

Tour of Historic Homes

The preservation and use of Minnesota's cultural and architectural heritage adds a special vitality to our community. As part of the Bend of the River Days Festival, the Blue Earth County Historical Society is hosting a TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES on Saturday July 11, 1987, from 1-5 pm with seven homes open to the public for touring.

Along with being open for viewing, the Hubbard house tour will include a videotape on a community preservation group, home restoration brochures on subjects including millwork, wood columns, lighting, among other tips for the wood-be home restorer.

Tickets will be on sale beginning July 1 at the Blue Earth County Historical Society, 606 S. Broad Street in Mankato. Ticket price is \$5.00 per person. Tickets will also be available at the Historical Society on the day of the tour.

Come join us for a festive afternoon, enjoy refreshments in the beautiful Victorian gardens surrounding the Hubbard house and have the rare opportunity to tour some of the areas finest historic homes. For further information contact the Historical Society at 507-345-4154.

Volunteers Needed

Many hours and much thought have gone into planning the First Annual Tour of Historic Homes scheduled for July 11, 1987. In order for this event to be a success we need the support of all our members. There are a number of ways you can help: First, plan to attend the event and bring along a friend or two. Second, we need volunteers to donate bars or cookies. Third, we need twenty-seven volunteers to serve as host and hostess for approximately one hour and forty-five minutes, hosting one of the homes on the tour. Please call Barb at 507-345-4154, if you can help out. Get ready for an exciting afternoon.

Curation Notes

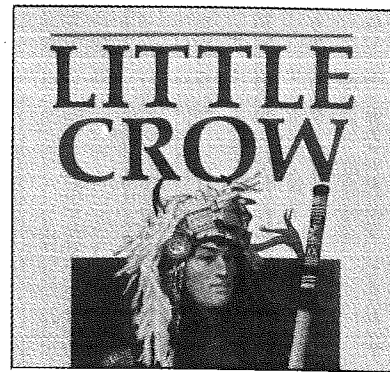
The staff of the Historical Society bids a fond farewell to Jan Brown our temporary curator, funded through an Institute of Museum Services Grant. For the past three months, Jan has toiled away in the "elegant" surroundings of the Hubbard House attic, refining the records of artifacts which have been stored in the attic for many years. We thank Jan for giving the Society the benefit of her professional training. We also thank Jan's able assistant, long-time volunteer, Elmer Goodrich, who cleaned and treated the artifacts as Jan brought them to light. We had a hard-working team on this project.

Society Update

For members who were unable to attend the Minnesota Quilter's Inc. Quilt Show at Gustavus Adolphus in June we share with you the show's *Dedication* as found in the program booklet: "The Sentimental Journey Show Committee dedicates the Ninth Annual Minnesota Quilter's Show to the memory of Marcia Schuster of Mankato, a member of the Show Committee who died in January, 1987" (Mrs. Schuster is a past Director of The Historical Society).

Thanks to the following people for their donations to the Building Fund, helping to make our move to the Summit Center a reality: Paul Schuster, and Edna L. Will. Additional donations were received from the Lake Crystal Senior Citizens and the Goldenairs of Minneapolis.

Approximately 1,000 people of all ages participated in this year's spring tour season, from April-June. Although many of the school children were from the Mankato school district, hundreds came from communities including St. Peter, Sleepy Eye, Madison Lake, Amboy, Mapleton, St. Clair and St. James, among others. We're pleased to have the opportunity to share Blue Earth County History with so many young people, both residents and non-residents of Blue Earth County. Adult tour groups including the Lake Crystal Extension club, the Minnesota AAA Backroads and Country Inns tour, and the Goldenairs of Minneapolis have visited the Society this spring. Special thanks go to our group of dedicated tour guides. We couldn't have done it without them. For further information on scheduling a guided tour or large group visit please contact Shelly at 507-345-4154.

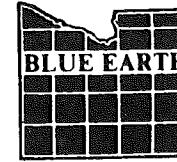


The Blue Earth County Historical Society Gift Shop carries books on subjects important to Minnesota as well as local Blue Earth County History. These books include information on frontier life, Betsy-Tacy adventures, and the Dakota Conflict of 1862, among many others. A new addition to the gift shop is *Little Crow: Spokeman for the Sioux*. In this well written book, biographer Gary Clayton Anderson presents Little Crow as an astute, intelligent and tragic Indian headman who tried to prevent war in 1862.

Blue Earth County
Historical Society
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BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 1987

Calendar of Events

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| July 4 | Independence Day |
| July 5 | Bend of the River Days Parade —Watch for our float. |
| July 11 | Tour of Historic Homes, 1-5 pm |
| July 15 | Archeology for the Young Historians , Daily Park, Mapleton |

Notes from the Director

I am pleased to announce that over 60 people attended Nick Coleman's program on "The Public Reaction to the Dakota Conflict of 1862", Thursday, June 4 at the Minnesota Valley Regional Library in Mankato. It was an interesting evening, full of lively discussion.

The staff of the Historical Society participated in the Mankato Area Shape Up Challenge during the month of May. We didn't win the grand prize but had a lot of fun trying.

One of our Society members, Mr. Hal Natvig of Mankato is trying to save the historic Oscar Schmidt house (YMCA) in Mankato. The Schmidt house is an outstanding example of the Neo Classic domestic building style, constructed by the second generation of a family which played a role in Mankato's commercial activity. Due to expansion of the YMCA facilities, the National Register Schmidt house will be torn down August 1st. Hal is working with the Minnesota Historical Society and others to keep this building intact by moving it to a new location, and restoring it into a bed and breakfast. While preservationists usually frown on the moving of buildings as a general rule, Hal's plan is far superior to tearing down the structure. I applaud Hal for his effort in trying to save a piece of Blue Earth County History.

Early Blue Earth County Newspapers Part 2

Publishing in the 1800's, when printers had to laboriously hand set type, is a world apart from today's phototype-setters and high speed web presses. Blue Earth County publishers often used "ready print," or paper pre-printed with four pages of world-wide news and informative columns; feature articles, stories, poems and humorous "filler"; and national advertising—mostly for patent medicines that claimed to cure everything from catarrh to cancer. But local printers still had to gather and hand set about four large pages of area as well as local news, and solicit enough ads from local business to keep the presses running.

In Amboy and Madison Lake, early ventures into newspaper publishing were marked with frequent changes. *The Amboy Herald* first appeared October 13, 1891, with Carl Strom as manager. Among the paper's half dozen proprietors during its first decade were J.A. Krohn, H.C. Hotaling and J.E. Brown. In later years ownership tenure lengthened as Arlie Wilder, H.L. Burdick, and L.A. Erdman each published the paper for 10 to 20 years. Kelly Dethloff Reuter in her 1979 Centennial publication describes the *Herald* as "a newspaper where good people make page one. There are no murders or scandals—only positive things like community development, education, church activities and who's been visiting whom." Items often carried homespun editorial comment in the early days. For example, a December 2, 1891 report that a man in Poland had invented a smokeless, odorless artificial coal costing only \$1.00 per ton, was followed with "Nature may as well pack up her kit and retire if this sort of thing continues." In the same issue such items as "Charles Quiggle has finished a new addition to his house" and "Miss Wilder, an elementary teacher, was sick on Monday" filled long columns of local news.

When Spencer-Davis Publishing, Inc. bought the *Herald* in the early 1980's they also acquired the *Good Thunder Herald* and the *Vernon Center News*. As the three papers were combined into one, the *Amboy Herald* became the *Country Times*, a regional newspaper, now in its 97th year and published today by James and Marcia Hensley.

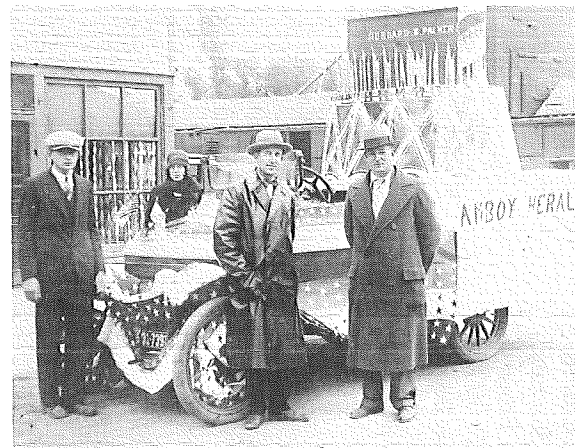
Madison Lake's first paper, the *Madison Lake Breeze*, edited by J.K. Knapp, was published in 1892. Bought by H.G. Maxfield in 1896, it continued as the *Madison Lake Mirror*. Of special local interest the *Mirror* of April 15, 1897 reported "a wonderful airship" passing over Madison Lake on a previous night. "Nearly all our people collected in the streets and gazed in wonderment at the curious looking creature." (Other area newspapers reported the air ship as having "alternating red, green, and pale red lights," all so bright one could not see the shape of the ship.)

After Maxfield's *Madison Lake Mirror* came the *Madison Lake New Era* (ca. 1902) and the *Madison Lake Tribune* (ca. 1904), both published by George Southwick. Subsequent *Tribune* owners were George Swaengen (ca. 1906) and Garfield Morrison (ca 1908).

Madison Lake publishers were ardent boosters of the town and its newspaper. Morrison advertised his *Tribune* as being published in "the most Wide-Awake Village in Southern Minnesota" and circulating in "the richest farming and dairy country in the world." In 1919 John Skinner published the paper as the *Madison Lake Times*, "The Only Newspaper in the World Devoted to the Welfare of Madison Lake and Vicinity." True to its motto, the March 27, 1919 issue carried a number of articles related to better road construction, the estimated cost of concrete being "\$15,000 per mile for a nine-foot road with seven and one-half foot gravel wings."

In 1925 Joe Lillegraven began a 25-year stint as publisher of the *Times*. Ted Roemer, director of the Madison Lake Historical Society, recalls the racket and oil smell and how the whole building shook when the Ford motor in the basement started up to run the press. During the 1950's Evan "Skip" Morris followed by Karl Edgerton published the *Times*, and since 1960 it has been in the hands of Wayne and Patricia Will, who in 1966 gave it yet another name: *The Lake Region Times*, serving Eagle Lake as well as Madison Lake.

Although no longer published, the *Good Thunder Herald* and the *Vernon Center News* enjoyed a wide circulation



Harold L. Burdick (right), publisher of the *Vernon Center News* for 50 years and of the *Amboy Herald* for 13 years, stands by the *Herald's* car decorated for an Amboy celebration. Also shown are Hank Thul (center) and "Spitz" Erdman (left).

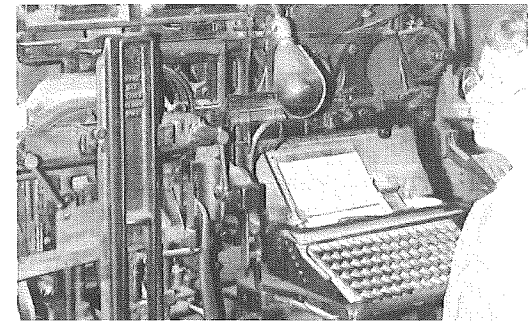
for over 60 years. In the first issue of the *Good Thunder Herald*, September 2, 1891, editor and proprietor F.H. Griffin committed his paper to the principles of the farmer's Alliance, mutual interchange of ideas with farmers, political independence, and the general interest of Good Thunder and vicinity. The front page was mostly devoted to world markets, national labor strikes and the effect of weather on crops from North Dakota wheat to Georgia peaches. On the editorial page, Griffin rivals Morrison's praise of Madison Lake in extolling the advantages of living in Good Thunder and vicinity. The farming district "produces the finest and largest crops of any county in the Northwest," and citizens of the Good Thunder area reportedly are "a social class that cannot be excelled."

After Frank Griffin's approximately 25 years in the business, Carl E. Young, followed by Ray C. Young, published the *Herald* for about 30 years. After World War II Sidney and Phoebe Kienitz bought the paper and published it until the early 1970's when it closed down.

Michael H. Galer published the first *Vernon Center News* in 1897 and retained ownership for almost 20 years. Except for a short period in 1908 when the paper became the *Blue Earth Valley News*, whose motto was "Independent in Politics—Neutral in Nothing," the paper retained its original name. The first page of the September 10, 1908 issue mostly concerned Blue Earth County politics, while inside pages reported newsworthy area happenings, one being the burning of the Good Thunder mill.

In 1915 Galer sold the *Vernon Center News* to Harold L. Burdick, who came to Vernon Center planning to stay only a few years, but remained to publish the *News* for half a century, as well as publishing the *Amboy Herald* from 1917-19 and 1924-35. The Minnesota Editorial Association awarded him a 50-Year Plaque in 1960. Burdick found newspaper publishing an opportunity to do community work and filled positions of responsibility in the town and country. An active DFLer, he was in charge of all arrangements when Harry Truman came to Mankato in 1948. He regarded the train ride with Truman a high point in his life. After his death in 1965, *The Vernon Center News* continued until 1982 when it became incorporated into *Country Times*.

A review of early Blue Earth County newspapers reveals a similarity in the concerns of the 1800's and those of today, such as ecology, national economy, military budget, balance of trade and illegal aliens. The *Good Thunder Herald* of September 2, 1891 carried an article assuring readers that seals were not an endangered species, as a war vessel officer reported swarms of seals in the Bering Sea. On the same page, the cash balance in the U.S. Treasury in 1891 was reported as \$155,641,538 and in another item the Secretary of War was requesting money from the 52nd Congress for



Pat Will, publisher of *The Lake Region Times*, at one of the oldest linotype machines in the state, still being used for their job printing press.

more war ships. *The Review* of May 25, 1867 reported "the tariff, more than piracy, war, or tornadoes, was driving American shipping from the seas." Of illegal aliens, the *Amboy Herald* reported pauper Hungarian Jews and Chinese were being sent back from Grand Forks across the border to Winnipeg, and "unless they keep a sharp lookout, they will flock across the line in great numbers."

Even with television and radio, newspapers continue to inform, educate, and influence people on issues of the day. To that end, current Blue Earth County editors or publishers Michael Larson of *The Free Press*, Don Marben of *The Lake Crystal Tribune*, Kenneth and Marcia Warner of the *Mapleton Enterprise*, James and Marcia Hensley of the *Country Times*, and Patricia Will of *The Lake Region Times* endeavor to serve county residents today.

Inella Burns

Sources

Kelly Dethloff Reuter, *Amboy, Minnesota—A Heritage Rooted in Rural America*, 1979; Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County*, 1907; *Mankato City and Blue Earth County Directory*, R.L. Polk and Company, 1892-1985; *Amboy Herald*, October 13, 1891, December 2, 1891; *Blue Earth Valley News*, September 10, 1908; *Good Thunder Herald*; September 2, 1891; *Madison Lake Mirror*, April 15, 1897; *Madison Lake Times*, March 27, 1919; *Mankato Free Press*, July 26, 1960; *The Review*, May 25, 1867.

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