with students and friends. Our "classroom on wheels" has completed three trips that have offered history, geography, sociology, and geology along with fun and good times.

The first trip, TLB#1, took place in the fall of 1998 and concentrated on the history and development of the bluff country of Southeastern Minnesota. TLB#2 took place in the spring of 1999 and found us following the Red River trails to the headwaters of the Minnesota River and then north along the Red River to Pembina and Winnipeg with a return over Lake of the Woods to Grand Rapids and home. TLB#3 was last fall and it dealt with the history of Southwestern Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River Valley and the HoChunk (Winnebago) people. The HoChunk had a reservation in Blue Earth County.

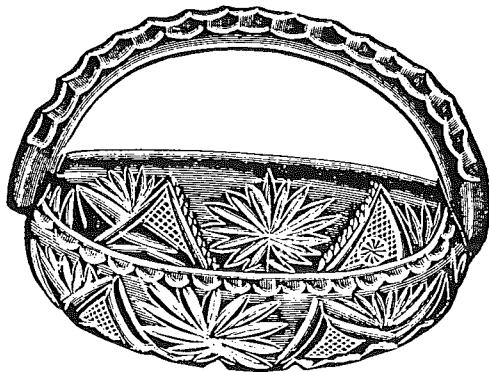
TLB#4 and TLB#5 are on the drawing board. We plan to extend our visit to Wisconsin on TLB#4. We'll visit the eastern side of Wisconsin along the Fox River Valley, along Green Bay and Door County as we trace the early routes of people like Marquette and Joliet, Radisson and Groseilliers, Father Hennepin, and Joseph Nicollet. This trip will leave Mankato on Monday May 8, 2000 and return on May 12, 2000.

TLB#5 will follow the Dakota and settler battles of 1862 to the west and into South Dakota to the area of Ft. Thompson and Pierre where the Dakota and HoChunk people were resettled after the conflict. This trip will leave Mankato Thursday September 21, 2000 and return on Sunday September 24, 2000.

Itineraries and costs will be available shortly. We invite BECHS members and anyone else interested to join us. It is appreciated if those who are interested contact us. We also look forward to your questions and suggestions. Please, let us hear from you. For further information please write to: TLB Tours c/o BECHS at 415 East Cherry Street Mankato MN 56001.

New and Renewed Members

Adams, Doris
 Anderson, Tania
 Barnard, Charles & Marilyn
 Bartholdi, Roberta
 Berger, Doris
 Bessler, Marilyn & Bill
 Brokke, Goldia
 Bunkers, Suzanne
 Burns, Inella
 Diel, Doris
 Duane, Susan
 Erickson, Glenn & Helen
 Fostveit, Donna
 Frankhauser, S. K.
 Frederick, Carol
 Fredericks, Marlene
 Hintz, Todd
 Hopman, Edith
 Howard, Don
 Junge, Robert
 Kvasnicka, Don
 Leeman, Harold
 Marlow, Richard Dr.
 Norris, Margaret
 Powell, Nancy
 R&R Tire & Guns of the Pioneers
 S.S. Peter & Paul Jesuit Community
 Rezmerski, John
 Simonett, Patricia
 Smith, Louisa
 Swanson, Keisha
 Swenson, Helenrachel
 Weinert, Lucille
 Wessman, Vernice & Wendell
 Zimprich, Shirley



BECHS Past Events

It was a busy fall for special events at BECHS. Our annual "Ghosts from The Past" program was held in early October at the Heritage Center and featured little known "Scandals and Dirty Deeds" from Blue Earth County. Those who attended saw six vignettes about

unusual Blue Earth County people and events. Eleanor Wittrock told of the mysterious Kawell Fire of 1901. Joe Kubicek portrayed George Sontag, a Mankatoan who became a train robber in the West in 1910. Mary Sullivan and Jo Schultz shared the billing for Dr. DeCoster and his scandalous affairs. John Christianson dramatized prohibition shenanigans of the 1920's. Roger Bergquist told about the 1909 Ledbetter murder story and Mike Lagerquist's tale was about the cannon firing in 1909 in Lincoln Park. Special thanks to Jo Schultz for again spearheading this longtime BECHS program.

This year, the YWCA asked BECHS to cosponsor their "Setting Pretty" program which was held on October 23 and 24, 1999. It was a nice opportunity for BECHS and the YWCA to work together on an event involving both historic houses. The event included tours of the Hubbard House, where Kelly Reuter had beautifully set the dining room table with 1896 Havilland China, which is on loan to BECHS from Ann Burckhardt. Artist Marian Anderson was also on hand, displaying her original painting of the Schmidt house, which is the first in her series of limited edition prints. She will next paint the YWCA's Cray House, and then our Hubbard House. The BECHS and the YWCA will share a portion of the proceeds from this series. We hope to plan more joint events with the YWCA and take advantage of the proximity and beauty of these two historic homes.

On November 22, BECHS held a book fair at Barnes & Noble. It wasn't a huge success, but we hope to try it again next year, perhaps with evening or weekend hours. Thanks to all who turned out to support us!

Our December events included the bake sale for non-profits at Madison East, Christmas at the Hubbard House and gift-wrapping at Barnes & Noble. Thanks to the many volunteers who brought baked goods for us to sell at the bake sale and open house! This year's Christmas at the Hubbard House was especially nice because of the mild weather and the arrival of the newly restored rosewood piano. The Hubbard House was decorated for the holidays both inside and out. Costumed guides provided the history of the Hubbard house and family. Special music for the two nights was provided by the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Select Choir, the Maple River girls & boys quartets, the Minnesota Valley Chorale, Hazel Faust, Rosalyn Spear & Ron Goodrich. M. J. Turtle of North Mankato won the drawing of a framed Marian Anderson print of the Schmidt house. Our thanks to the many BECHS volunteers who helped make this a lovely event.

Kandi Demaray
 Programs Coordinator

BECHS Volunteers since the last issue

The following people have generously donated their time since the last newsletter. We very gratefully acknowledge their efforts. We would also like to apologize for the names inadvertently left off the list in the Fall Newsletter.

These people were very helpful to the BECHS by doing some of the following:

Cutting newspaper articles,
Typing catalog cards,
Guiding tours of the Hubbard House or Museum,
Baking for the bake sale,
Decorating the Hubbard House,
Cleaning the Hubbard House,
Doing Research,
Serving on a BECHS Committee,
Office work,
Exhibit production,
Collections work,
Newsletter Publication,
Computer work,
and more.

If you would be willing to help us fulfill our mission of sharing the history of Blue Earth County, please call the Society today to learn more about the many opportunities.

BECHS Volunteers

Anderson, Elaine	Kettner, Jody
Apitz, Darrel	Kubicek, Joe
Baer, Marcia	Lavitschke, Jo-an
Baird, Jane	Lundblad, Larry
Bartsch, Glenn	Lundgren, Molly
BOP of D.O.E.S. Members	Lundquist, Jean
Boyce, Dave	Maple River Boys Quartet
Burns, Inella	Maple River Girls Quartet
Chamber Captain's Crew	Meisel, Burt
Cords, Betty	Nisja, Millie
Cramer, Mike	Nussbaumer, Linda
Crogg, Tyler	Reid, Cres
Demaray, Kandi	Rezmerski, John
Dooley, Mary	Salsberry, Tom
Falenczykowski, Lona	Severerson, Alma
Faust, Hazel	Snilsberg, Loretta
Frederick, Michael	Southern MN Vietnam
Garlick, Russ	Veterans Association
Goff, Harley	Spear, Rosalyn
Goodrich, Ron	Steel, Ramona
Graham, Joanne	Schultz, Jo
Grundmeier, Win	Schultz, Bob
Grundmeier, Shirley	Tarjeson, Jane
Hagen, Tom	Tarjeson, Tony
Hanson, Kathryn	Tate, Sandy
Hopman, Edith	Walker, Jeff
Jaenisch, Carol	Webb, Donna
Jansen, Steve	Whitrock, Eleanor
Jensen, Orv	Wilmes, Brad
JWP Select Choir	Zimmer, Beth

New in the Museum Store!

- The new Sandon plate "The Rainbow Bridge" has arrived and is now in stock.
- Numerous Minnesota history books are on order from the Minnesota Historical Society.
- The History of SS. Peter and Paul's Parish, 1854-1899.

Announcement

Julie Schrader is taking reservations for reprinting the book The Heritage of Blue Earth County, Minnesota. This book was first published in 1990 and was quickly sold out. The book contains over 900 pages of county and genealogical history. Contact Julie at 507-625-8056 for information.

Financial and Equipment Donations were made by:

Bartsch, Glenn
Burton, Ronnie
Confer, Elizabeth
Grundmeier, Win & Shirley
Hadley, Paul
Hanson, Kathryn
Marco Business Products
Mary S. Gray Trust
Mildred M. Jones Trust
Rezmerski, John
Schultz, Jo
Severson, Alma
Tarjeson, Jane

Thank You All!

Blue Earth County Historical Society
415 East Cherry Street
Mankato MN 56001

Non-Profit Org.

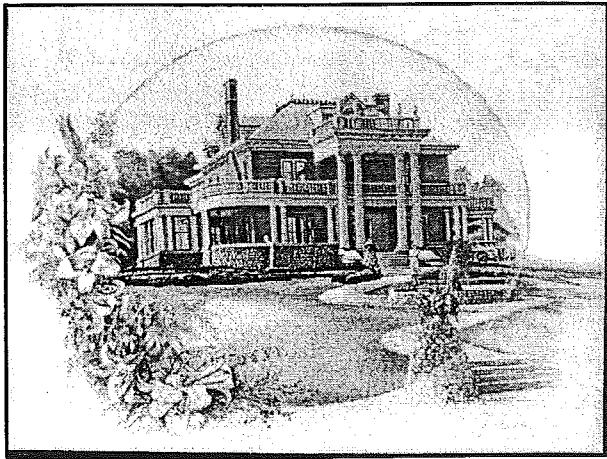
U.S. Postage

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Mankato MN

56001

Permit No. 343



This beautiful home was built in 1923 on a hill overlooking South Front Street in Mankato. The house was built for the family of Oscar and Katherine Schmidt. The house was listed on the National Register, but was torn down in 1988. Marian has done extensive research for historic accuracy and interviewed family descendants for personal details including the favorite flowers of Katherine Schmidt used in the painting. Each print is numbered and autographed by the artist and includes a heartwarming history of the home and the women of the house.

A Friendly Reminder

The Marian Anderson Gallery is donating a portion of the proceeds from sales of the print "A Time Remembered, The Schmidt House" to the BECHS and the YWCA. Please help support us through purchases of cards and prints from the BECHS and the Marian Anderson Gallery. The print is the first in a series of three that will include the YWCA's Cray House and the R. D. Hubbard House.

650 Main Edition Prints - \$75.00

65 Artist Proofs - \$150.00

Image Size - 20" x 16"

Hurry to get your print while supplies last!

Thank You!