

Calendar

Jan. 19-27 Sno-Fest
 Jan. 20 Inauguration Day
 Feb. 11 Valentine Party (more info. later)
 Feb. 18 President's Day, Museum offices closed

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Please check your mailing label. Is your name and address correct? Will you be moving soon? If your mailing address changes, please let us know so that we can keep our list up to date. It costs us 25¢ for each newsletter returned.

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Volunteers Needed !!!

If you have extra time on your hands, please consider volunteering a few hours to the Historical Society. Three positions are available. If you are interested, call the Museum for more information.

Obituary Indexer - - A person to index current obituaries into present filing system. Involves some typing. Approximately 8 hours per week.

Textile Marker - - A person to sew identification labels on textile items in the collection. Basic sewing skills. Flexible hours depending upon amount of current textiles.

Volunteer Curator - - A person to process new collections into record system, number artifacts, type cards, write correspondence, and prepare items for storage. Will also work with existing collections in inventory and reorganization of storage areas. Must have typing skills, be organized and be able to following instructions. Minimum 8 hours per week.

If you have other skills which you think might be helpful, contact us.

Farewell . . .

We bid farewell to Nancy Andrew who resigned as Public Services Director in December. She accomplished a great deal in the two short months she was here. We wish her well as she moves on to continue her education.

Welcome . . .

We bid a warm welcome to Jan Gullo, our new Public Services Director who began work on January 7. Jan is originally from Illinois and has her degree in elementary education from Northern Illinois University.

Jan has numerous ideas for public programs including traveling presentations, monthly programs, in-house school programs, and the Junior Historians program.

As you may know, the funding for the position is through a challenge grant from the George M. Palmer Foundation. The funding is guaranteed for three years and carries a specified matching amount which must be raised by the Society during each of the three years.

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"Harnessing the Power: Building the Rapidan Dam" will be on display at the State Bank of Vernon Center. It has been on exhibit in Rapidan, Garden City, and Good Thunder. For information about scheduling the traveling display, call Jan at the Museum.

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The Mankato Area Model Railroad Club is searching for photos from the 1930's and 1940's to document the city of Mankato in order to build a model of the city at that time. If you have photos, contact the Museum.

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Wish List

Does anyone have any of the following items (new or used) they would like to donate to the Museum. We will be using them for upcoming programs and special events.

1. Coffee maker - - up to 50 cup capacity (we have a 12 cup pot)
2. Serving trays of various sizes
3. Punch bowl
4. Candle holders
5. Serving pitchers - glass, metal, or plastic.

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Blue Earth County Historical Society



January 1985

Homestead Players

Congratulations to Barb Maher, producer of the video of the Homestead Players production of "When We Were Young" taped last fall at the studios of CCTV. The video received a "Makatemy Award" in the Informational category. The award was presented at ceremonies held at CCTV on December 11. The award is on display at the Museum so it may be shared by the cast and all who helped make it possible.

The Homestead Players have added a new dimension to promoting the history of the county for the Society. We continue to give a round of applause to all those who volunteered their time last summer to the traveling troupe.

Plans have begun for organizing a second season of production. Sue Chambers has volunteered to be the director and Betty Cords will again serve as the general coordinator. More information will be available later concerning auditions and performance schedules. If you want to help or have a story which should be included in the script, call the Museum, 345-4154.

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"New Exhibits in the Carriage House"

"On the Green: Golf in the 20's has just been completed in one of the display cases on the second floor of the Carriage House.

Two exhibits, as yet untitled, will be completed within the month of winter clothing from the 1880's to the turn of the century. Both exhibits will be in cases on the second floor in the Carriage House.

DRESSING THE INFANT AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Dramatic changes have occurred in the concept of infancy in the past fifty years. From the Puritan idea that the child was almost a non-entity until age six when the child became an adult in the eyes of the church, capable of choosing right over wrong, to today's studies of the life of the prenatal child, infants have come into their own as human beings capable of perception at the moment of birth. At earlier and earlier ages, infants crawl, walk, and eat solid foods. Some historians credit this change to the change in clothing for infants. Whatever the cause, the physical changes do seem to go hand in glove with a change in clothing for the infant.

Lloyd DeMause in his chapter on "The Evolution of Childhood" in The History of Childhood (1974) points to swaddling as the prime culprit in the slower development of children's motor skills. Almost universal in application, swaddling persisted from ancient Egypt down through the late 1800s in Germany. Infants were bound to avoid scratching out their eyes, tearing off their ears, breaking their legs, activities adults were sure would happen if infants were left free. Besides, notes, DeMause, it was convenient for adults. Once swaddled, little attention had to be paid to the infant. "As a recent medical study of swaddling has shown, swaddled infants are extremely passive, their hearts slow down, they cry less, they sleep far more, and in general they are so withdrawn and inert that the doctors who did the study wondered if swaddling shouldn't be tried again." (37) Crawling was considered animalistic and thus discouraged. It is not surprising to find that infants walked as late as two years for the first time and parents were not alarmed by this retardation.

The turn of the century in the United States found swaddling abandoned for more humane clothing but remnants of the philosophy of infant protection remained. Besides an abundance of clothing which must have slowed down even the most determined child, child experts advocated the abdominal band. It was five inches wide and twenty-four inches long, allowing for multiple wrappings. The band was designed to protect the vital organs in the stomach and abdomen thought particularly vulnerable in an infant. Mothers were

cautioned in a 1905 Ladies Home Journal article by New York physician, Emerlyn Lincoln Collidge, not to make the band too tight because "it compresses the stomach and abdomen and causes vomiting, and pushing all the abdominal organs out of place, thus ruining the child's shape in later years." (44) Of course, if it were too loose, there would be no protection at all. The band was to be flannel. In the third month, it could be replaced by a ribbed knit one with shoulder straps but the child was to keep wearing that one until age three.

The clothes for an infant were ample and all attached. Marianna Wheeler in "A Proper Way to Clothe a Baby" (Harper's Bazaar, 1900) cautioned against loose flowing clothes for an infant. They were "most uncomfortable, not lying close enough to the body to give warmth . . . and the child is usually lying in a bed of wrinkles which crease and seam its delicate flesh." (308) The swaddling concept had not lost out entirely.



Besides the abdominal band, the infant wore a diaper either made of white cheesecloth or cotton birdseye. Rubber pants were available through Sears and Roebuck but writers advising mothers in popular magazines suggested a "small square of light mackintosh on a prepared cloth called 'imperveaux,' this to be pinned about the thighs over the diaper, and to be worn when the child goes out, as it keeps the baby's clothing dry." (308) Wheeler, "The Proper Way to Clothe a Baby," Harper's Bazaar, 1900.)

Also, next to the skin, the baby wore an undershirt. It was recommended that the undershirt be wool even for summer wear because wool would best absorb the perspiration of an active infant. Never should the child be uncovered in hot weather. Covering the legs were bootees, wool and knitted. These came up to the diaper where they were fastened. In fact, all underclothing was fastened to the diaper with buttons or by basting the garments together on the side. Pins were not considered safe.

On top of the undergarments went a day-slip, which was sleeveless, had a waist and a gathered skirt. Also included was a petticoat with a band and a gathered skirt. It was recommended that these be made of flannel or soft cambric.

Mothers were advised to keep the dresses simple. Gone were the yard and a half long dresses with puffs and ruffles and lace. Instead, dresses were to be only thirty-six inches long (consider that an infant was probably about twenty inches from head to toe) to be made out of Persian lawn or nainsook, an Indian cotton. The yoke on the dress was considered a nuisance.

Added to these layers went a "borrow coat" usually made of flannelette, open in the front with no sleeves. It served much the same purpose as wrapping babies in blankets does today. Bonnets of various styles were necessary until a baby was two. Ears had to be protected. The Sears catalogue of 1908 offered eleven different bonnet styles to choose from. The same catalogue also featured shawls for baby, one of the most necessary items for baby's wardrobe. It could be had for 43¢.

Babies should never go barefooted. They should always wear, day and night, long woolen stockings or bootees in the winter or cotton ones in the summer. Moccasins could be worn until the baby stood but never shoes. There was some discussion whether or not baby should wear a veil to protect his/her face in the winter. Some experts saw it was essential, others as a nuisance.

Babies were either dressed in white or cream white. Color was seldom mentioned. When a royal baby was born in Italy in 1901, Insley remarked in Harper's Bazaar that either blue or pink was selected for clothing and decorations, blue in this case because it was sure to be a prince. She found that use of color odd. Along with the uni-color for American babies, no distinction was made in clothing for the sex of a child. Boys as well as girls wore dresses. Hair was not cut for male children until sometimes school age.

There were, of course, no synthetic fabrics. Natural fabrics for infant wear were nansook, cotton, lawn, wool, flannel and flannelette, cambric merino (half wool and half cotton), linen and silk. Practical advice was to



avoid silk, generally, although Sears pushed it for its more elaborate wardrobes.

According to Sears, parents could outfit a baby for \$5.79 in 1908. Lola D. Wagner in 1904 Ladies Home Journal article suggested she needed \$28.00 but this included sheets and bibs as well. Most of her baby's clothing were made although she suggested buying three mixed silk and wool shirts and three pairs of merino stockings. At night babies were to be put into flannelette night dresses over the stockings, underwear and abdominal band.

Foremost in considerations for dressing the baby was the protection of the infant who seemed fragile. Warmth was a prime motive even in the summer. The transition from the turn of the century to today speaks to a better understanding of the needs and capabilities of the infant and to warmer houses.

Louisa Smith