

From the Director's Rolltop . .



Denise Hudson

The week of April 21-27 has been designated National Volunteer Week to honor all those who generously give of their time and talents to so many groups. Volunteerism is the spirit on which our world runs.

We at the Historical Society are honored to have dedicated volunteers performing essential duties for us. In 1984 there were 700 recorded hours of time donated to the Society. The actual time donated would exceed 1500 hours if the garden clubs and the Homestead Players had kept time sheets of their work for the Society.

Essential people who give of their time working with the Museum collections are: **Rene Peters** — Typist. She types cards for the Archives collections and the card catalog. We have lost track of how many cards she has typed. **Evelyn Weisgram** — Archives Aid. Evelyn is responsible for indexing all current obituaries and is currently working on indexing our collection of the *Good Thunder Herald*. **Pam Youngblom** — Archives and Collection Aid. Pam types cards for subject headings, files cards, indexes books, and helps number the textile collection. We certainly would not be able to function as efficiently without "our" volunteers!

The **Twilight Garden Club** and the **Rose Society** deserve credit for keeping our gardens pretty. These volunteers appear after 5:00 p.m. so they are not seen working; but we all know they have been around — the flowers speak to us.

The **Homestead Players** — our newest group of volunteer associates — deserve a round of applause for a job well done. Their special talents can be seen by all, (the season begins on June 29, by the way), and mean so much in "telling our story".

All those who have helped at our activities — Harvest Festival, Bazaar, County Fair, and other small projects — are necessary for the success of the event. We could not do it without you!

Last, but certainly not least, is the time given by the **Board of Trustees**. This dedicated group meets monthly to set policy and serve as the governing body of the Society. Special committees

From the Director's Rolltop, cont.

involving Board members meet as the need arises. A conservative estimate of time donated by these seventeen people is 600 hours for 1984. This is in addition to their own jobs and other activities!

I think we can count — on a smaller scale — the family members of the staff who help move furniture, clean rooms, repair items, attend programs, and hear all the ideas. They volunteer their time by association. Thanks!

As you can see, we could not operate without our volunteers. They perform many essential tasks which might go undone if they were not willing to help us out. If you have free time, or know of someone who does, and want to be a volunteer with the Society, give us a call. Volunteer an hour, or a day, we will appreciate it!

Denise



AROUND THE COUNTY

Deep Valley Quilters are sponsoring a workshop on making an "All Quilted Vest", on Saturday, April 27, 1985, from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., at the Unitarian Center, 114 Pohl Road, Mankato. As a special treat a slide-lecture presentation called "How Do You Quilt" by Fons and Porter will be offered Friday evening, April 26, at 8 p.m., at the Unitarian Center. For further information and cost of workshop and film call: Marcia Schuster, 625-6314.

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If you wish to submit an item for the "Around The County" section of the newsletter, please write or call Jan, 345-4154 before the 10th of the month preceding publication.

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Memorials

In Memory of:

Mr. Art Kost

from Dr. & Mrs. Donald Meredith

**Blue Earth County
Historical Society**

606 South Broad
Mankato, MN 56001

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Blue Earth County Historical Society

April 1985

Calendar of Events

- Apr. 11 **BECHS Annual Meeting**
Wiley's Last Chance
Vernon Center, MN
Dinner 6:00 pm
Meeting 7:00 pm
Entertainment 7:30 pm
- Apr. 18-21 **Organization of American
Historians**
Annual Meeting - Minneapolis, MN
- Apr. 22-26 **National Volunteer Week**
- Apr. 26 **Fons and Porter slide/lecture**
Deep Valley Quilters
- Apr. 27 **Quilted Vest Workshop**
Deep Valley Quilters
- May 11 **Tracing The History of
Your House Workshop**
By-The House Detective
Jim Sazevich BECHS Sponsored

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Special Thanks

The following have made contributions to the Blue Earth County Historical Society during the past month.

Matching Funds for the George M. Palmer Grant:
Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Schuster

Endowment:
Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Schuster

General Funds:
Florence La hann

For Farming Tools for Elementary Schools
Museum Visitations:
Mr. Joe Kubicek

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THE MAPLETON COLONY

Part II The Wisconsin Group

In April of 1856 Uriah Payne claimed land in what is now known as Mapleton Township. It is assumed that he was the first settler of the township. He was from Wisconsin, and after making his claim, he returned to Wisconsin to prepare to move to his new home. At Ripon, Wisconsin, he came in contact with a colony of settlers, originally from Vermont, who were drifting west in search of new homes. This colony consisted of: Ira Annis, Azro Annis and wife, their sister, Sarah, Asa P. Sherman with wife and two children, B. Hall with wife and one child, Russell Franklin with wife and one child, Charles Durkee, and Jonathan Holbrook.

Richard Stephen Annis, son of Ira Annis, wrote an interesting account of the trip as follows:

Along about June 20th, 1856, there might have been seen a man of middle age, with a keen grey eye, and stern face, his old trusty rifle slung carelessly over his shoulder, his faithful, courageous, old yellow dog, Tige, following closely at his heels, making his way across the clear, broad prairie lying between the streams known as the Cobb and Maple Rivers. This man would stop once in a while to survey the surrounding ground for about one half mile. In his rear, followed six or seven teams and covered wagons. This man was selecting out the best plans for crossing the low spots, and still keeping in view of a certain point of timber on the Maple River. These six or seven covered wagons carried the household goods of several families, composed as follows, Ira Annis, his wife and five children, his sister, now Mrs. J.W. Sprague, Azro Annis, and wife, Asa P. Sherman, wife and two children, R.B. Hall, wife and one child, Russell Franklin, wife and one child, Charles Durkee and Jonathan Holbrook, and, last but not least, our pilot and frontiersman, Uriah Payne and three sons, a total of twenty-five souls, making their way across the broad prairie with neither a bush nor tree to greet them, and the wild prairie grass from eighteen inches to three feet tall. They left a trail behind which was followed and used as a road for a great many years and is still a part of Mapleton's public highways. This colony started from Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, about the 10th day of May, and fell in with Uriah Payne. They soon learned he was making his way to Minnesota, and as the colony had no particular point in view, naturally drifted along until we reached a place called Owatonna, a city of one

frame building and one log store on the banks of a little stream called Straight River, but which we later found to be one of the crookedest little swimming streams we ever saw and which we boys fully explored, for ten days following, with a little old mud scow. Here a halt was called and a council held. Some wanted to stop, while others wished to go farther on, and it was finally decided that as Ira Annis had the only horse team, they would unload a light wagon, take a selected few, a few guns, provisions, etc. and proceed to the Maple River, where Mr. Payne had previously located a claim of 160 acres in the timber just west of where Jud Cornell lives. This party, after an absence of ten days, decided to proceed from Owatonna, so all except Mr. Franklin returned for their families, and reached the banks of the Maple River, where Ben Taylor now lives, at about three o'clock in the afternoon on June 20th, 1856, famished, footsore and thirsty, for it was a warm day. Mr. Franklin told us there was a boiling spring of good cool water at the edge of the river below, and as soon as we could, men, women, and children made the descent of the steep bank, with cup in hand to get a good cool drink. There had been some limbs thrown into the shallow water, and not used to boiling springs, I stepped right into the bubbling sand and down I went nearly to my waist and don't know how much farther I might have gone had I not been caught by some men and pulled out. Then when I came to drink the strong iron water, oh my! It was cold, but I could drink the stuff only by holding my nose.

Well, in a few days our little colony began to scatter out, Ira Annis and A.P. Sherman going east, up the river, about one and a half mile; Azro Annis going west into the township now called Sterling, where some of the family still reside. After this separation began the struggle for eatables and wearables. The summer and fall of 1856 was very dry, and the earth was parched and cracked in places, making fissures large enough for me, a small boy, to run my foot into the ground above my knee.

My father started the breaking plow at once after getting settled, and well do I remember one day along in July while driving four yoke of oxen, we looked away to the northeast, near where the village of Mapleton now stands, and saw something very peculiar glistening in the sun. For a time we could not make out what it was, but a little later on, discovered it was a company of Indians, about one dozen, all on horseback, and the sun was shining upon their guns which caused the glistening. Well my curiosity was aroused and a little fear, too, for when they arrived at our tent, they wanted water. But the funny part was to come, and it was this. When we left Wisconsin we had a good ten gallon keg

of vinegar, and upon our arrival at our new home found three oak trees spreading at the earth between which we had placed our vinegar keg. Those Indians saw the keg and began circling around it and smelling at it until my father's cousin, Charles Durkee, went and drew out about a quart and handed it to one of the band. He smelled of it, and passed it on until it went the round. Then Mr. Durkee took a spoon and drank a spoonful and each one of the party followed suit, then seemed to proceed on their way quietly. Later on, we used to have them call quite often, as our house was on their direct trail from the agency at Lura Lake and so on to Bass and Rice Lakes. But I am getting ahead of my story, and will return. On the 4th of July, 1856, at our tent was held one of the first, if not the first, celebrations ever held in Mapleton. We had prepared a good pole swing between two large oak trees (our party had been enlarged by the arrival of another Holbrook by the name of Joel, so that there were about twenty-five in number). Captain R.B. Hall made a speech, we fired the old double barrel, muzzle-loading shot guns, waved our flags, ate a good hearty dinner, and all returned home as happy as could be expected.

The winter of 1856 and 1857 was cold and many were the hardships we passed through. Then began the Johnny cake times and for three years it was nothing but beef and Johnny cake three times a day; even Johnny cake was scarce. Some ground their own meal in a coffee mill on account of the long distance to travel to the mill and the cold weather, but we all as a usual thing, were a healthy lot.

The Annis family and the other members of the Wisconsin group arrived in southern Blue Earth County where the members of the Minnesota Settlement Association from New York had settled the previous spring. The area settled by these two groups later became Sterling and Mapleton Townships.

An election precinct under the name of Mapleton was created on July 9, 1856. It included the present townships of Sterling, Mapleton, and Danville. School District No. 5 was organized on the same date and covered the same territory. Two years later, in April 1858, present-day Sterling Township was organized under the name of Mapleton.

At a meeting in December, 1859, Robert Taylor of the New York group suggested that the name of the township be changed to "Stirling" after Lord Stirling of Scotland; but William Russell felt it should be called "Sterling", in reference to the pound sterling. It also referred to the "sterling" quality of the soil and the people. The majority of the people sided with Russell. Sterling was a common name in a number of the eastern states and that may have influenced the selection.

Sterling Township was flanked by two large lakes, which came to be known as Lura to the east and Jackson to the west. Lura Lake was called Tewapa (water lily) and Atakinyan (crooked, irregular) by the Indians. Sometime later a settler found the name "Lura" carved in a tree trunk near the lake, and so chose to call the lake Lura. The Indian name for Lake Jackson was Sinkpe (musk-rat). Lake Jackson was named for one of the first settlers of the area, Norman L. Jackson. The Maple River flows through the northwest corner and played an important role in Sterling Township. The river was significant for practical and recreational needs of the early Scottish settlers.

Like Sterling, Mapleton Township was settled in 1856 and was first known as Sherman. The township was named for Isaac Sherman, a member of the Wisconsin group. The present Mapleton was united with the old town of Mapleton, now Sterling, for administrative purposes.

With the separation of the two towns, the present names were adopted. The first town meetings of the independent municipalities were held in April of 1861.

Article submitted by
Audrey Annis
Mapleton, MN

SOURCES

Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County*, 1874; Ronald J. Newell, *Where The Winding Maple Flows*, 1978; Rev. Edward D. Neill, *History of the Minnesota Valley*, 1882; Thomas Hughes papers, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Mankato State University.

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New Life Member

Dr. & Mrs. John Mickelson
Burbank, California

New Annual Member

Mr. Elmer Goodrich
Mapleton, Minnesota