

Curation Notes

-Audrey K. Burmeister-Hicks

What is more enjoyable than a picnic in the country on a beautiful June day! The Blue Earth County Historical Society and the Traverse des Sioux Genealogy Society are inviting the public to join them for an event which combines a picnic in the country with an opportunity to participate in the preservation of historical data.

This summer the BECHS and the local genealogy society will be resuming a cemetery project which was initiated several years ago by members of both these organizations. In that project teams or individuals systematically record information inscribed on tombstones and place a copy of that data in historical libraries for use by researchers. Most of the 20 cemeteries in Blue Earth County which have already been surveyed are small or private or "abandoned" cemeteries which have deteriorating tombstones.

Persons interested in participating in this project should meet at the BECHS Heritage Center, 415 Cherry Street, Mankato, at 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 8, to car-pool out to a rural county cemetery. Please bring pencils, notepads, and a picnic lunch if you will be with us all day. We plan to work until about 4:00 p.m. We expect beautiful weather but in case of rain we will meet at the same time and place the following Wednesday, June 15.

The project will be continued on the second Wednesday of July and August. For more information on the Blue Earth County Cemetery Project, contact Audrey at 507-345-5566.

We continue to have a need for cardboard boxes with telescoping lids (paper supply boxes). If you have any to spare please bring them to the Heritage Center or call 507-345-5566.

Heritage Dinner

Our thanks to the following people who helped to ensure the success of the Third Annual Heritage Dinner, honoring the George and Olivia Palmer family.

Betty Lou Cords	Barb Maher
Susan & Dick Chambers	Colleen Smith
Kathy Dorn	Elizabeth Lorentz
Bunny Just	Tom Sevens
Mike Lagerquist	Jeanette Thorn
Jim Zwickey	John Palmer
Dean M. Pettis	Rosemary Brosch
Esther Iverson	The Confer family
Anita Stone	Jo Schultz

Volunteers needed:

If you can help out with the July 9, 1988, Tour of Historic Homes, we will provide you with a complimentary ticket for the tour in exchange for working a 1½ hour shift. For more information please call Barb at 507-345-4154.

Membership

-Barbara J. Lamson

Memorials received:

In memory of Richard L. Myers, former President of the Blue Earth County Historical Society and Chairman of the Minnesota Territorial Centennial Celebration, 1952.

David & Barbara J. Lindenberg	Mrs. R.H. Sponberg
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce & Industry, St. Paul, MN	Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Madsen
Olsen, Thielen & Co., St. Paul, MN	Paul & Dorothy Mulready
Lee Snilsberg	Mr. & Mrs. George W. Sugden
Dr. R. Wynn & Elizabeth Kearney	Bud & Adeline Carlson
Kelton & Dorothy A. Gage	Robert F. Johnson
Howard Williams	Mrs. Orris M. Johnson
Lee Williams	Karl H. Bruscke
Mr. & Mrs. Theo Miller	Dr. & Mrs. R.V. Townsend
C.R. Butler	Dr. & Mrs. Ben Geurs
Mrs. Wm. R. Luwe	David & Ellen Christensen
Jim Halpern	Patricia K. Johnson
Evelyn Pennington	Cletus & June S. Cummiskey
Judge & Mrs. Milton D. Mason	Jean T. Bender
Paul L. Stevens	Earl & Georgeanna Reynolds
Gerald W. Eick	Rodney & Roselyn Skillman
Mrs. T.V. Welsch	Phyllis K. Rivard
	Waldo & Jean Jaax
	Dr. & Mrs. Mark Taylor
	Scott Taylor
	Mr. & Mrs. Brett M. Taylor, Jr.
	R. H. & Catherine Lutes
	William C. Blethen

Other memorials received:

In memory of Ivan H. Roberts, from Loren & Marilyn Ringheim

In memory of Mary Huettl Leonard from Elizabeth M. Lorentz

Donations to the Heritage Endowment Fund:

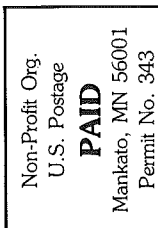
Jean E. Carlstrom	Don & Joanne Kvasnicka
The Mankato Free Press	Eldon & Helen Jones
Jeanne D. Kress	Helen Wiedenheft
Don & Marge Meredith	L.W. & Nadine Andreas
Virgil & Jeanette Thorn	Peter Ferguson
Carl & Ruth Peterson	Judy Davis
Robert Holzinger	

Additional donations:

Leray Township	Crystal Study Club,
Jean E. Carlstrom	Lake Crystal

Welcome to the following new members:

Al & Ruth Meyer, Mankato, MN
Carolyn Fox, Mankato, MN



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Mankato, MN 56001
Address Correction Requested

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BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

June 1988 Calendar of Events

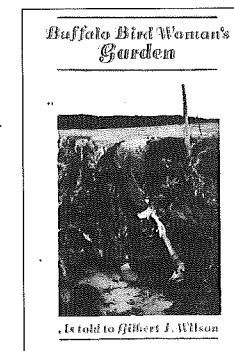
June 8	Blue Earth County Historical Society and Traverse des Sioux Genealogical Society Cemetery Project.
June 10	Chamber of Commerce Coffee Break , 8 am at the Heritage Center, all members welcome.
June 11	Young Historians workshop , 9 am, "Medicine Before Aspirins", taught by retired MSU Professor, Ronnie Burton.
June 18	Minnesota Genealogical Society Meeting, at the Heritage Center.
June 19	Father's Day
June 21	Musicfest, Mankato/North Mankato Commission on the Bicentennial Celebration of the U.S. Constitution.

Notes from the Director

-Susan M. Monk-Kjos

Welcome to the month of June and the beautiful gardens of the Hubbard House and Carriage House. The city of Mankato along with the Twilight Garden Club have been working diligently on our Award Winning Gardens. Thanks for all of the nice letters and phone calls we have received since the Heritage Dinner last month. We truly appreciate hearing from our members.

One of the most in-depth accounts of the Hidatsa village Indians ever published is available in a new edition and for sale in our gift shop. "Buffalo Bird Woman's Garden: Agriculture of the Hidatsa Indians" by Buffalo Bird Woman as told to Gilbert L. Wilson with a new Introduction by Jeffrey R. Hanson is available for \$7.95. Buffalo Bird Woman's first person narrative provides modern gardeners with a guide to an agricultural method free from fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. In addition, recipes, stories, songs and horticultural secrets are shared with the reader. Please feel free to stop by the Hubbard House gift shop at 606 S. Broad St. in Mankato and browse through the ever changing items. Gift shop hours of operation are Tuesday-Sunday, 1-5 p.m.



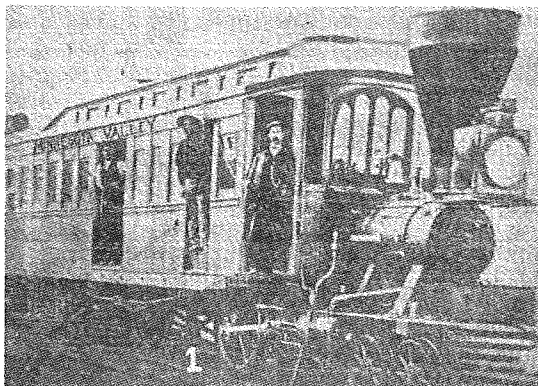
The Railroad Comes to Blue Earth County

By 1868 Blue Earth County was experiencing considerable growth. That year 40,689 acres of land were under cultivation, 25,566 of which were planted in wheat with a harvest of 550,000 bushels. As a result, milling flourished and manufacturing of farm implements developed. The wool trade for the spring of 1869 amounted to 43,640 pounds, and the fur trade continued strong with \$88,800 worth of pelts bought by Mankato furriers.

With such growth, the county was in need of commercial expansion, but transport by horse-drawn wagons was slow with limited cargo space, and river shipping was seasonal as well as uncertain. And so there was cause for great celebration in the fall of 1868 when the Minnesota Valley Railway (later known as the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad) reached Mankato, connecting the county with the outside commercial world.

The first stake for the railway survey was set with due ceremony by Judge J. Brayton of Ohio on June 4, 1857, and surveying crews worked in the county during the early 1860's. By the middle of 1865, the company had six to eight miles of track laid from Hamilton's Landing (Savage) southwest toward Shakopee. But with a lack of funds and materials, construction lagged. The company had no locomotives nor money to buy them. Finally with a private loan, E.F. Drake, who headed rail construction, found a second-hand locomotive in Columbus, Ohio, and purchased it along with five flat cars and two box cars. He shipped them by rail to La Crosse, Wisconsin: by barge up the Mississippi to St. Paul; and on up the Minnesota River to Hamilton's Landing.

The earliest engines on the Valley Railroad were *The Shakopee* and the *Mankato*. Called "the dummy," the *Shakopee* could pull only one coach and the engine cab served as the smoking compartment for coach passengers. Although it made the first run from Shakopee to Mankato,



The *Shakopee*, first engine used on The Minnesota Valley Railroad, which later became The St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, then The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad.

the *Mankato*, a curious four-wheeled engine, was the first to pull a train to Mankato.

As construction picked up in 1866, Mankato voted a bonus of \$15,000 in bonds for right of way over Fourth Street and for depot ground between Plum and Elm streets with the understanding that the rail lines would reach Mankato by December 1.

But the Valley Railroad didn't reach Mankato until October 3, 1868. At that time, the track was considered too rough for safe passenger travel, but on October 8, the first freight shipment left for Chicago carrying 200 barrels of flour from the Red Jacket and Farmers' mills. Finally on October 12, the new timetables for the Valley Railroad went into operation, and the *Mankato Weekly Record* reported "two daily passenger trains arriving and departing with commendable promptness." For a \$4.00 ticket, a person could travel to St. Paul in three hours and 23 minutes.

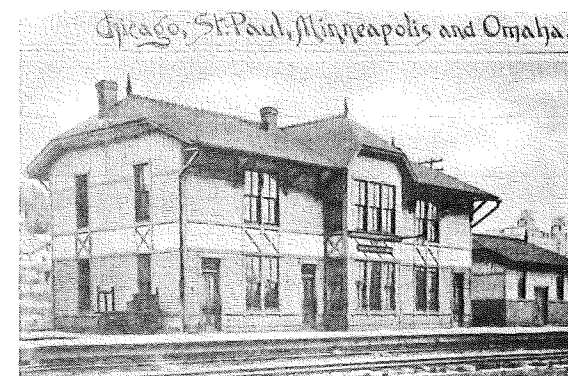
To honor the advent to the railroad and the people responsible, Mankato held a great celebration on October 20, 1868. At an early hour, teams from the country began to arrive, lining the streets with wagons and buggies. Front Street was soon bustling with people. About noon the Mankato Cornet Band led the crowd to the depot. As the train arrived, 500 "whole-souled, jolly" guests from St. Paul, Minneapolis and intermediate points received loud and hearty cheers. Among the dignitaries welcomed by Mankato's Mayor Wiswell were Ex-Governors Henry Sibley and Alexander Ramsay, Col. Merriam, St. Paul Mayor Steward, and the Hon. Edmund Rice, "the father of railroads in Minnesota."

The Great Western and Mankato bands led the procession of at least 1,000 persons to Burn's new brick building where dinner had been prepared by M and T.C. Fowler of Clifton House. According to the *Record*, the feast consisted of the following: "50 turkeys, 10 geese, 20 ducks, 100 chickens, 15 tongues, and 12 hams . . . making 1,170 pounds of meats; 1200 biscuits; 310 pies; 50 large frosted cakes; 25 large plain cakes; 12 jelly cakes; 74 stands of celery; 74 dishes of sardines; 74 stands of jelly; 74 dishes of pickles; 74 dishes fritters; 74 dishes small cakes; 74 dishes cheese; 24 bottles catsup; 74 dishes cold slaw; 3 barrels of coffee, besides a number of little things." Following the banquet officials from around the state praised Mankato's cooperation in building the railroad and especially commended E.F. Drake, head of construction.

The day after the festivities another historic event worthy of celebration occurred at the Fourth Street depot. The first message on the newly completed Northwestern Telegraph line was received by Operator Drake, providing the county faster access to distant places by wire as well as by rail.

A number of the visitor's impressions of the railroad celebration at Mankato were reported in their local newspapers. The *St. Paul Press* praised Mankato's handsome location, its seven churches, new school building, and flourishing Normal School of sixty pupils. The *Dispatch* was impressed with the number of factories . . . "a woolen mill, several flouring and lumber mills, sash and door factories, furniture and machine shops, a pottery, tannery, oil mill and others . . ." The *Winona Democrat* commented on "the miraculous growth of Mankato, its long rows of splendid brick and stone business

houses, its numerous elegant private residences, and above all its never ceasing whirl of business."



Mankato's first train station. After the city's agitation to remove the tracks from residential Fourth Street, the station was abandoned in favor of the present Union Depot.

On October 29 St. Paul, in turn, hosted a Mankato excursion to their city to celebrate the completion of the Valley Railroad. Two hundred tickets were issued by the railroad company and distributed to leading citizens by the Common Council. Considerable indignation was expressed because no clergy were included, but one gentleman reasoned that perhaps "they did not care to have their little irregularities noticed in the pulpits."

As reported in the *Record*, the Mankato delegation "sped through wood and swamp and o'er prairie and trestle work" toward St. Paul, past ponds and lakes "sparkling like beads of silver . . . and covered with countless numbers of wild fowl." Upon arriving in St. Paul the group was met by cheering crowds, and the Great Western Band led them over the Mississippi river bridge to Third Street, which was hung with banners and lined with throngs of people. They stopped at the International Hotel and crowded into a room intending to toast the occasion; but just as the Mankato Mayor raised his glass, the floor gave way from the weight of the throng, and the dignitaries all disappeared beneath a cloud of dust. Rushing to the cellar to offer aid, Mankatoans arrived to see the dust clear away and the tall figure of their gallant mayor still holding aloft his glass. Fortunately, no one was injured. After a "feast worthy of a king," toasts and speeches, treats of cigars and "other light things," the crowd returned to the depot and "tumbled aboard followed by a keg of molasses (?) the gift of St. Paulites." The trip home was reported as uproarious with everyone "yer bes' frien', ye know." Nothing occurred to mar the occasion.

From this gloriously celebrated beginning, the railroads soon extended in a network throughout Blue Earth County to bring increased growth in agriculture, business, industry and cultural enrichment to county people. But that's another story for a future BECHS Newsletter.

by Inella Burns

Sources

Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County*; Jeanne Kress, "Railroads in Blue Earth County - Chronology of Railroad Construction," 1980; *Mankato Free Press*, April 5, 1937; October 21, 1949; *Mankato Weekly Record*, October 10, 1868; October 17, 1868; October 31, 1868.

An Economic Advantage

- Ann Christenson

Sometimes it seems that your Historical Society sits right up there along with apple pie, the flag, and motherhood—nice, harmless, and unchallenging.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Well, nice, yes. Harmless, yes. But unchallenging? No way.

Stop to think about the economic impact the Blue Earth County Historical Society has on the city of Mankato and the county at large. Then think about the potential economic impact of two first class attractions such as the Society envisions.

When you have visitors, where do you take them to show off our area? Mankato and Blue Earth county are not exactly heavy duty when it comes to offering visitors entertaining options.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau works hard to attract large meetings, conferences and sports events. One thing meeting planners look for in selecting a site is the availability of entertainment for the spouses and children of those attending the event.

The Valley Industrial Development Corporation works hard to bring new business to the area. The commercial enterprises already here could make the job easier by supporting the institutions that enhance the quality of life employers are looking for, such as the Historical Society, the library, YMCA and YWCA, schools, churches, etc.

The challenge is to foster in Blue Earth County and Mankato unique, high quality attractions that will make us all proud. The restoration of the Hubbard House to a period piece holds terrific appeal to tourists. There's nothing else like it around. Such preservation projects in other communities generate an enormous amount of interest.

Likewise, to be able to offer a museum that can adequately display outstanding artifacts from a collection of more than 15,000 items is an economic advantage. The Heritage Center will house such a museum, along with an archival research area that will gladden the hearts of the hundreds of researchers who come from outstate, and even from other countries, to seek family histories.

When you're asked to contribute to the Heritage Fund drive, don't think of it as supporting apple pie and motherhood. Consider the economic edge two outstanding historic facilities can bring to an area that's struggling to establish an identity for visitors.

Think of the potential! Accept the challenge!