

The Blue Earth County Historian

Blue Earth County Historical Society Spring 2002

History of Minneopa Cemetery

By Win Grundmeier

Minneopa Cemetery is truly a pioneer burying ground, the oldest existing cemetery in the Mankato area. It is situated on an imposing location, a ridge in South Bend Township, almost entirely surrounded by Minneopa State Park. Looking from the cemetery southward, you gaze into the valley of Minneopa Creek and the older portion of the park. Looking north from the cemetery, your view is a panoramic sweep of the Minnesota River Valley, and in the foreground the new part of the park. Truly, the histories of the park and the cemetery are interwoven.

In 1855, in covered wagons, eleven Welsh families made the six-week trek from Watertown, Wisconsin, and settled near Minneopa Falls. These settlers had been attracted by tales told by earlier explorers and pioneers. In June 1853 the small steamboat Clarion came up the Minnesota and landed at the bank where the village of South Bend now stands. The Captain, Samuel Humbertson, and his party decided to settle here. He put up a shanty, left it in charge of his nephew, and proceeded to organize the development of the site.

A kind of company was formed consisting of David C. Evans, Lyman Matthews, Humbertson, Alden Bryant, John Mann and J. S. Lyon. They laid out the townsite, and on Saturday, the sixth of August 1853, the first log cabin was built for Lyon. Lyon's name was given to the nearby creek, which we now call Minneopa Creek. D. C. Evans suggested that the town be named South Bend, owing to its location at one of the big bends of the Minnesota River.

David C. Evans built a large, permanent log house here in the following winter. It measured 16 x 24 feet and was three stories high. Evans acquired a large tract of land to the west of town including the present sites of the cemetery and the old part of Minneopa Park. Evans was keenly interested in developing his natural treasure, the deep valley of

Minneopa Creek and especially the falls. When the Omaha Railroad came through the neighborhood in 1868, it disappointed Evans by refusing to locate a depot at South Bend town. However, the railroad and Evans cooperated to build a hotel and depot at Minneopa. With the rapid influx of people to the area, D. C. Evans decided to plat part of his land, on the ridge north of the railroad tracks, as a burying ground. On January 21, 1899, Orange Little and his wife, Estella, deeded two more acres to South Bend Township to be added to the cemetery. Thus, the cemetery now contained 52 acres.

The first death in the Welsh colony of South Bend was Ann Jones, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Jones. Her grave is the oldest in Minneopa Cemetery. Because the inscription on Ann Jones' marker was wearing away, in 1995, at Loren Crane's request, the marker was replaced with a new granite stone. It is the exact replica of the original except for the words, "First Burial".

The cemetery started as a Welsh burying ground. Eventually it came under the control of South Bend Town Board. In 1868, when the railroad depot was to be built at Minneopa, D. C. Evans gave a 700-square foot piece of the cemetery to the town. In 1902, the Omaha Railroad straightened out an "S" curve at Minneopa, moving the railroad right-of-way closer to the cemetery.

In 1908, due to heavy rains, there occurred a landslide from the railroad's cut into the hillside, which caused a few bodies to be dislodged and slide down the hill. The railroad made good the damage, and awarded the Town of South Bend \$6,000. But officials of the Town used the money largely to build roads and bridges, and put only \$200 of the award back into the cemetery. The settlers considered this action an outrage, got stirred up, and on October 1, 1917, they took the cemetery away from the Town and incorporated under the State of Minnesota. Henceforth, the responsibility of the cemetery rests with a Board of Directors.

Minneopa Cemetery continued on Page 3.

***The Blue Earth County Historian
Spring 2002***

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.

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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!

Membership Levels

Student:	\$15.00	Individual:	\$20.00
Household:	\$30.00	Patron:	\$100.00
Business Associate (1-10 employees)	\$25.00		
Business Affiliate (10-50 employees)	\$50.00		
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Please write your Name, Address, Phone number and e-mail address on a card and send it along with your check payable to BECHS and send it to BECHS 415 Cherry Street, Mankato MN 56001. Your e-mail addresses will be used to send notices of programs, exhibits and other BECHS news. It will not be given or sold to anyone.

Please contact us at: 507-345-5566 or by e-mail at:

James Lundgren: bechs@juno.com
Jessica Potter: bechs-collections@juno.com
Mary McGrew: mary-bechs@juno.com
Shelley Harrison: bechs-research@juno.com

New Exhibits at BECHS

The following new exhibits are available for viewing at the Heritage Center and Rainbow Foods. We hope that you will come see them.

Recent Immigrants

An Ethnic Women Oral History project presented by the Women's Studies Department of Minnesota State University, Mankato and the Blue Earth County Historical Society will be on display at the BECHS Heritage Center from April 29 - May 31, 2002.

Women from the Somalian, Mexican and Hmong communities have been interviewed by MSU graduate students documenting the recent immigration of new cultures to Minnesota and Mankato. The multi-cultural project will include a program presented by the students and oral history participants and an exhibition of the different cultures.

The program and exhibit opening will be on Monday, April 29th at 5:00 PM at the Heritage Center. Admission is free and refreshments will be served.

Native American Artifacts

John Theissen served as the curator for the society from 1942 to 1954. He served longer than any other Curator or Director. We are preparing a permanent display case dedicated to his memory that will display items from our Native American collection. We have already set up a temporary exhibit in one of our existing cases while volunteers work on the permanent case to be installed later this year.

Mankato Booming Businesses

This exhibit was created for the Chamber's Business Expo. It was installed in the BECHS display area at Rainbow Foods last week. This exhibit contains artifacts from businesses of Blue Earth County including Hubbard Milling, Brett's Department store, and the Saulpaugh Hotel.

Vietnam Veterans Exhibit held over!

This exhibit was made for the Minnesota Historical Society. It is being held over for one more year, but will be closing in the beginning of 2003.

Minneopa Cemetery continued from page 1.

The State of Minnesota declared burial grounds as "holy ground" that cannot be condemned or infringed upon for any purpose. John W. Roberts was the first President of the 1917 Cemetery Corporation and served for two years. G. A. Strom succeeded him and served for 27 years. Loren Crane was elected to take his place and served as President until 1963 when he became Treasurer. Loren served in that capacity until 1981. Daniel Williams was the first Treasurer and held that office until 1949. Arthur Roberts was elected Secretary in 1917 and served until his death in 1981. The cemetery owes a huge debt of gratitude to these gentlemen and others that guided and directed it so wisely for so many years. Their work was all done on a volunteer basis.

As other immigrant groups moved into South Bend Township – Germans, Irish and Scandinavians, especially – the cemetery became more universal. It became necessary to acquire more land suitable for burials. In 1946 negotiations were started with the State of Minnesota to exchange 11.6 acres of cemetery-owned land north of the cemetery in Section 16 for 8.6 acres of park land in Section 21 to the west and across County Highway No. 117. The 11.6 acres of cemetery land was heavily wooded and partially located in very high contour terrain. The 8.6 acres of Minneopa Park land was much more level and less wooded. The park had planned for tennis courts to be made on this property in the 1920's, but this never came to pass.

Finally in May 1948, the trade in parcels of land was accomplished. But it took nearly nine years to prepare the "new" cemetery for burials. The first burial was in 1955, just 100 years after the first burial in the old cemetery. This new burial was also a child -- daughter of Gerhard and Bonnie Groth.

The financial aspects of the cemetery have also changed over the years. The first complete and detailed financial report appeared in March of 1917, the time of incorporation. Assets were \$5,565 -- \$150 of which was the beginning of the Perpetual Care Fund. Property owners then had to decide whether to pay an annual fee for cemetery upkeep

or pay perpetual care. Eventually annual fees became nearly impossible to collect so, in 1941, perpetual care was made mandatory. Fifty percent of the purchase price of property is put into Perpetual Care Fund. The State of Minnesota requires only 20% be set aside for this purpose.

Miss Esther Daniels, a life-long resident and schoolteacher in Mankato, left one-third of her estate to Minneopa Cemetery upon her death in March 1971. The crypt in the "old" cemetery was dedicated to Miss Daniel's memory.

The cemetery board owes a great debt of gratitude to Ruth Roberts Otto who served as Secretary for over 40 years. She had succeeded her father, Arthur Roberts, who served 64 years.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the Minneopa Cemetery should take in the program and historical tour at the cemetery on May 19, 2002 from 2:00 – 5:00 PM. - Editor

Sources:

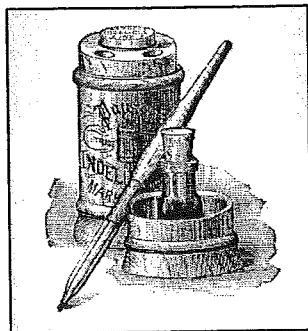
1. Neill (Edward D.) & Bryant (Charles S.), "History of the Minnesota Valley", North Star Publishing, Mpls., 1882.
2. The Daily Review, Dec. 18, 1899. Paper by Thomas Hughes, "Territorial Days in the Minnesota Valley – Historic Incidents".
3. Hughes (Thomas E.), Edwards (A. David) & Roberts (Hugh G.), Hanes Cymry Minnesota".

Recent Financial and Equipment Donations

Anonymous
Blue Earth County
City of Mankato
Dotson Company
Fischer, George
Free Press
Grundmeier, Win
INS Engineering
Jensen, Orv
Johnson, Barbara

LaFavor, Lyle
Kearney, Elizabeth
Piepho Moving & Storage
Radichel, Dorothy
Richards, David & Kristee
Richards, Marcia Jones
Ryan, Mary Helen
Schultz, Jo
Tarjeson, Jane
Webb, Donna

Thank You All Very Much!



From the Executive Director

Greetings to all from the BECHS Board, Staff and Volunteers. My report for this newsletter starts on a sad note. Last month we lost one of our Board of Trustee members when Jack Jones passed away. His sense of humor and experience will be missed at the Board Meetings and programs.

Our Annual Meeting was held on March 19, 2002. Dr. Sheryl Dowlin provided the program on the history of the Education day for the annual Mahkato Powwow. She showed excerpts from the video of this important project that educates the school children and provides healing as part of the ongoing reconciliation between the Native Americans and Euro-Americans. When the project is finished we will have copies of the video at the historical society.

The election of the Board of Trustees resulted in the change of status for Mike Frederick who was moved from Madison Lake Historical Society representative to full Board Member. Mike takes over Jack Jones' seat.

The Executive Board, however, has changed a bit as Theresa McLaughlin replaces Larry Lundblad as Vice President, and Marcia Baer steps into the vacant secretary position.

The Board of Trustees will be determining the specific committee assignments at their next monthly meeting. As always, anyone wishing to serve on one of the committees please give us a call. We have plenty of projects needing assistance.

Some of our committees have been very busy during the winter making plans for the coming year.

The Summit-Heritage Foundation decided to increase the rent to cover rising costs. Since no increase had been implemented for six years, the increase was significant. The BECHS Board of Trustees has set up a fund raising committee to make recommendations for the Board to cover the deficit in the budget resulting from this increase.

Among the ideas being discussed include creating more donor levels, recruiting more corporate memberships, and holding a major fund raising event based upon the popular PBS series *The Antiques Roadshow*. More information will be forthcoming as the plans develop.

Our Programs Committee is working on putting together more events during our centennial year. We have several speakers coming in over the next few months, and are working on some major Young Historian Events in partnership with the Blue Earth County Library's summer reading program.

Several new exhibits have been created and can be seen in the gallery and Rainbow Foods. The exhibits department will be busy this summer making plans for exhibits to take the place of the Vietnam Veterans exhibit that will be leaving next winter.

Lists of new exhibits and upcoming programs can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

James C. Lundgren
Executive Director

BECHS Wish List

These items are currently needed at the BECHS Heritage Center. Please let us know if you can provide any help.

- Wall clocks for the Orientation and Conference Rooms.
- People to serve as weekend guides of the R. D. Hubbard House.
- Reinforced three-hole punched paper for the obituary books.

Archives and Artifact Donations
January - March 2002

City of Mankato: 1997 Polk Directory of Mankato
City of North Mankato: Trophy - Main Street Bridge

Dey, Gordon: Photo - Central Fire Station

Dougan, Marie Yaeger: Certificate - American National Red Cross, 1919

Finnell, Albert: Book - National Society Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, Lineage VII

Frederick, Mike: The Otaknam-1927, MHS Class of 1927 program, Campaign Card of Fred A. Wingen-1930, Alan Page Football trading card, Carl Eller Football Card, Mankato Magnet, Buttons - (2) Lake Crystal, (1) Carlson Craft

Hofmeister, Gary: (4) B/W Photos Preacher lady Amboy-1959, Color photo Cab Driver

Hughes, Alice Katherine: Thesis - "The Developmental Stages of a Frontier Town: Mankato, MN"

Ironworld Discovery Center: BEC Naturalization Index

Jensen, Mary Ann: Cup - "Sambo"

Jensen, Orville: Cheese cutter - KYSM Radio, Bottle opener - Winniarski Interiors, Bottle cap - Hubbard, Pencil - "July 1999 Don's Hobby..."

Keefe, Michael: Photo - (2) Automatic Electric, Photo - (1) Hubbard Milling, Photo - (1) Thro brothers, Photo - (6) LeHillier tornado, Photo - (1) North Mankato flood

Kubicek, Joe: Auction Bill - E.S. Terwilliger

LaFavor, Lyle: Garden City Cemetery burial permits, Box camera, Rock from Garden City (stone tool), Fossil - cephalopod, Ruler - Farmers State Bank, Arrowhead

Masberg, Rita: Photos - Rapidan Dam, Photo - Schwickerts repairing BEC Courthouse

Matzke, Frederick: Kerosene Iron

McComb, Mary: Motorola Cell Phone, Twin Lens Reflex Camera

Olson, Robert: Book - Booth's Justice Manual, 1953, 1966, Seal - Village of Skyline, 16 Photos of the 1969 Flood, Village Ledger Books - Criminal Docket, Civil Docket, Misc. Village papers

Pediment Publications: Book/CD of photos used in the book Mankato Memories

Phelps, Dean: 45 Pierce Family photos

Pietan, Pam: Sign-Member Holstein Club, Pullman Train car diagram, Poster-Join the Better Sires Better Stock Campaign, Poster-J.A.O. Prues Campaign 1923

Red Door Creative: 7 women's hats: black with rose, black, gold, navy, pink, straw, beige

Schaper, Herb: "The Story of Service Co. 135th Inf. 47th ID"

Schultz, Jo: Photo - Robert Schultz

Sugden, Nadine: Political Buttons (45)

Tarjeson, Jane: Book-Czech Immigration Passenger List, Book-Mankato Memories Historic Photo Album, 6 Postcards of Good Counsel, 1 Postcard of Cliff Kyes Motel, Book-The Minnesota, Book-The Indian People of Eastern America, Photos of Garden City Fair, 1999, Photo/negative Fire Station #2, 1999

Zielske, Dan: Mankato Fanfare and Processional

**Thanks to all our donors for
your help in preserving the history of
Blue Earth County!**

Travel Like Bert #8

***Further in the Footsteps of
Lewis and Clark***

May 2 – 6, 2002

It is not too late to come on board the next TLB bus trip. If you have never been on one of these trips before we encourage you to make the time. Participants have commented on how much fun and educational these trips have been. We have detailed flyers available at the Heritage Center or we can mail them out to you. Please give us a call or e-mail for more information.

New and Renewed Members

Allen, Sara & Wayne	Lewis, Chuck
Anderson, Elaine	Lundblad, Larry & Karen
Baer, Marcia	Maher, Barb
Bartsch, Glenn	Mankato Area Chamber
Botten Jr., Joel	Mathiason, Renee
Bowen, Patrick	McComb, Mary
Burns, Inella	McLaughlin,
Cherney, Tim	Tom & Theresa
Clements, Thomas	Mitchell, Sandra
Duane, Susan	Murray, Matthew
Dunlop, Donna	Nussbaumer, Linda
Engdahl, Dave	Ohlenkamp, Ora
Evans, Barry & Sandra	Owens, Helen
Faust, Mrs. Claire	Pennington, C. W.
Frisch, Carlienne	Ploog, Julie
Gasch, Bob	Reich, Gerald
Griffith, Helen	Salsbery, Tom & Cindy
Grundmeier, Win &	Salsbery, Verle & Caroline
Shirley	Sandeen, Robert
Heller, Barb	Sassenberg, Karl
Higginbotham, Jack &	Sheran, Kathleen
Shirley	Simonett, Patricia
Hinrichs, William	Smith, Pat & Linda
Howard, Don	Tarjeson, Jane
Huettl Richard	Thiesse, Sylvan & Rosalin
Huettl, John	Tire Associates
Hughes, Katherine	Ward, Steve
Jensen, Orv & Mary Ann	Wicker, Nancy
Junge, Robert	Wilmes, Brad
Kalvig, Ann	Wingen, C
Kanyusik, John & Carolyn	Zimmer, Beth & Jim

BECHS Volunteers since the last issue

Apitz, Darrel	Lavitschke, Jo-an
Baer, Marcia	Lundblad, Larry
Baird, Jane	Madsen, Jack
Bartsch, Glenn	McComb, Mary
Boyce, Dave	McCoy, Patrick
Burns, Inella	McLaughlin, Theresa
Burton, Ronnie	McLaughlin, Tom
Coleman, Mary	Nisja, Millie
Cords, Betty	Niu, Dana
Cotton, Rose	Nussbaumer, Linda
Dooley, Mary	O'Clock, Clara
Falencykowski, Lona	Ohlenkamp, Ora
Frederick, Michael	Patterson-Lundgren, Molly
Goff, Harley	Potter, Brad
Griffith, Helen	Salsbery, Tom
Grundmeier, Shirley	Sandon, Buzz
Grundmeier, Win	Schultz, Jo
Hagen, Tom	Smith, H. Roger
Herbst, Gordon	Sofchalk, Helen
Hentges, Seth	Tarjeson, Jane
Hopman, Edith	Twilight Garden Club
Jansen, Steve	Webb, Donna
Jensen, Orv	Wilson, Bernadette
Jensen, Mary Ann	Wright, Lorraine
Karp, Ben	Ziegler, Ken
Kubicek, Joe	Zielske, Dan
Larsen, Gary	Zimmer, Beth

Volunteers Are Always Needed

If you have some time to spare and want to help BECHS preserve history, please give us a call. We can find a project to suit your specific interests!

Upcoming events at area Historical Societies:

Please contact the society listed for further information on these events.

Martin County HS

- *Martin County Authors* will be on display from May to October of 2002.
- Open House Slide Shows are available on May 16 and June 20 2:00 PM. There is a choice of topics.

Nicollet County HS

- "The Forgotten Olive Fremstad" Thursday, April 18, 7:00 PM
- "From Eden to Exile, the life & times of the People of the Cambria Focus" Sunday May 5, 2:00 PM
- Dr. William Lass presents slide show and lecture on early river traffic. Thursday, June 6, 7:00 PM

From the President

The Rapidan Depot comes home

In 1870 the village of Rapidan Station was platted in anticipation of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad. The long awaited railway arrived in 1874, with the Rapidan Station being one of four stations on what was then known as the Wells track. This branch was 38 miles long, beginning in Mankato and ending in Wells. It was one of the best paying short branches of the whole Milwaukee system.

The Milwaukee Railroad was responsible for the growth of Rapidan Station and the surrounding area. It brought immigrants eager to homestead and farm the good rich soil; the village bustled with a blacksmith, feed mill, general store, creamery and hotel. The pioneers built schools to educate the young and churches to meet the spiritual needs of all. Transportation between towns was now simplified.

In 1906 a new railroad depot was built. Modest in size, it measured 16' x 34' and stood proudly next to the tracks in the center of the village. The depot consisted of a waiting room, office and baggage room. What a bustling place! Local people riding to Good Thunder or Mankato on business, excursionists from Mankato on a day trip enjoying the countryside. The train brought in materials and workers for the building of the dam. But by 1958 the depot was no longer needed. Passengers no longer traveled via train, automobiles were now preferred for travel. The depot was moved to a nearby farm and used for grain storage.

Now, forty-four years later, the depot is ready to come back to its roots in Rapidan (Station). On May 11, 2002 the depot will be moved back to its original location. The railroad tracks are gone, but future visitors will be able to step into a restored

railroad depot and imagine hearing the approaching train whistle. They can wonder at the initials and date written on the baggage room wall – W. W. 1943 Mar. 27. The word AFRICA carved below it – was this the destination of a local man about to enter World War II, or a soldier returning from war? We may never know the answer to that, however the Rapidan Heritage Society is endeavoring to keep the spirit of the depot alive. The Rapidan area played a very important part in the growth of Blue Earth County, the Society wishes to preserve this rich heritage through the collection of artifacts and oral histories.

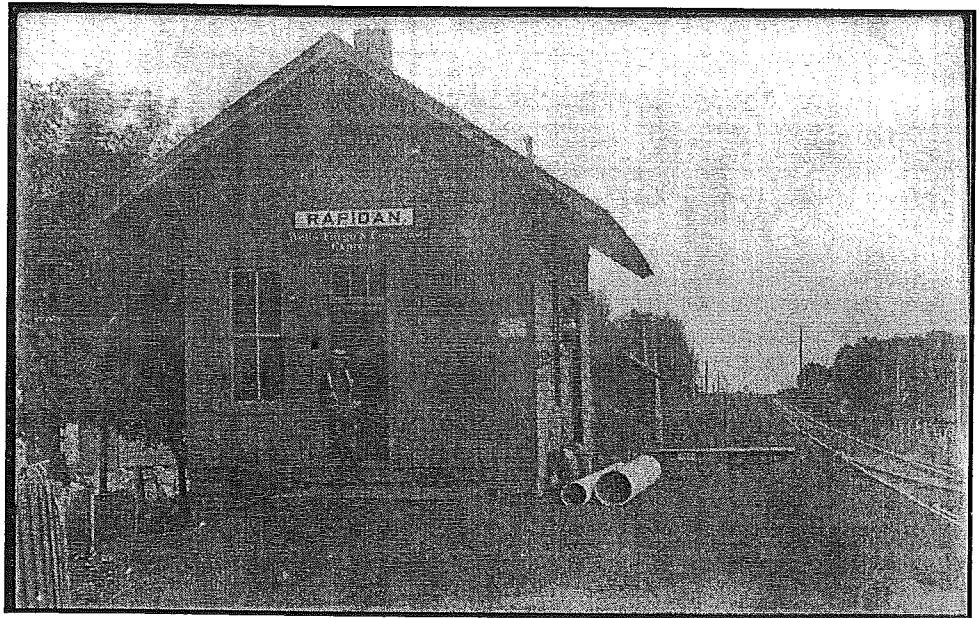


Photo: Charles Nelson by the Rapidan depot. Mr. Nelson was the depot agent at Rapidan for 46 years.

For more information on the Rapidan Heritage Society, contact Jane Tarjeson at jtargeson@hotmail.com or phone 278-3738.

For upcoming events for Rapidan Heritage Society: Meeting, April 25th, 7:00 p.m. at the Rapidan town hall.

Memorial Day service and depot ribbon cutting, May 27th, 9 a.m. at Rapidan.

Jane Tarjeson
BECHS President

Upcoming BECHS Events

Please mark your calendar and join us

*April 21, 2002
BECHS Exhibit at the
MSU International Student
Organization Festival*

*April 23, 2002 5:30 P.M.
BECHS Volunteer Appreciation event.
BECHS Heritage Center*

*May 2, 2002 7:00 P.M.
Archaeology Week Program
"How Did Their Garden's Grow?"
BECHS Heritage Center*

*May 2 – 6, 2002
Travel Like Bert #8
Further in the Footsteps of
Lewis & Clark*

*May 4-5, 2002 1:00 – 4:00 P.M.
R. D. Hubbard House
Opens for walk-in visitors every
weekend until September*

*May 14, 2002 1:00 P.M.
Preservation 101
Come learn the basics about preserving your
personal items. BECHS Heritage Center*

*May 14, 2002 7:00 P.M.
Steamboating on the Minnesota River
BECHS Heritage Center*

*May 16, 2002 1:00 P.M.
Genealogy for Beginners
Come learn more about how to get started
working on your family genealogy.
BECHS Heritage Center*

*May 19, 2002 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Cemetery tour & program at
Minneopa Cemetery
(Last tour starts at 4:00PM)*

*June 22, 2002 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
Young Historians:
Historic Transportation Fair at the
Blue Earth County Library*



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

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Preserving and sharing Blue Earth County's history since 1901