

Curation Notes, Continued

most commonplace articles of our daily life are not well represented in museum collections because it doesn't occur to us that they have historical significance. Keep in mind that Father's chores overalls are as important to the interpretation of the past as is Father's wedding suit.

The Maytag washer, the Edwardian walking suit, the exercise bike, and the manuscripts on flying saucers have served their original purpose well. Now, however, the purpose of these items will change. These items, like all the artifacts and archives material in our collection, are the primary source material to be used in constructing the picture of life in Blue Earth County. Each artifact added to the museum collection contributes to the Blue Earth County Historical Society's ability to fulfill its purpose of promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of the past.

We are currently in the research and planning stage of our new (large!) exhibit gallery in which we would like to cover the county's history through the present day. Not surprisingly, our collection is very strong for the prehistoric and early historic period (1852-1920s) but sparse for the 1930s through the 1980s.

As you do your spring cleaning or browse at local rummage sales or visit with friends and neighbors, keep the museum collection in mind. The "junk" you are discarding may be the "treasure" that will brighten a curator's day!

The Future of Our Past

- Ann Christenson

Cable access channel 13, CCTV, will soon be broadcasting a special program explaining the needs of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, why we are making our present changes, and a little bit of our history.

The video production uses slides pertaining to Blue Earth County and to the Historical Society's programs and facilities. It is introduced by development coordinator Ann Christenson.

Watch your TV listings in the Free Press for specific times of broadcast beginning in mid-May and repeated throughout the summer.

A similar program is available live for any organization, church group, or club in the county by calling Ann at 345-5566. There is no charge for this presentation.

Although we are still in the early stages of our capital fund drive, we are most grateful to those of our members and friends who have made contributions that are helping us get off to a running start. These include: Ken & Marilyn Berg Susan & Dick Chambers Bert & Inella Burns John & Ann Christenson

Mary Dooley Barb & Bill Maher
Wallace & Gladys Anita Stone
Hayenga Tom & Bridget Weigt
Joe & Sylva Kubicek Marty & Sue Wiltgen

Membership

- Barbara Lamson

Although membership dues will be increasing June 1, your membership will mean more than ever.

At the April meeting, your Board of Trustees discussed the recommendation of the Development Task Force that dues should be increased to help meet the increasing costs of operating your Historical Society. The Task Force made its recommendation after carefully examining the program, staff, and facility needs of the Society, and the costs associated with maintaining memberships.

While we are pleased that memberships have more than doubled in the past year and a half, we are finding that our members are asking for more services and more programs. Printing, planning, providing service, and, as we are all aware, postage, are eating bigger chunks from our operating budget every month.

After discussion and careful consideration, the Board members agreed that dues increases would be a responsible move toward trying to make the Society more self sufficient and responsive. The Board voted to raise single person annual dues to \$20, annual dues for families to \$30, and annual student dues to \$15 (all \$5 increases). Patron (\$100), Sponsor (\$300), Life (\$500), and Corporate (\$100) memberships will all remain the same.

In keeping with our capital fund drive, which includes provision for endowment monies that may be used to provide future operating funds, the increased membership dues will help give quality services and programming to all of our members.

Thank You

Thanks to the generosity of the following people for additional support during the past month:

Cambria Township Palmer Foundation
Lime Township Edna Will
Mapleton Township Lucille A. Fitzsimmons
Judson Township

Memorials Received

In memory of:
Mrs. S.W. Crooker, from Ogden W. & Jane Confer
Norman Nitzkowski, from Carl & Ruth Peterson
Mrs. James Reynolds from Dr. & Mrs. Don Meredith
Richard L. Myers, from Dr. & Mrs. John Trost, Laird
Waldo, Mrs. Cecil H. Jones, Chuck & Mary Lofy

Volunteers Needed:

If you can help out at the July 9, 1988 Tour of Historic Homes please give Barb Lamson a call at 345-4154.

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BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May 1988 Calendar of Events

- May 6 **Heritage Dinner**, Honoring the George and Olivia Palmer family, Ogden P. Confer accepting the award
- May 8 **Mother's Day**
- May 8-14 **Preservation Week 1988**, "Preservation: The People's Choice"
- May 11 **Audrey Burmeister-Hicks addresses Traverse des Sioux Genealogical Society in the Archives, Heritage Center, 7 pm**
- May 18 **International Museum Day**
- May 20-21 **"American Indians and Museums"** Conference, Science Museum of Minnesota
- May 22-23 **Historic Preservation, Tax Credits, and Housing Programs:** Packaging a Low-Income Rural Project, workshop in St. Paul, call 202-842-8600 for details.
- May 30 **Memorial Day**

Notes from the Director

- Susan Monk-Kjos

The staff of the Historical Society bids a fond farewell to Museum Aid, Bill Bessler who has accepted a summer position at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. We wish Bill the best of luck and look forward to seeing him in the fall. Barb Lamson and myself were dressed in Victorian costume during the Minnesota State Tourism Conference held in Mankato last month. We talked to over 250 people, promoting the Historical Society. Blue Earth County can certainly be proud of all we have to offer visitors. At certain times in our lives, each of us feel the need to remember special people and, often, want to make the remembrance significant and long lasting. A gift to the Blue Earth County Historical Society can be such a remembrance. Memorial gifts are used to support operations and/or specific projects assisting in the preservation of Blue Earth County history. Memorial gifts along with recognition gifts (birthday, anniversary, etc.) are unique ways to commemorate a person or occasion. Each Memorial or Recognition Gift is immediately acknowledged to the person or the family of the person being honored. This card does not include the amount of the gift. You, as the contributor, will also receive a separate acknowledgement for your records. For further information, please contact Barb Lamson at 507/345-4154.

Palmer Family Honored

The Blue Earth County Historical Society proudly announces the selection of the George and Olivia Palmer family as the 1988 Heritage Award recipients for significant contributions to Blue Earth County history. Ogden P. Confer will be accepting the award for the family at the third Annual Heritage Dinner on Friday, May 6 at the Mankato Holiday Inn.

George M. Palmer was born in 1853, in Winnebago County, Wisconsin to John and Cordelia Morrison Palmer. As a youth, George lived with relatives in Maine and received his basic education in an academy at Monmouth, until his relatives, the Tiltons, decided to move west and settle at Garden City, Minnesota when young Palmer was 14. Here George earned meager wages working for farmers and clerking in a local store. When George was 19 he took his \$200 savings and went to St. Paul where he attended a business college.

After returning to Garden City in the Spring of 1872, George learned of a bookkeeper job at the Mankato Linseed Oil Co. and walked the 14 miles to Mankato to investigate the position. One of the principals of the Linseed Oil Company, was R.D. Hubbard. He liked what he saw in young Palmer and offered him the bookkeeper job. Thus began a business association which spanned many decades.

Always alert of his surroundings, George Palmer observed a steady stream of horse-drawn wagons passing the linseed mill, hauling loads of wheat to be shipped out on the railroad which reached Mankato in the late 1860's. When young Palmer suggested to Hubbard that Mankato might be a natural site for a flour mill, entrepreneur Hubbard loved the idea. Soon plans for a large mill on North Front Street were drawn. Ground was broken in 1878, and the mill was open a year later. The new company was incorporated as the Mankato Mill Company, with Hubbard, William Pearson and Palmer as shareholders. Two name changes for the corporation followed, with Hubbard Milling Company evolving as the corporate name in 1897. This name continues to the present time.

Palmer emerged as an entrepreneur in his own right, becoming a stockholder and director of the First National Bank. In 1888 he organized, with S.H. Grannis, the Palmer and Grannis Elevator Company. This new firm developed 40 elevators in southwestern Minnesota, becoming a major supplier of wheat for Hubbard Milling Company.

In 1903, Palmer resigned his position with Hubbard Milling Company and became the full-time president of the First National Bank retaining that title for over 32 years.

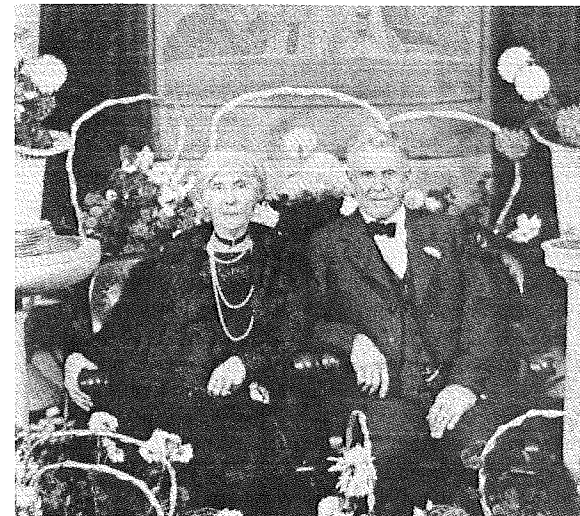
Leadership of the Hubbard Milling Company changed when R.D. Hubbard died in 1905. Palmer became a director and corporate treasurer. Jay Hubbard succeeded

his father as president. Less than a year later, Jay Hubbard resigned and Palmer became president, until his death in 1939 at the age of 85.

In addition to his milling, grain and banking interests, Palmer had other business involvements as well. He was associated with the Willard Cattle Company in Mankato, he was a partner in a farming operation known as the Palmer Farming Company at Euclid and Dorothy, Minnesota, with a nephew, Alfred Erven Palmer and in Mankato, was president of the Little Giant Company, from 1916-1937, this firm continues today as the Dotson Company.

Supplementing corporate ventures, Palmer was involved with civic and church organizations. He was one of the founders of the Mankato YMCA, was elected for a term as Mankato's mayor and was also on the city's Board of Education. He was a member of the Mankato, Minnesota, and U.S. Chambers of Commerce, president of Southern Minnesota Mills, and was affiliated with the Kiwanis Club, Social Science Club and the Masonic Lodge. He served the First Baptist Church of Mankato for many years, including being superintendent of its Sunday School for over 50 years. He also was president of the Minnesota Baptist Convention.

Mary Olivia Roberts, a Mankato native became George Palmer's wife on October 19, 1880 and shared in his many activities as his wife for over 50 years. Mrs. Palmer was also an active leader in church and community affairs.



George and Olivia Palmer on the 50th Anniversary of Hubbard Milling, 1928. From "A Past to Remember-A Future to Build", 1978.

The Palmers were the parents of a son, Earl, and a daughter, Ruth, who married Ogden A. Confer of Minneapolis in 1911. Earl Palmer had one son, George, and

Ruth Palmer and Ogden A. Confer had three children Ruth Confer, Mary Koehler, and Ogden P. Confer. The Palmer association with Hubbard Milling carries on today.

Accepting the award May 6, on behalf of the George and Olivia Palmer family is Ogden Palmer Confer, a grandson of George M. Palmer. His sons, Richard, and Ogden W. are actively involved today in Hubbard Milling Company. Mary Confer Koehler and her daughter, Ruth Bergerson are currently members of the Hubbard Company Board of Directors. In addition, George and Olivia's descendants live throughout the country and carry on the entrepreneur spirit begun over 100 years ago.

Prior Heritage Award recipients have included the Williams family with Howard Williams, senior member and the Judges Frank and Leslie Morse families with Leslie Morse, senior member.

For further information on the Heritage Dinner, please call Barb at 507/345-4154.

Curation Notes

- Audrey K. Burmeister-Hicks

One of the most rewarding aspects of a curator's job is the addition of another artifact to the collection. Rarely a week passes that we don't receive at least one artifact or archives item. A local person walks in with a box of "treasures", or a package arrives by mail, and it's Christmas for the collections staff!

It is not our general practice to list new acquisitions in our monthly newsletter because of limited space, but this is spring cleaning time and it may be helpful to acquaint you with the type of items we collect.

A very special item we received recently came to us by a rather circuitous route. The item is a two-piece Edwardian walking suit/dress—in excellent condition—worn by former county resident Mary McCleary. Mary and her husband, James T. McCleary, lived in Mankato from 1881, when McCleary began teaching history at Mankato Normal School until 1907. In 1892, McCleary was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for seven consecutive terms. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed McCleary assistant postmaster general and the McClearys left Blue Earth County.

How then did Mary McCleary's suit return to Blue Earth County in 1988? During the years of the McCleary's residence in Washington, D.C., they spent summers in Maiden Rock, Wisconsin. There Mary McCleary befriended a young girl who lived next door and presented the suit to her as a gift. The dress was carefully preserved by this woman who subsequently sold it to an antique shop in Red Wing, Minnesota. In time the suit was purchased from the shop by Mary Frances Palmer

of Winona, who apparently has no connection with either the McClearys or Blue Earth County. Palmer exhibited the suit at the Victorian Fair and other historical exhibitions in Winona, but always felt that it should be displayed in the area where it was originally worn. Thus, she presented the suit to the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

Only a couple weeks prior to the receipt of Mary McCleary's suit, we received another item related to the McCleary family. A box of books was brought in and we were invited to choose any books we felt should be added to the collection. Packed between various novels and textbooks we found a textbook entitled *A Study in Civics* written by James T. McCleary. The book is one of two textbooks authored by McCleary during his tenure at Mankato Normal School. The other book, entitled *A Man of Civics*, is not currently represented in our collection but this seems to be McCleary month here at the Museum and it too may arrive shortly!

Another recent acquisition, which comes to us from the estate of Wilbur Sperry, represents a world far removed from that of the McCleary walking suit. Sperry was a chemical engineer who had a professional and private interest in flying saucers, "star energy", and "cosmocymbetics" and we are the recipients of several unpublished manuscripts written and illustrated by Sperry.

The receipt of the Sperry collection aptly illustrates that our organization collects Blue Earth County history from prehistoric times right up through the Space Age.

And what better illustrates life in the 1980s than exercise equipment! Recent visitors to our curatorial workroom may have received the false impression that the museum staff spends their days working out on the Schwinn exercise bike and rowing machine located there. These items are actually being accessioned into the museum collection. Receipt of these nearly new "artifacts" gives us the opportunity to preserve them in their original condition. If any of our members have given up their exercise routine or have worked their way into a smaller clothing size, we would also like to add to the collection an aerobics leotard, jogging suit, and other exercise gear. This is your opportunity to show your great great grandchildren that yours was a healthy and fit period of history!

Illustrating the period midway between the Edwardian Era and the Space Age is a 1927 Maytag wringer washing machine which comes to the collection from Richard Longenecker of Mankato. The washer represents a commonplace item necessary to our everyday life, but which is usually discarded after it has been replaced by an improved product. Many times the