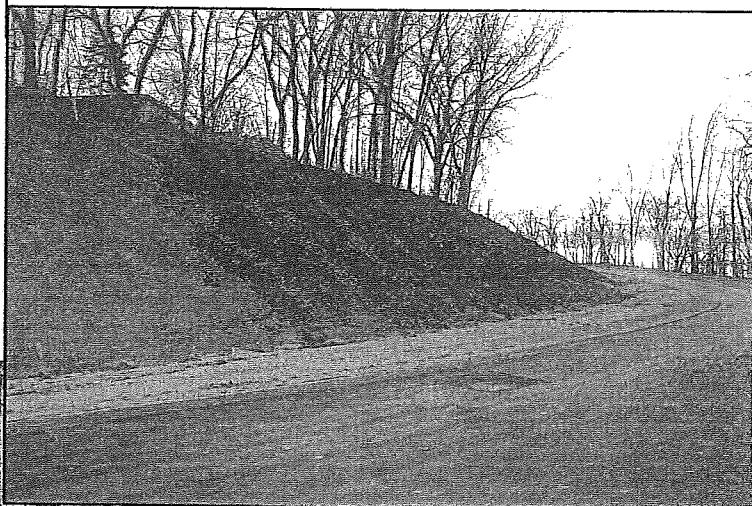


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Sumner Hill Road Winter 2006



Sumner Hill Wall, Summer 2006



## *From the Executive Director*

2006 has been a great year for the Blue Earth County Historical Society. I thought I'd take a moment to review.

In January, we welcomed the community and members of the Ho-Chunk tribe to Mankato for a look back at their May 2005 visit. It was a very well attended event with over 140 people squeezing into Old Main Village's social room. We were glad that we switched locations early in the day; we would have never been able to accommodate everyone at the Heritage Center.

In February, we opened auditions for Shirley Grundmeier's play, "Medicine Show: From Quack to Clinic." We never imagined this would be such a great program when Shirley first proposed the idea. The Terrific Traveling Troupers performed eight times throughout Blue Earth County with over 600 people seeing the production. In February, we also began remodeling the Museum Store, thanks to the

Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation. The project finished up in April.

March brought our Annual Meeting with guest speaker and local restaurateur Sal Frederick. It was interesting to hear his stories of growing up in Blue Earth County and his involvement in World War II.

In April we honored Blue Earth County veterans with a Heritage Dinner at the Eagle Lake American Legion. The event was well received and a wonderful opportunity to hear incredible stories. We continue to gather information from veterans and hope to compile a book about Blue Earth County servicemen and women in the near future.

In May we opened the Hubbard House for another season. Throughout the season, over 1,000 school children, families and individuals visited the historic 1905 house. We also held a Grand Re-opening of the Museum Store with the first installment of a new program series titled Meet the Author, featuring local author Kathryn Doty.

In June we celebrated summer with a Lawn Party at



Blue Earth County Historical Society

415 Cherry Street, Mankato, MN 56001, 507-345-5566

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnbechs/>

BECHS mission is to collect, preserve and publish materials relating to the history of Blue Earth County.

### **Board of Trustees**

Todd Stromswold, President, Lake Crystal  
Leslie Peterson, Vice President, Mankato  
Bernadette Wilson, Treasurer, Mankato  
Vail Belgard, Secretary, Garden City  
Mike Brennan, Mankato  
Mike Frederick, Madison Lake  
Win Grundmeier, Mankato  
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Jack Madsen, Good Thunder  
Mary McComb, Mankato  
Henry Quade, Good Thunder  
John Rezmerski, Mankato  
Jane Tarjeson, Rapidan Heritage Society

### **Staff**

Jessica Potter, Executive Director  
bechs@hickorytech.net  
Shelley Harrison, Archives Manager  
bechsrc@hickorytech.net  
Sara Upadhyay, Collections Assistant  
bechsc@hickorytech.net  
Anna Larson, Museum Assistant  
bechsms@hickorytech.net  
LaDonna Tollefson, Archives Aide

### **Newsletter Production**

Donna Webb, Editor

## *The Blue Earth County Historian*

Winter 2007

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the Hubbard House and a tour of Pilgrim's Rest Cemetery. And who could forget the Cambria Eisteddfod held at Morgan Creek Vineyard celebrating Welsh heritage?

July was busy with ice cream socials and many speaking engagements for staff and volunteers. BECHS was part of the Cambria 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we met with the Mankato Rotary, a group at Gustavus Adolphus College and residents of Laurels Edge. In July, we also added a new Advisory Council. The group will guide BECHS with a long-range plan.

In August we went to the Blue Earth County Fair. This year we provided activities in the schoolhouse. It was a wonderful opportunity for us; we look forward to many years in interpretation of that building. BECHS was also part of the Old Town Festival in August. This was another great event that will continue to get better every year.

September was busy with the Old-Fashioned Barn Dance at Jack McGowan's farm and the Silk Stocking Stroll walking tour. We look forward to both programs in 2007. The staff also took its first field trip with our colleagues from Nicollet County Historical Society. We visited Brown and Cottonwood County Historical Societies. It was a great opportunity to get out and see what other historical societies are doing.

October ushered in the annual Ghosts from the Past. This year we took over the Butler House Bed and Breakfast for a look at the Butler and Clements families. It was a very well-attended event. The staff also ventured to Carver and Scott County Historical Societies for a look around.

November was the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual South Central Minnesota Genealogy Expo; BECHS has served as a co-organizer since its beginning in 2001. We also took part in the Herberger's Community Day sale, Deep Valley Book Festival, and Madison East Bake Sale. It was a busy month.

December was highlighted with Christmas at the Hubbard House. I had the proud honor of spending the day with John Jay Hubbard and his family. He is the great-grandson of R.D. Hubbard. He hadn't been

back to the house since the 1970s; it has changed a little since then. It was great to hear more about R.D.'s son Jay Hubbard and the Hubbard family of today.

Wow, what a year! I look back fondly at all that we have accomplished, participated in and all of the people we have helped do research, given tours to or interacted with at programs. We are looking forward to the year ahead and all of the incredible possibilities before us. Stay tuned for more details about our exciting future plans. Please continue to support us with your membership and by visiting the Museum and Hubbard House. I really can't say enough about all of the incredible people associated with BECHS. Your support has been overwhelming! Maybe the best way is simply by saying, "Thank You!"

*Jessica Potter*, Executive Director



## *From the President*

Greetings!

In my first President's column of the New Year, I want to relate to you a condensed version of what the Board of Trustees has been working on over the last year. I can assure you, we have been *very* busy. When I became President last year, my foremost goal was to shift our attention to the creation of a long-term plan for the Blue Earth County Historical Society. At this point, I would say that our efforts have been successful. But if you have ever participated in this sort of planning, you know that it cannot be done overnight. Our focus has been on answering one central question: "Where do we want to be in 10 years?"

Certain questions are easy to answer, at least in the abstract. For example, we know that we want a larger facility. We know that we want to offer a wider range of services and increased programming. But the devil is in the details. How much space do we need? How much can we support? What additional services can and should we be offering? What additional staffing do we need? And of course the *big*



question: How do we accomplish all of these things and still remain financially healthy?

Coincidentally, while we at BECHS started looking at these issues, various committees and action groups have been examining the idea of revitalizing the downtown Mankato area. How should we work with these groups to accomplish our goals? As a tantalizer, let me just say that the Board of Trustees intends to have answers to many of these questions ready for our annual membership meeting this coming March. I hope to see you there, to look at a long-term picture of where and what we want to be.

Many of you have no doubt heard that our downstairs neighbor, the Summit Center (Mankato Area Senior Citizens, Inc.), has been undergoing organizational changes. In late October 2006, the Summit Center announced that VINE Faith in Action would assume responsibility for managing the Summit Center facility after November 1, 2006. I won't say that this transition has been perfectly seamless, but it has gone remarkably smoothly. As I understand, the services that the Summit Center has previously provided have continued with very little interruption. Several of our members have inquired about what impact this transition has had on BECHS. At this point the impact has been minimal. Our Board has always chosen to work constructively with the Summit Center, and we will continue to work with VINE Faith in Action in the same manner. We do not feel that this transition will impact the services that BECHS offers. In fact, we have chosen to look at this transition as an opportunity to comprehensively review and refine our long-term plan.

Our Board carefully scrutinizes any developments that may affect our organization and facilities. We actively seek constructive advice from citizens and professional sources about how best to cooperate with our county community to advance our mission—to collect, preserve, and promote the history of Blue Earth County for the present and future generations.

I look forward to talking with you in more detail about these matters at our annual meeting.

*Todd Stromwald*  
Board of Trustees President

## BECHS Membership October—December

### New Members

Brandel, Ruth  
Browne, Robert and Suzanne  
Eck, Margaret  
Ehmke, Judy  
Frey, John and Anne  
Halstead, William  
Hanna, Rick and Mary  
Hess, Dominic  
Klugherz, Catherine  
Kohrt, Melinda  
Landsteiner, Cheri and Steve  
McLaughlin, James L.  
McMillin, Ronald  
Mauny-Mercurio, Alice  
Nienow, Tricia  
Penhiter, Judith  
Sheffer, Roger E.  
Schwichtenberg, Shawn

### Renewing Members

Bessler, William and Marilyn  
Botten, Joel  
Burns, Loretta  
Chalgren, Mrs. William  
Coleman, Mary  
Compton, Harlan and Nancy  
Fleming, Dan  
Jacobson, Lyle and Kay  
Jerabek, Barbara  
Keenan, Jerry  
Kenward, Robert and Ann  
Lagerquist, Mike  
Leeman, Harold  
Meredith, Dr. Donald and Marjorie  
Oehler, Richard  
Pond, Patricia  
Stokesbary, Christine  
Tollefson, LaDonna  
Westphal, Myrtle

### Business Level Memberships

Brennan Construction  
Greater Mankato Chamber of Commerce  
MSU First Year Experience

## **WANTED** **History Fest Volunteer** **Coordinator**

for Jack McGowan's History Fest, a non-profit educational event held in October. A full job description is available through BECHS. Please call BECHS at 345-5566 if you are interested.

## **Recycle your used printer ink cartridges at BECHS**

The cartridges can be redeemed at Office Max in Mankato at a \$3 value. Please help us cut down our office supply costs by having us recycle your used ink cartridges.

## **Recent Donations**

### **Unrestricted Donations**

#### **Up to \$25**

Anonymous  
Hanna, Rick and Mary  
Kolosovskis, Peter  
Manthe, Lois  
Mathiason, Renee  
MHS Class of 1946  
Reak, Bonnie  
Siebrass, Hershel

#### **\$25-\$49**

Chalgren, William  
Church, Barb  
Craig, Nancy  
Cummiskey, June  
Evans, Brian  
Hagen, Tom  
Huettl, Richard  
Kelley, Gene and Barbara  
Kurth, Ervin  
Merkert, Karin  
Nielsen, William  
Owens, Helen  
Pulis, Tim  
Questers - Minnehaha Chapter  
Sassenberg, Eunice  
Sassenberg, Karl  
Scheidel, Dr. A.M.  
Schulz, Roy and Velma  
Sohler, Lois  
Torgerson, Allen and Jane  
Vosbeck, Elizabeth

#### **\$50-\$99**

Anderson, Mary V.  
Bethany Lutheran College  
Browne, Robert and Suzanne  
Buck, Margaret  
Burkhardt, Mike and Jean  
Carstensen, Norma  
Casella, Donna

Cramer, Donald  
Frederick, Sal  
Griffith, Helen  
Hadley, Paul and Alice  
Higginbotham, Jack and Shirley  
Hoehn, William  
Hollingsworth, Alice  
McGregor, Byron and Karen  
Medalen, Ethel  
Rottunda, John and Barb  
Sawina, James

#### **\$100-\$499**

Bassett, William  
Buscher, Robert and Marilyn  
Fischer, Eldena  
Fuess, Billings Sibley  
Gopher State Buick Club  
Jensen, Orville and Mary Ann  
Lamont, Earl and Sally  
McComb, Mary  
Miller, Julie  
Olson, Robert and Susan  
Pengra, Jim and Joan  
Ries, Carol and Charles  
Roscoe, Don  
School Sisters of Notre Dame  
Schultz, Jo  
Snilsberg, Lee and Loretta

#### **\$500 and Up**

Madsen, Jack  
McLaughlin, Tom and Theresa

#### **Building Fund**

Paulsen Architects

#### **Endowment Fund**

Mary Schultz Gray Charitable Trust

#### **Hubbard House Restoration**

Barrett, Mary  
Dooley, Mary

Fredericksen, Dennis and Joan

#### **Programs**

Wigley, Francys

#### **Technology**

Webb, Donna

#### **Wish List Fulfilled**

Broadwell, Don and Linda  
- archives supplies  
Zimmer, Beth  
- microfilm  
Grundmeier, Win and Shirley  
- Digital Camera

#### **Memorials**

In Memory of Lucille Weimert  
Durenberger, Paul and Kathryn  
Estate of Lucille Weimert  
Zimmer, Beth

In Memory of Stan Studer  
Ringheim, Marilyn

In Memory of Shirley Runke  
Madsen, Jack

In Memory of Eva Schnoebrich  
Ringheim, Marilyn

#### **In-Kind**

Jensen, Orville and MaryAnn - Farm  
Family Cutouts  
Kenward, Robert - 3 Reams of Copier Paper  
Resner, Donna - 2 Reams of Copier Paper  
Zimmer, Beth - Books - Military Claims

#### **Grants**

Minnesota Historical Society Grant for  
PastPerfect Software

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Evans, Brian  
Hagen, Tom  
Huettl, Richard  
Kelley, Gene and Barbara  
Kurth, Ervin  
Merkert, Karin  
Neilsen, William  
Owens, Helen  
Pulis, Tim  
Questers - Minnehaha Chapter  
Sassenberg, Eunice  
Sassenberg, Karl  
Scheidel, Dr. A.M.  
Schulz, Roy and Velma  
Sohler, Lois  
Torgerson, Allen and Jane  
Vosbeck, Elizabeth

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Fuess, Billings Sibley  
Gopher State Buick Club  
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## Brick Walls

Sara Upadhyay  
Collections Assistant

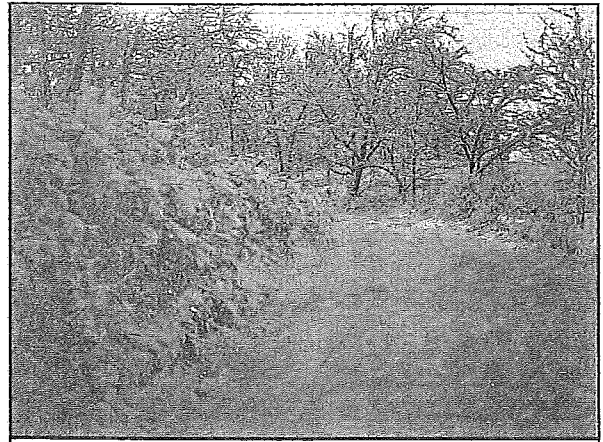
When you ask a research department to answer a simple question, you may get more than you expected, because we can become a little obsessed. If you have stopped in the Research Center in the last six months, you likely have heard discussion of the Sumner Hills wall mystery. In the last newsletter I promised we would solve the mystery, and you could all share in the experience.

The process of research can be frustrating and very difficult, but that's also what makes most of us love it. You cannot always find an answer easily. You may need to search in many places and talk to many people. Sometimes the records you need may not even exist, and you will probably hit many brick walls along the way, but if you keep searching, you may solve your mystery.

Our great wall mystery all started last summer when Lee Snilsberg, a resident of the Sumner Hills housing addition, came into the Research Center to find out when the wall leading up to Sumner Hills was built. At that time the City of Mankato was trying to decide what to do with the wall that was falling apart. Since then the wall has been torn down and the hill re-sloped.

The first step to answering a question is to check our ready references in the Research Center. We checked our vertical files on the Works Progress Administration program, construction companies, and our greatest "ready references," our volunteers. If I can't find an answer quickly, I immediately ask whoever is in the building. We are blessed to have wonderful knowledgeable people at BECHS. But for this mystery, I knew it was going to be difficult to solve when our volunteers didn't know the answer.

When Mr. Snilsberg discussed his question with our Executive Director, Jessica Potter, she remembered the hill was a part of Maud Hart Lovelace's Betsy Tacy series. Lovelace refers to the hill as "Hill Street Hill" or the "Big Hill." In Julie Schrader's book, *Maud Hart Lovelace's Deep Valley*, we learned the hill was previously called Prospect Heights. In 1961



Prospect Heights about 1910

Maud Hart Lovelace wrote, "Sumner Hill rises behind Betsy's house. A road used to run straight to the top, but now a much finer one winds upward behind the same embankment, which encloses the Center Street hill. And on top of the Big Hill, where once the sun came up behind a lone white house, there are scores of modern homes. This is all quite different from the way it used to be, but the view from the top is the same." When I first read this passage, I did not realize how many clues Maud Hart Lovelace had left for me.

Mr. Snilsberg also thought J. S. McLaughlin and Sons, a local road construction company, could have built the road. He contacted Marcia Chalgren whose father was Leon McLaughlin, a son of John S. McLaughlin, the founder of the company. Mrs. Chalgren gave us our first big lead by telling us her uncle, James McLaughlin, owned the land and built the road and wall in the 1930's. She explained McLaughlin had kept horses in the barn on the hill, and he lived at 115 Lewis Street, just down the street from the hill. Mrs. Chalgren also remembered Earl Manning lived in the little white house on the hill and took care of her uncle's horses.

Following these clues, I searched for information on James McLaughlin and the J.S. McLaughlin and Sons company. I searched the biography files on the McLaughlin family, card catalogue, and any reference we had to this family. I hit a brick wall.

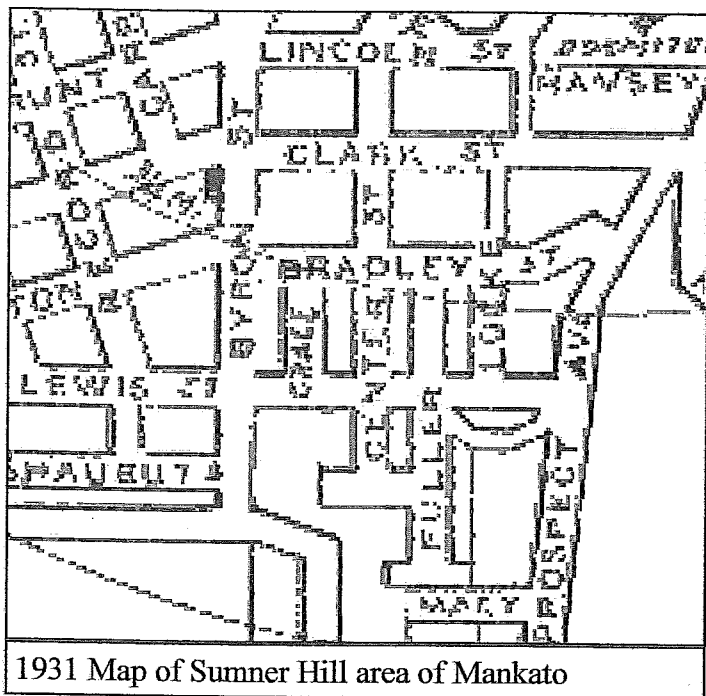
So now I had to look at the mystery in a different way, and I checked the city directories to see when Earl Manning lived on the hill. I found he lived at

327 Prospect Avenue, which was the lone white house on top of the hill, from 1934-1936, so I zeroed in on those years.

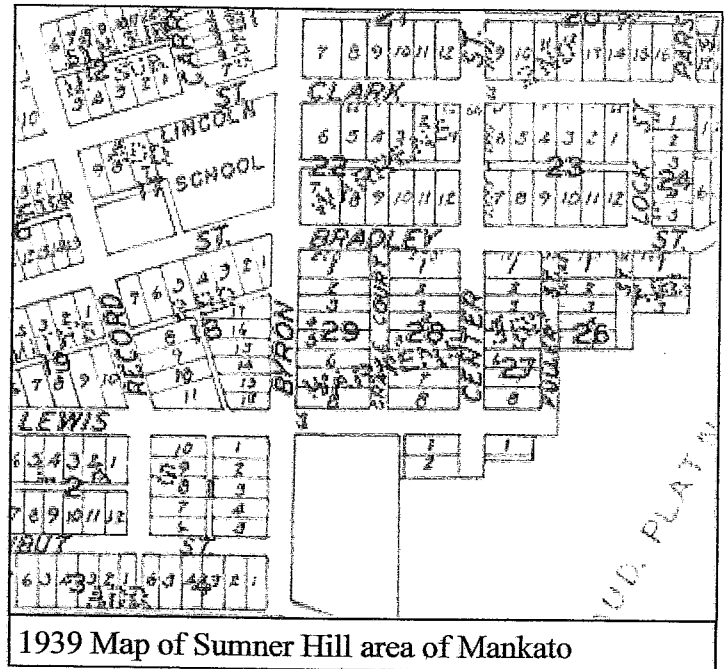
Shelley Harrison, the Archives Manager, checked the land records at the Nichol's Building and found James McLaughlin bought many pieces of land in the 1930s near the hill. From the land records we learned the area was a part of Esther M. Hall's Addition and Prospect Heights. Ms. Harrison found mention of James McLaughlin petitioning the city to vacate streets in Hall's Addition, but we were not sure at this time what that meant: another brick wall. [For a greater explanation of our experiences with land records, please see Ms. Harrison's column.]

After I talked with Marcia Chalgren on many occasions, she suggested I call Bill Edwards who lived near the hill for many years. Mr. Edwards, who referred to the hill as Hogsback, remembered Lewis Street going all the way up the hill. Today the wall blocks Lewis Street. This was a very important clue in our search. It was our first clue to one of the streets that was vacated in the 1930s.

From here we decided to look at maps of Mankato to see if Lewis really went up the hill. It is hard to imagine because of how steep the hill is at the location. We had a 1931 map of Mankato that showed Lewis Street continuing up the hill, and a 1939 map that showed the street stopping at Fuller, so we knew



1931 Map of Sumner Hill area of Mankato



1939 Map of Sumner Hill area of Mankato

the wall was built between 1931 and 1939.

Ms. Harrison suggested I search the City of Mankato minutes books to see if we could find mention of McLaughlin petitioning the City to vacate the streets in Hall's Addition. Win Grundmeier (one of our greatest "ready references") and I looked through the city minutes and found on March 9, 1931, McLaughlin petitioned the city to vacate parts of the following streets: Center, Fuller, Caroline, Mary and Prospect Avenue. As we continued to read, we found on April 13, 1931, that the City approved his petition. Now we knew as early as 1931, McLaughlin had a plan and rights to build a new road to the top of the hill.

We all became very curious about Mary Street and Caroline Street. No one I talked to had ever heard of these streets. I went back to the city directories and found the streets, which were on top of the hill, but no one lived on them. I then referred to the maps of 1931 and 1939 and found the streets. [We did find that Mary and Caroline Streets were named after John N. Hall's daughters and Esther was his wife. Interesting – but not what we were looking for.]

Now that we knew McLaughlin had been approved to vacate the streets in Hall's Addition in 1931, we started to read the *Mankato Free Press*. We knew it would be a long shot and would take a lot of time, but we hoped to find our answer of when the Sumner Hills wall was built. Ben Swenson, another ambitious volunteer, spent many days looking through the



newspaper. He found three articles relating to McLaughlin and the hill. On March 11, 1931, the city minutes were published with McLaughlin's petition to vacate the streets in Hall's Addition. On April 13, 1931, the article explained that McLaughlin had been granted permission to vacate the streets in Hall's Addition, and he planned to improve the section and to build several roads. The third article from March 11, 1931, states, "We don't know what James McLaughlin plans to do in the development of a tract of property at the head of Center Street." Could this be the wall?

Impatience grew as we searched the newspapers, so we went back to the city minutes looking for more clues. On October 26, 1931, the city council planned to talk to McLaughlin about his "project." The city engineer brought up the subject of putting in a drain tile on Lewis Street to connect with the J. A. McLaughlin Project on November 30, 1931. Could this be the wall? With new dates, we had to go back to the newspapers.

In the meantime, I contacted the City and was given permission to look in their archives at maps and photos. We still hoped to find a 1932 or 1933 map of Mankato to see if Lewis Street stopped at Fuller Street. Win Grundmeier accompanied me on this ad-

venture. After spending two days in the basement of city hall, we found a few maps that were important in the history of Sumner Hills, but not the maps we wanted. Instead we found a plat map of Esther M. Hall's Addition from 1887 that had Mary Street and Caroline Street, which gave a clear picture of how they were laid out. The map also had a handwritten note stating Caroline and Mary were vacated to McLaughlin, but it was not dated.

As we continued to look through the *Mankato Free Press*, many hours and days passed, and then it happened...the mystery was solved.

*Mankato Free Press* November 11, 1931

#### McLaughlin Will Build Approach to New District

Rapid Progress in the development of property on what is known as Prospect Heights at the head of Center and Lewis Streets is being made by J. S. McLaughlin.

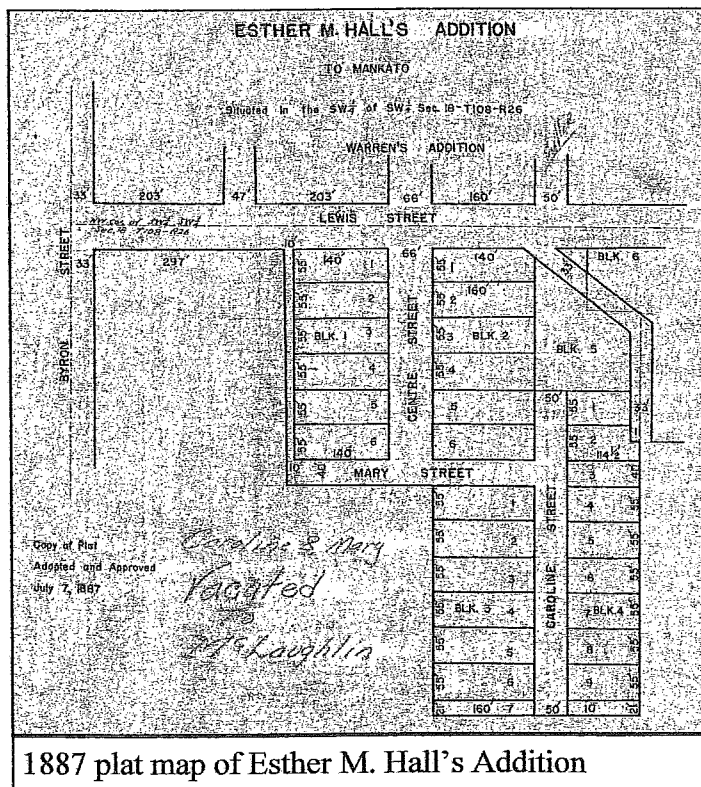
Last Spring the city council voted to vacate several platted streets which had never been surveyed or graded that Mr. McLaughlin might develop approximately 14 acres of ground he owns there. Work has been started on a street which will serve the district and will connect up with Fuller Street. Mr. McLaughlin plans to open the property as a residential section.

Research can be stressful, disappointing, and time-consuming, but if you persevere, you may get your answer. If you hit a brick wall, step back and try going in a different direction. Even if you do not solve your mystery, you will learn a great deal along the way, and you may solve other mysteries. I have to warn you, you will most often find new mysteries. But you can always come to the Research Center and use our resources, especially the "ready references."

#### To conclude the story...

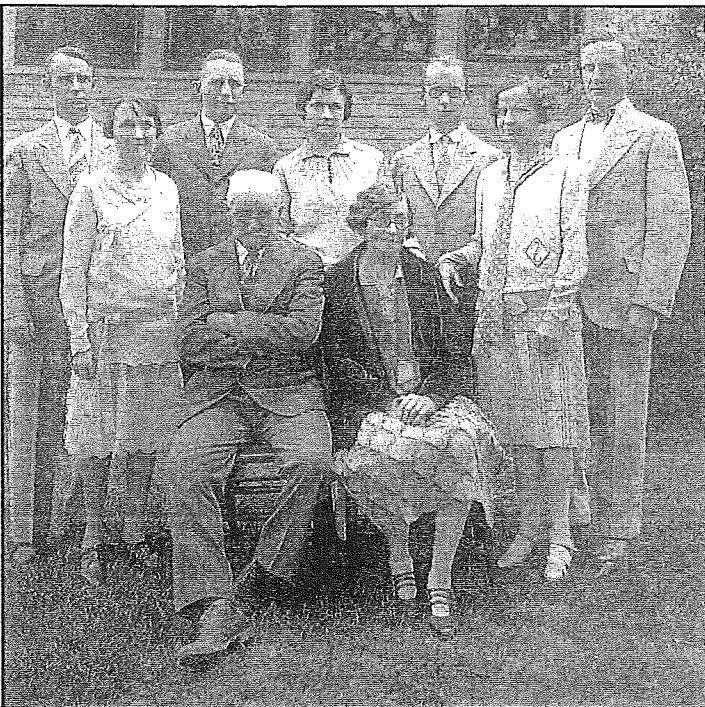
Through this process of researching, we have learned a great deal about Sumner Hills.

As early as 1887, Sumner Hills, also known as Prospect Heights, Valley View Heights, the Hogsback



and the Big Hill, was platted. It was a part of Esther M. Hall's Addition and Prospect Heights. There were streets platted that many of us never knew existed. Caroline Street ran straight up the hill off of Lewis Street, probably close to where the Sumner Hills Road starts today. Mary Street ran perpendicular to and connected Center Street and Caroline Street. This land passed through many hands, but James McLaughlin made the first steps to building what is today a beautiful addition in Mankato with one of the finest views of the Minnesota River Valley.

According to the city directories, James McLaughlin, who built the wall leading to Sumner Hills, came to Mankato around 1919 and worked for the Minnesota Pipe & Tile Company. Around the same time, his father, John S. McLaughlin, also came to Mankato to build the headquarters to his business, J.S. McLaughlin and Sons, a road construction business that built many highways from Northern Iowa to Southern Minnesota. From his obituary, we learned that John S. McLaughlin was born in Adel, Iowa, in 1857. He spent most of his life in the construction field. In 1903 when municipalities began ordering permanent sidewalks, he began contracting in Red Oak, Iowa,



Wilbur, Adeline, Dan, Besse, Leon, Graces, James John Sr, Burley Dean McLaughlin, 1928

and later moved to Kansas where his business pros-

pered. When the rise in automobile traffic demanded paved highways, the McLaughlin firm entered the field and paved many highways in Iowa and Minnesota. McLaughlin's sons joined his business, and in 1919, J. S. McLaughlin and Sons moved to Mankato.

In the 1930s, James McLaughlin owned the land now known as Sumner Hills. According to Marcia Chalgren, her Uncle James was an imaginative man and had plans to build houses at the top of the hill. He also owned land in other parts of Mankato that he hoped to develop. By 1940, WWII was under way, and highways were not being built, which caused J. S. McLaughlin and Sons to fold. James McLaughlin sold to W. G. A. Burton, the owner of the Burton Hotel and moved to Iowa and late retired in California.

In 1945, the land was sold to Sumner Carlstrom and Rex Hill, who planned to build a housing addition on the hill. In 1945, a contest was administered to name the new housing addition. According to the June 10, 1945, *Mankato Free Press*, Mrs. William Skoog, of Owatonna and formerly of Mankato, won the contest with the submission of Sumner Hills. Today fifteen houses stand on the hill overlooking the beautiful Minnesota River Valley.

## Blue Earth County Historical Society Annual Meeting and Open House

Sunday, March 11th, 1-4 p.m.  
Heritage Center open for  
behind-the-scenes tours

2 p.m. Business Meeting and President's  
Message followed by a short program by  
outgoing Board Member Jack Madsen "On the  
Banks of the Maple River -- and Beyond"

*Free and open to the public.*

Great opportunity to visit with staff and Board  
members as well as look toward the  
future of BECHS.



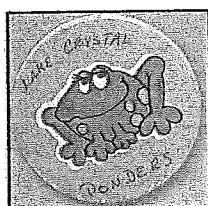
## Through the Research Center Door:

### Research Center Mysteries

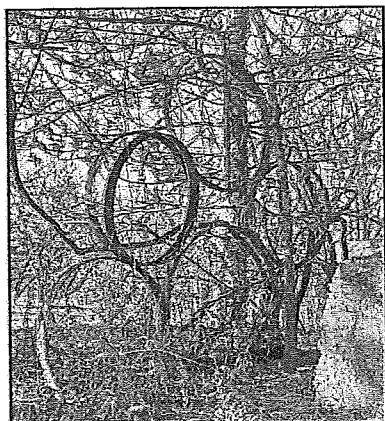
The mystery page has been a big hit. If you have any questions you would like answered, please contact the research center and we will ask our readers.

#### *New Mysteries*

Has anyone ever seen this button? What was Lake Crystal pondering?



At Schimek Park near Good Thunder, there is a wooden cross, a fish and cross on a building, and an 8-wheel structure with a cross on it. Does anyone know what it represents or its significance?



#### *Unsolved Mysteries*

Who was Dr. Arleen? I am not sure if this is a first or last name. The doctor was referred to in a 1929 newspaper article.

What happened to the sign on Highway 169 that stated where the Vernon Center Fort was located? If you have any information that can help solve these mysteries, please contact Sara at 345-5566 or [bechsco@hickorytech.net](mailto:bechsco@hickorytech.net).

Sara Upadhyay  
Collections Assistant



Orv and Mary Ann Jensen with our new "Down on the Farm" Family. Orv served as carpenter and Mary Ann as the artist. They make a great team.

## WISH LIST

- Glassware for the Hubbard House
- White cotton gloves
- Copy paper
- *The Land* on microfilm
- Mylar book covers
- LCD projector

## Cultural, Arts and Community Enhancement Committee

The Mankato City Council has formed a Cultural, Arts and Community Enhancement Committee to establish the feasibility of a Cultural, Arts and Community Enhancement District, to examine the potential district and its relationship with the community as well as the economic value/impact and greater public purpose of the district. Jessica Potter, BECHS Executive Director, and Colleen Jackson, BECHS Board Member and Summit Center Heritage Foundation President, were named to the Committee.

## September—December Volunteers

Bartholdi, Roberta  
 Belgard, Vail  
 Brennen, Mike  
 Burton, Ronnie  
 Coleman, Mary  
 Engh, Jane  
 Frederick, Mike  
 Frisch, Carlienne  
 Garlo, Sandi  
 Garlow, Laura  
 Goff, Harley  
 Gorman, Sarah  
 Griffith, Helen  
 Grundmeier, Shirley  
 Grundmeier, Win  
 Herbst, Gordon  
 Hopman, Edith  
 Horoho, Kelly  
 Howieson, Bob  
 Hugg, Corey  
 Hynes, Susan  
 Jackson, Colleen  
 Jensen, Mary Ann  
 Jensen, Orv  
 Keir, Grace  
 Keir, Richard  
 Lagerquist, Mike  
 Lamson, Barb  
 Lavitschke, Jo-An  
 Madsen, Jack  
 Maksymenko, Nina  
 McComb, Mary  
 McLaughlin, Theresa  
 Mummert, Kristin  
 Ohlencamp, Ora  
 Oldenburg, Alex  
 Peterson, Leslie  
 Peterson, Molly  
 Quade, Henry  
 Rezmerski, John  
 Rodriguez, Gabriela  
 Sassenberg, Eunice  
 Schultz, Jo  
 Shortall, Christina  
 Sofchalk, Helen  
 Stromswold, Todd  
 Swenson, Ben  
 Tarjeson, Jane  
 Wilson, Bernie  
 Ziegler, Kenneth  
 Zimmer, Beth

## *Volunteers Are Always Welcomed*

If you have some time to spare to help us pre-serve history, please give us a call. Some ex-amples are:

*serving as tour guides*  
*participating on committees*  
*helping to research and write grants*  
*doing data entry for Archives indexes*  
*indexing census or newspapers*  
*researching and/or writing*



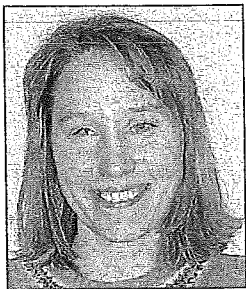
### ***New "Menu" for Diners' Club***



Beginning in 2007, the Diners' Club will meet four times a year. Along with our meals, we will be served a brief historical presentation of the building in which we are dining. The Diners' Club is open to anyone interested in enjoying food and ideas with other BECHS members and learning more about the history of various establishments in our county.

The next Diners' Club event is scheduled at noon on Thursday, February 2, at LeMay's Humphrey Street Grill, 151 W. Humphrey St., Lake Crystal (just one block off Main Street). We will learn about the events that have taken place in this century-old building, and we'll have the opportunity to see the original tin roof in the basement. Due to limited space, please RSVP the week before each Diners' Club by contacting Anna at 345-5566. For carpooling, please contact Carlienne Frisch at (507) 387-8157.

Other Diners' Club times and dates are: Tuesday May 1 at 6 pm, Saturday, August 11 at 11:30 am and Thursday, November 8 at 6 pm. Locations will be announced in future BECHS newsletters.



## *Notes from the Archives Manager*

So there I was minding my own business – and the question about the Sumner Hill wall gets asked and, no I don't have a clue when the wall was built, but let's find out! It's a mystery, and mysteries are meant to be solved, so in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes and Nancy Drew, grab your coat and come with me and we're off to Blue Earth County Land Records in the Nichols Building.

Why Land Records? Because if we can find out when James McLaughlin owned the property, we can narrow down our search, and we'll know when to start looking. First we need to know the legal land description. In doing rural searches, it would be township, range and section; for town searches, we need the addition, block and lot. We didn't know what land McLaughlin owned, so we made an educated guess: we chose the Esther M. Hall Addition, Block 5, Lot 1 – the piece of property closest to the wall. With that information in hand, we're off.

We need to locate the tract book index, which will tell us which book the Esther M. Hall addition is in. We find the Esther M. Hall Addition is located in Tract Book #2, p. 356. Block 5, Lot 1 leads us to a series of Land Deed Record Books, volumes and pages. Now it's just a matter of searching each volume and page to discover when James McLaughlin bought Lot 1 of Block 5. Ah ha! - James McLaughlin bought the lot on April 24, 1928, so we know when to start our search, but what's the next record? It's Misc.12 page 173. This is a Miscellaneous Record Book, which is where odd documents referring to the piece of land are recorded. The record states "A Resolution Vacating and Discontinuing Certain Public Highways in the City of Mankato in March of 1931." Basically he bought all of the property which later became the Sumner Hills Addition. This large piece of land had many streets leading up to it: Fuller, Center, Lewis, Mary, etc. We assume he only wanted one street to access his property, so he petitioned the city to close off the other public highways and the city agreed. Yeah !! We're getting so close – we know the wall was built along the only street to

access that property. So the wall wasn't there before 1931.

Bingo – we then started searching the newspapers in March of 1931. Meanwhile, back at Land Records, we pull all the Deed Books pertaining to the piece of property. Along with the Deed Records, you will also come across everything having to do with that piece of land. We discover Probate Records, Mortgages Records and Miscellaneous Records. We follow Block 5, Lot 1 through the years until it turned into Auditors Plat #33, when James McLaughlin sold all the land to W.G.A. Burton in 1940. Burton then sold the property to Sumner Carlstrom and Rex Hill, who created the Sumner Hills Addition in 1945.

That was just one Block and Lot of the over 30 pieces of property Mr. McLaughlin owned in the 1930s. So we are on to the next Block and Lot — oh, my column can only run so long, so until the next column or, if you have any questions, give me a call. I'll grab my coat and we'll go off to Land Records.

*Shelley Harrison*  
Archives Manager

## *PastPerfect Museum Software*

The Blue Earth County Historical Society has received a Minnesota State Historical Society State-in-Aid Grant for \$875 to purchase PastPerfect Museum software. The grant and software will allow us to upgrade our in-house management system of the Society's collections. The initial project will be to input information about our book collection. An additional aspect of the project will be to establish a computer network throughout the Heritage Center, as well as computer stations in the Research Center. The network has been funded by the Mary S. Gray Charitable Trust, and a computer has been donated by the City of Mankato. Also, thanks to Jack Madsen and Donna Webb for their contributions toward this project.



## YOUNG HISTORIANS

The Young Historians group has been doing a lot of exciting things during the past few months. We learned what it was like to be in a pioneer schoolhouse, met illustrator Dave Geister and author Jan Neubert Schultz, and learned about the Civil War from Arn Kind.

When we were learning as pioneer children would



BECHS Member Arn Kind gathers with the December Young Historians group. He taught the group about the Civil War.

have in a one-room schoolhouse, we did math on slates with chalk and took turns reading from the same story. Our teacher, Mrs. Potter, stood up at the front of the room with a desk and big chalkboard, while we sat at tables behind her.

We also went to the Deep Valley Book Festival and met author Jan Neubert Schultz, author of the book *Battle Cry*, which the Young Historians Club members read. She talked about her book and told us how many long hours of research she put in to build a fascinating story of historical fiction. Also at the Deep Valley Book Festival, we met illustrator Dave Geister. He showed us how he paints brilliant pictures for books, and then we were able to draw pictures of our favorite scenes from books.

When Arn Kind came to talk to us about the Civil War, everybody in the group listened and watched intently to everything he said and did. He is excellent at portraying a Civil War soldier! We saw many dif-

ferent types of weapons and how they worked, including cannons and muskets, as well as ships.

The Young Historians group and Club are held on the second Saturday of each month during the school year. We are always looking for new 3rd - 6th grade kids to join. If you would like to be a part of the fun, call Jessica Potter at 345-5566. Come and join Young Historians!



*Alex Oldenburg*

President, Young Historians Club

BECHS now accepts VISA, Mastercard, Discover and American Express. Credit cards will be accepted for Museum Store purchases, memberships and donations.



## Rapidan Heritage Society

From the boardwalk of the Rapidan Depot...

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus and he found his way to the Rapidan Depot on Saturday, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, to spend the afternoon with Mrs. Claus and visit with the area children. Reminiscences of Santa visiting the school in years past and handing out bags containing an apple, peanuts and hard candy came to mind as Santa again dispensed bags of goodies. RHS updated this tradition by also giving each child a photo taken with Santa. Everyone enjoyed cider and cookies in the town hall. Special thanks to Rapid Thunder Carriage for providing Santa with horse and buggy transportation.

RHS members enjoyed a holiday party that evening at The Peddler in Rapidan with a short meeting after the dinner. We were pleased with our accomplishments in 2006 and left with many new ideas for 2007 dancing in our heads.

Thanks to BECHS and members for all the support and encouragement offered this past year in our endeavors!

*Jane Tarjeson*  
Secretary

*Now Available*  
**Cemetery Information Books**

Using the cemetery information transcribed by volunteers, we are now able to create a book for each individual cemetery in Blue Earth County. Every book contains the complete cemetery transcription with a surname index for that cemetery. Maps and detailed directions to the cemetery are also included. Each book is printed on demand, and the price is determined by the cemetery. It's a great resource for your family research. If you are interested in any of these books, or if you have any questions, contact Shelley or Sara at: [bechsrc@hickorytech.net](mailto:bechsrc@hickorytech.net) or by phone at 507-345-5566.

**Admission Fees**  
**effective January 1, 2007**

**Heritage Center Museum  
and R.D. Hubbard House**  
Adults \$3  
Children 6-17 \$1  
Children under 6 and BECHS members Free

**Heritage Center Research Center**  
Adults \$3  
Students \$1  
BECHS members Free

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The Blue Earth County Historical Society's Heritage Center Gallery,  
Museum Store and Research Center are open  
Tuesday 10:00 to 12:00, 1:00 to 4:00 and 5:00 to 8:00  
Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00

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**Blue Earth County Historical Society**  
415 E. Cherry Street  
Mankato MN 56001

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[www.rootsweb.com/~mnbechs/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~mnbechs/)

Expiration Date

Preserving and sharing Blue Earth County's history since 1901