

From the Director's Rolltop . . .



Denise Hudson

Dear Fellow Members,

I think the time is right to share a few thoughts about the Historical Society with you. Those of us who work closely with things here tend to take for granted that everyone knows what we do -- and more importantly, why we do it.

First of all, this really is an exciting time for the Society. We have come so far in the years since we were founded -- and we have only just begun. As most of you know, we had a Market Analysis completed for us late in 1984. (Special thanks to our County Commissioners for assisting with that endeavor.) The study tested our programs, leadership, relationship with the public, and our funding base. The study was a positive experience for us. It helped us see what we are doing right, and where there is room for improvement. The report outlined a vigorous program for us - Task Forces, Associates Groups, member involvement, leadership development, etc. -- and planning is underway! We are very excited about our future.

This brings me to my second point -- members. We really need you. You have shown that you believe in us -- you have paid dues and keep up with us through our newsletter. I ask and encourage you to take that commitment a few steps further. Tell your friends about us, ask them to come to one of our programs with you, ask them to be a member, (or **give** them a gift membership). You are important to us! Let us hear from you -- tell us what you like, don't like, or want us to do. I also challenge you to become involved -- we have committees that need help and there are Museum tasks, too. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to call all of you and ask for help -- there are over 350 of you out there!

I just had to put those thoughts on paper. I hope to see all of you at the Chatauqua program on June 8th in Good Thunder. It will be fun to picnic with friends and enjoy an afternoon out of doors.

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AROUND THE COUNTY



The Blue Earth County Historical Society is pleased to be sponsoring in cooperation with the Minnesota Association of Library Friends with funding made possible by a grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission, a Chatauqua program, "To A New Land."

Come join us for picnicking in the City Park of Good Thunder at 12 noon, Saturday, June 8, 1985, with performance to follow at 1:30 p.m. "To A New Land" is an hour long program of music, prose, and poetry about the Minnesota immigrant experience.

It is a dramatic, sensitive portrait of the Minnesota immigrants from 1880 to 1920, "To A New Land" deals with their dreams, experiences and Americanization. The program features folksinger and musician John Berquist, currently on tour with the 1985 Minnesota Chatauqua program series produced by the Minnesota Association of Library Friends.

Berquist will use a variety of musical instruments, including the button accordion, guitar and autoharp. His songs will be sung in Swedish, Norwegian, French and Finnish.

Originally written for a Readers' Theatre series by Fred E. H. Schroeder, Berquist's presentation focuses on the struggle for existence. The work and music of lumberjack, farmer, miner and railroad man is recalled. Memories of more than a dozen nationalities are shared. Admission is free.

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: Kathryn Hanson

Endowment: John Burton

General Funds Donation: Mankato Art History Club, Chapter D.A. P.E.O.

For their generous donation of a Micro-film Reader/Printer: Mico, Inc.

For contribution of leather: Misch's Shoe Service: Charles Wall, Stan Christ and Ronnie Christ

For providing cookies for the children's "May Day Party": Madsen's Foods - Mankato

For providing "May Poles" for the children's "May Day Party": Mankato Area Recreation Council - Mark Sivanich

For displaying the Rapidan Dam Exhibit: Norman's Cafe and Lounge, Amboy

For providing Kasota limestone for our school tours: Vetter Stone Company

For providing post and rail fencing for our school tours:

Blue Earth County
Historical Society

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Blue Earth County Historical Society

June 1985

Calendar of Events

- June 8 "To A New Land," Minnesota Chatauqua with folklorist John Berquist, Good Thunder - City Park
- June 17 "Keeping the Image" - Photograph copying, Norman's Cafe and Lounge, Amboy
- June 23 "Old Timer Day" - Madison Lake
- June 24 "Keeping The Image" - Photograph copying, Community Center, Madison Lake 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- June 26 "Starting A Collection," Children's Wednesday Workshop
- June 29 Homestead Players, "When We Were Young" - Summit Center, Mankato
3:30 p.m. Performance
5:00 p.m. Box Social/Auction
7:00 p.m. Performance

"Keeping The Image"

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is sponsoring a photograph-copying project, "Keeping The Image: Photographs in Blue Earth County." The Historical Society wishes to encourage Blue Earth County residents to share their family's photographs for this copy project. By sharing in this project the people of Blue Earth County will be helping to document the history of their communities, preserving their photographs for future citizens of our county, and teaching our young people about their county heritage. A copying session has been set-up for Madison Lake at the Community Center on Monday, June 24, 1985, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. If you have questions contact the staff at the museum, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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To commemorate National Children's Day on June 10th and initiate a new series of children's "Wednesday Workshops" beginning June 26th we are pleased to share this personal family account with our membership. This reminiscence was written by one of our members for her children and grandchildren. We hope you will share this enjoyable story with a "special" young person in your family.

A Steamboat Excursion On The Minnesota

The year was 1908. It was a gorgeous April day. Grandpa (Ellsworth) Palmer was a jeweler at 311 South Front. He was also the timekeeper for the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad. He had just returned from the depot after having checked the clocks and watches. The telegrapher had given him the news that the excursion steamboat, Lorene, had arrived at St. Peter. It would be stopping at the wharf near the present site of the Hubbard Mill to pick up passengers who would like to take a steamboat ride to New Ulm.

Grandpa hurried to his place of business, went to the phone and rang #815B, and told his wife, Emma, the exciting news. She agreed that an excursion upriver would be great fun. She quickly packed a picnic lunch and cleaned up her two youngsters, Harry, age five and Lucile, three. She put on her second-best dress, picked up her parasol, locked up the house at 712 North Fifth Street, and began the walk to Grandpa's jewelry store.

It was a very pleasant walk. The early spring flowers were blooming. Birds were singing. The two little Palmers were so excited they ran on ahead. As they reached the corner of Main and Front Streets they heard a loud whistle. The steamboat had arrived!

Grandpa had left his jewelry business in charge of his brother, Erv, and was waiting

for the family. He showed Emma the tickets he had purchased so they would be assured of a ride.

A large crowd had gathered on the river bank. After all, this was a special occasion. Rarely did even small steamboats venture as far upstream as Mankato. The last large sternwheeler, the Henrietta, had plied the waters of the Minnesota to Mankato in 1897. Many in the crowd had just come to see the Lorene but quite a number had picnic baskets in hand intending to board the boat for a trip upstream.

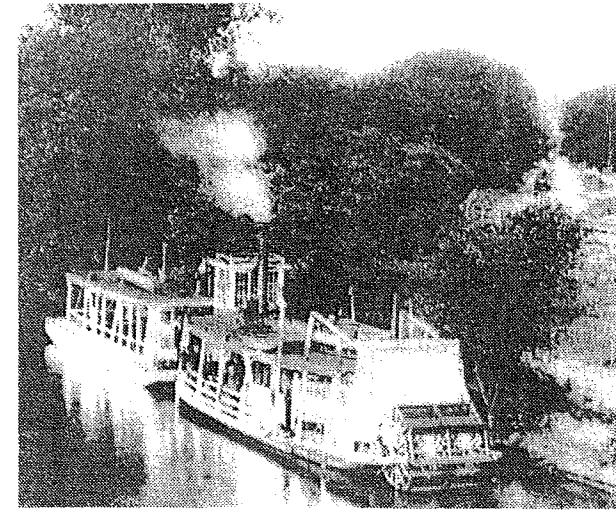
A board walk was extended from the boat to the bank and the eager travelers hurriedly boarded. The boat's whistle gave three short toots. The captain called, "All aboard who's going aboard!"

The east section of the Main Street bridge was swung open so the Lorene could pass through. They were underway! They passed the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha depot. Soon they came to the place where the Blue Earth River flows into the Minnesota. The current was strong but the sternwheeler took it in stride and moved on toward the bend of the river where the site of old South Bend was located. A lively little creek called Minneopa came flowing into the main stream. Many of the passengers spoke about how beautiful Minneopa Falls would be at this time of year. Several had taken the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad to Minneopa Station recently and had enjoyed a day of picnicking and viewing the falls.

The youngsters enjoyed counting the horses and cows in the meadows and pastures. Occasionally they saw a farmer working in the field, his plow pulled by several horses. The captain greeted each farmer with a short toot on the whistle; the farmer waved in return. Oh! what fun they were having!

The adults sat on chairs on the deck viewing the countryside as they visited with one another. All too soon they reached Judson. The captain gave a three toot welcome. Many came down to the river to see the Lorene.

The Lorene had come to the bridge at Judson. The captain surveyed the situation. There definitely was a problem. A new iron bridge had been built across the Minnesota there in 1904. It was



Lorene Dubuque Steamboat docked in Minnesota River near end of Range Street, North Mankato.

not equipped to separate so that a steamboat could pass by. The river was too high for the Lorene to pass under the bridge.

The captain called the passengers together and expressed the bad news. He promised that even though he couldn't get them to New Ulm, he would do his best so they could have an enjoyable day. He would find an ideal picnic spot, anchor the boat, let them disembark and enjoy themselves.

The little boys with the help of their fathers were soon fishing. They cleaned their catch, cooked them over an open fire and ate them one after another. They declared they were the best they had ever tasted.

Some of the children gathered colorful flat stones to skip on the water's surface. Soon they were having a contest as to whom could get the most skips from a certain number of stones. Others searched for tadpoles in the puddles along the stream.

The wild plum trees were in full bloom. Their white blossoms sent a sweet aroma throughout the area. What an enjoyable, lazy afternoon!

All too soon it was 6 p.m. The captain called, "All aboard!" He lifted the anchor and they were on their way to Mankato. He apologized for leaving so early but said he desired to reach Mankato during daylight.

The captain was ever vigilant so that overhanging branches would not become entangled in the smokestack. He needed to be constantly surveying the water ahead of the boat for submerged snags so the bottom of the boat or the paddlewheel would not get hung up or damaged.

At about 8 p.m. the Lorene approached Mankato. The bridge swung open. The boat anchored at the wharf. The weary travelers disembarked.

Grandpa engaged a hack in front of the Saulpaugh Hotel. He loaded the worn out youngsters and bone-weary Emma and started off for home.

* * * * *

Although I did not come to Mankato until 1932 nor meet the Palmer family until 1933, the ride on the Lorene to Judson was an experience which Grandpa Palmer and his son Harry, whom I married in 1934, often loved to tell me when spring came and the Minnesota River ran high.

Article lovingly submitted by: Gail Palmer

Special Thanks - And A Fond Farewell

After June 1, visitors to the Museum will no longer be greeted by Margaret Jahr. She has announced her retirement as Secretary-Receptionist-Bookkeeper. We will certainly miss her cheery greetings, her efficiency, and her dedication. Good Luck, Margaret, and thank you!

NEW MUSEUM VOLUNTEER

Elmer Goodrich

NEW MEMBER

Rita Marsh

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.