

all those visitors are going to mean to our area payrolls, jobs and tax base.

We've made significant progress the last few weeks. You've read in the Free Press about some of our gains—\$90,000 from the County (not \$105,000 as first reported!), \$20,000 from the Lake Crystal Bank (the Lake Crystal committee members are within \$8000 of their \$46,000 goal!), and the \$10,000 from the Mankato Area Foundation. Another \$60,000 pledge over four years will come from the City of Mankato. \$60,000 over three years from a local business that wishes to remain anonymous, \$12,000 from American Bank, and several \$3000, \$5000, and \$10,000 pledges have arrived lately.

It's all beginning to add up, but the November 15 deadline for our \$150,000 Hubbard/Confer/Koehler challenge grant looms large. Those final dollars are always the hardest to come by.

We don't mean to slight our many wonderful supporters who may be more financially limited—so many of you have reached deep into your pockets for \$100, \$50 or \$10 contributions, and those gifts are very much appreciated! They've added up to a significant portion of our goal.

And of course it goes without saying we're also very grateful for the large givers, those who have the means and the desire to go to \$5,000, \$10,000, \$50,000 or more.

If you haven't received a personal solicitation call, it's not because you've been overlooked. We simply haven't had the people power to reach everyone personally. As members, you should have received a pledge brochure in the mail. If not, please call.

But come on, folks. We're running out of time.

Mini-Campaigns

Mini-campaigns for our fund drive, "The Future of Our Past," are in the process of being organized in Mapleton and Pemberton.

If you live in the Mapleton area, including Mapleton Township, Danville Township and the southern part of Beauford Township, and are willing to work for about two months to help raise that area's portion of our county-wide goal, please call Ann Christenson at 345-5566.

Or, if you live in Pemberton, Medo Township, or the southern part of McPherson Township and will help with that area's campaign, call Ann.

Each population area of Blue Earth County has been assigned a local goal commensurate with the numbers of people living there. Remember, we are a *county* society—we have members from all areas, and have collected artifacts, photos, records, printed materials, histories, and other items extensively from all nooks and crannies of the county. Your city will be well represented in the new exhibit hall, and is already well represented in our collection. We need your help with the fund drive.

The Lake Crystal campaign, our first in the small cities, has been wonderfully effective, thanks to a large, dedicated group of volunteers. Several of them have agreed to help in other cities by explaining what worked and what didn't work in Lake Crystal.

OK people from Mapleton area and Pemberton area—it's your turn to shine!

Membership & Programs

- Barbara J. Lamson

Welcome to the following new members:
Mary Ann Norman, Lake Crystal, MN
Lois Champlin, Lake Crystal, MN
Dr. & Mrs. David W. Clause, No. Mankato, MN
Mildred Hoppe, Good Thunder, MN
John C. Kolbe, Mankato, MN
Jane Engh, Mankato, MN
Craig Roberts, Mankato, MN
Aileen V. Eick, Mankato, MN
Rosella Norman, Mankato, MN
Loretti Johnson, Mankato, MN
George Tabbert, Mankato, MN
Scott-Falen Family, Mankato, MN
Jane Geurs, Mankato, MN
Richard & Tricia Nienow, Mapleton, MN
Laurie Erickson, Duluth, MN

Thanks to Eldon & Helen Jones, Life members since 1975 for taking out an additional membership as an annual couple.

DONATIONS

Thanks to the generosity of Grace Jefferson we were able to provide free transportation for those desiring it, from the West High School parking lot to Williams Nature Center for Ghosts From The Past, Oct. 1 & 2, 1988.

Thanks to the following people for responding to our request for used candles:

Betty Cords	Susan Monk-Kjos
Denise Hudson	The Dick Family
Audrey Decker	

An Honorarium has been received for the Homestead Players performance featuring Kathy Dorn.

MEMORIALS

In memory of Fred Lutz, Sr. from Judge and Mrs. Milton Mason.
In memory of Jared How from Ogden W. & Jane Confer.

PROGRAMS

Thirty seven members of the Leadership Mankato class of 1988-89 spent all day Sept. 14, 1988 at the Society learning about the rich heritage of Blue Earth County. The following people helped to make this day possible:

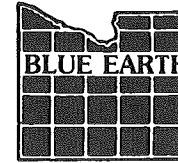
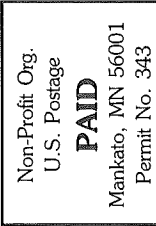
Jo Schultz, research
Janet Larson, research
Audrey Burmeister-Hicks, research
Susan Monk-Kjos, Slide presentation on the activities of the Society.
Ann Christenson, The Future of Our Past.
Burt Burns, Bus Tour, In Search of Our Past.
Bill Coughlan, Mankato-Kasota Stone Quarry Summit Center, use of their tables and staff.
Elmer Goodrich, for setting up and taking down chairs and tables.
George Tabbert, for setting up and taking down chairs and tables.
Bernie Langr, Servicemaster, shampoo carpet.
Mark Braun, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis/St. Paul
Martha Robinson, Acting Director Y.W.C.A.

Blue Earth County
Historical Society

606 South Broad

Mankato, MN 56001

Address Correction Requested



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

October 1988 Calendar of Events

Oct. 1	"Ghosts from the Past"
Oct. 2	"Ghosts from the Past"
Oct. 10	Columbus Day , Museum closed.
TBA	Young Historians Workshop

Notes from the Director

-Susan M. Monk-Kjos

First of all I'd like to say a temporary good-bye to Barbara Lamson who is leaving us this month for a 3½ month leave of absence. Barb will return to work in January and will be missed greatly while she is gone. Luckily, however, Margaret Hurlbut has been hired to temporarily replace Barb as Program Director. Margaret comes to us with experience in art education and currently has a studio at the Carnegie Art Center. We are excited about working with her on many projects this winter including the Young Historians. Good-bye to Marion Rodgers who has been with the Society as a Minnesota Valley Action Council Employee working with our collection. Marion is moving on to another position through the MVAC. Welcome Beverly Ham to our staff as a fundraising assistant working closely with Ann Christenson. Bev's experience with computers is proving a real asset in our capital fund campaign.

Work on the exhibit gallery design, partially funded through a Minnesota State Historical Society grant, architectural design of the new Archives/Map room and Conservators hired through the Institute of Museum Services grant will keep the staff and volunteers very busy this month. If members are curious about what is going on at the Hubbard House or Heritage Center please stop by and take a look. We've been getting lots of positive comments from people about our Move to the Future. Thanks for all of the calls and letters.

Mary Ann Norman, who is working on our fund drive in Lake Crystal, received the following note with a check from Orlando recently:

"Mary Ann,

I read in the Lake Crystal paper that the Historical Society is having a fund drive. I am sending you a check in memory of my uncle. I would appreciate if you would see to it getting where it needs to go. Thank you."

The sender's uncle is recently deceased. The unsolicited contribution from a former Lake Crystal resident was very gratefully received, and showed how much people, even those in distant places, care about their family roots.

The Windmill Climber

As a child growing up in Blue Earth County, Alma Wagen dreamed of mountains and the day when she would be able to scale a mountain to its peak. But with only glacial ridges and low Indian mounds available, she contented herself with climbing windmills on her grandmother Kraus's farm near Vernon Center. She called them her "mountains," and throughout the countryside she became known as the "Little Windmill Climber."

"I wanted to get up among the clouds and to feel myself free as the birds and the air," she said, "and to be able to shout my freedom as loudly as I liked without having someone say, 'It is not pretty for little girls to climb windmills.'"



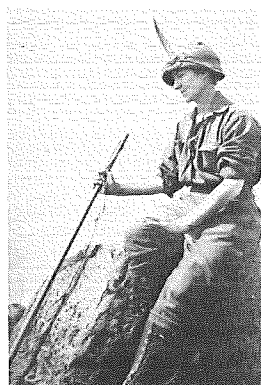
The Peter and Dora Kraus homestead where Alma Wagen became known as the "Little Windmill Climber."

Challenges were not unknown in Alma's ancestry. At the age of ten, her grandmother Dora Kraus embarked with her parents from Hanover, Germany, in 1845 for a seven-week voyage aboard an immigrant sailing ship bound for America. Immediately after landing in New York, the family set out for Wisconsin, finally pioneering on land near Milwaukee. At the age of 18, Dora married Peter Kraus, a "Forty-Niner" who had ventured overland to California during the gold rush, returning by way of the Horn. In 1864 they left their Wisconsin farm and traveled overland to LaCrosse, took a boat to Winona and then boarded the first train to run on the Northwestern Railroad to Rochester. Leaving his family there, Peter Kraus traveled on by stagecoach to Mankato and then by foot to the Watonwan where the family later homesteaded, where Alma's mother Mary was born, and where Alma climbed her "mountains." Although the windmills are gone, the homestead is still in the family today as the residence of Herbert and Carol Kraus.

Alma and her parents, Charles and Mary (Kraus) Wagen, lived in Mankato at 211 N. Front Street, where her father and uncle had a butcher shop. Here she grew up, attending Mankato Schools. Although she still had seen no mountains, she was holding to her dreams when she gave the commencement address entitled "Mountains" for her high school graduating class. After completing her further education at Mankato Normal School in 1899, Alma taught in Duluth and Mankato. Between teaching assignments, she continued her education at the University of Minnesota.

In 1913 Alma Wagen left the Midwest to teach mathematics in Tacoma Washington's Stadium High School. As she looked out upon Mt. Rainier from her classroom window, her dreams began to take shape. She spent her first earnings for hiking clothes; then joined the Seattle Mountaineer's Club, and hiked in the mountains during her spare time. On one of her early climbs, she was injured when a small boulder came bounding down and struck her on the back. Suffering unspeakable agony, she had to be brought down the slopes on a "human toboggan." Wrapped in coats and sweaters, she was lashed to the prone body of a well-padded guide who served as the make-ship toboggan. The two bound together were then alternately dragged and lowered across snow fields, rocks and chasms to an inn—an eight-house journey. Undaunted by this experience, she continued after her recovery to cross glaciers, explore caves and map out crevasses. Along with her hiking, she took special courses in botany and geology.

One summer Alma climbed over the Olympic Mountains on a hike from Port Angeles to the Pacific Ocean. The next summer she was scouting over the Reni Range in Alaska. But her most thrilling trip was in Mt. Rainier National Park. She walked entirely around Mt. Rainier—a distance of more than one hundred miles. Then instead of taking the usual south side climb to the top, she scaled the summit from the north side, a feat seldom accomplished. "By that time," Alma said, "I felt I could climb any mountain that ever reared its head in the air," and this she proceeded to do. In 1917 she scaled not only Mt. St. Helens, but hiked from there to Mt. Adams and on to Mt. Hood in Oregon. "And there," she said, "I felt the winds blow between the worlds at last, on the snow-capped peaks of Mt. Hood. No one but a mountain climber can know the joy it brings to reach the top."



Alma Wagen at the summit. On the back of a similar photograph she wrote that on a 14,408-foot climb, she carried a 16-pound pack to 9,000 feet the first day, spent the night at Camp Curtis, and reached the top by 2:00 p.m. the next day.

With the outbreak of World War I and the departure of most of the guides at Mt. Rainier National Park for military duty, Alma applied for and got a position as a mountain guide. As the first woman professional mountain guide in the national park system, she guided artists, editors, writers, statesmen, and international captains of high finance—among them, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. "But somewhere along the trail from Paradise Inn to the summit," she observed, "poet, diplomat and capitalist all lay aside their pet poses and became just plain folks."

Asked how women in her climbing parties compared with men in stamina, she replied, "There is no doubt that man is physically stronger, but when it comes to courage or endurance, just as many shaky masculine hands as feminine reach out to me for assistance across chasms and crevasses." She recalled one

well-known eastern athlete who began to get scared about half-way to the top. He became so terror-stricken his hand shook so that Alma could hardly grasp it to help him over dangerous places, but he stuck it out to the summit. Later she heard him remark to a companion, "I never would have made it in the world if we hadn't had a woman for a guide. I simply couldn't let a girl see me quit."

Professional mountain climbing ended for Alma Wagen when she married Dr. Horace Whitacre, a Tacoma physician and widower whose former wife had been prominent in social and community life. But Alma met this challenge with the same vitality, wit and organizational genius that contributed to her mountain climbing success. She channeled her energies into working with the newly emerging women's labor force, and was instrumental in the establishment of both the local YWCA and the large YWCA complex at St. Helens. When Dr. Whitacre became president of the Washington State Medical Association, she worked with him to establish the WSMA Auxiliary. She was the organization's first president and traveled extensively throughout the state helping organize other auxiliary units.

Fortunately, Dr. Whitacre shared Alma's enthusiasm for mountain climbing, although she couldn't always convince others of the benefits. "If I could only make tired people realize the invigorating effects of pure mountain air on tired bodies that are worn with months of intensive work in busy offices!" she lamented.

But as the "Little Windmill Climber" in Blue Earth County or the professional mountain guide in the Pacific Northwest, Alma Wagen needed no convincing. "There is no better fun in the world than that of sliding hundreds of feet on the snow in midsummer when you know the rest of the world is sweltering below you," she exclaimed, "or to know the wonderful exhilaration of viewing range on range of mountain peaks that rise in tinted ranks against the sky."

Inella Burns

SOURCES

All resource material for this article was gathered by Dr. Ruth Schellberg, MSU professor emeritus. Having become interested in Alma Wagen's achievements, she contacted a number of Wagen descendants and sought assistance from the regional and university libraries to collect the following magazine articles and photographs relating to Alma Wagen's mountain climbing experiences:

American Association of Health and Physical Education Archives, Reston, Va., 1918

Emerson Scrapbook, BECHS Archives, p. 99

Illustrated World, Volume 38, pp. 548-9, Dec. 1922

Obituary Book, 2, BECHS Archives, p. 346

Pierce County Medical Society Bulletin, Tacoma, WA, Sept. 1976

Sunset Magazine, June 1922

Wagen family contacts: G.M. Whitacre, M.D. (step-son of Alma Wagen Whitacre), Tacoma, WA; Herbert and Carol Kraus, Garden City; Mrs. Herbert Wagen, Mankato.

Curation Notes

-Audrey K. Burmeister-Hicks

The "Move to the Future" of the Society's museum collections is now two-thirds complete! All artifacts except those on exhibit or to be used in furnishing the Hubbard House have been transferred to the Heritage Center.

In the coming months the artifacts will be the object of much attention as the exhibit designers choose items to be incorporated into the first exhibits in the new gallery, the conservation consultant examines the condition of individual artifacts and assesses their needs, and the collections staff carries out an inventory and computerization of the collections records.

Once again, the BECHS was blessed with a crew of hard-working volunteers who sorted, packed, transported, and unpacked artifacts. The collections staff thanks Mankato's professional moving companies and the following individuals for assisting in the move:

Robert Cramer, Mapleton
Lorraine Wright, Mankato
Georgia "Jo" Schultz, Madison Lake
Fred Nelson, Mankato
Elmer Goodrich, Pemberton
George Tabbert, Mankato
Pam Johnson, Mankato
Marion Rodgers, Eagle Lake
Michelle Loveall, Mankato

Deadline!

The very generous challenge grant of \$150,000 offered by the Hubbard Foundation and Confer and Koehler families for our fund raising campaign has a deadline of November 15. The \$150,000 is to be the final amount in reaching our \$695,000 goal. This means that to collect, we must raise \$545,000 by November 15.

We are getting there. It is within the realm of possibility that we can achieve this goal. All it takes is the combined concerted effort of everybody in the county. Please join us in this wonderful opportunity. When the Hubbard House is restored and the Heritage Center is a dynamic, impressive museum, you are going to be very very proud!

WANTED

200 people to pledge \$1000 each, or 70 to pledge \$3000 each.

If that sounds like a lot of money, break it down into three- or four-year payments. That \$3000 pledge would only be \$1000 annually over three years, or only \$500 semi-annually. The \$1000 pledge would break down to only \$334 a year over three years, or only \$250 over four years.

Surely there are 200 more people in Blue Earth County who care about their roots and our local history enough to put \$1000 to \$3000 into the Historical Society's major expansion, not to mention the area economy and the difference