

Curation Notes

-Audrey K. Burmeister-Hicks

"Photographs seize time and hold a moment for close scrutiny", writes curator and author Patrick Norris. Photographs are windows into the past, carrying the mind into a time and place now gone.

In Blue Earth County's new history exhibit gallery photographs will be one of the major components. At this time we are in the process of selecting the photographs to be exhibited in the first series of exhibits. The BECHS and Minnesota Historical Society photograph collections have been searched for appropriate photographs. Many have been chosen, but others that we will need are not represented in either of those two collections. We are hopeful that those photographs can still be found and to assist us with this, we are turning to our members. If you have or know of the existence of any of the photographs listed below please call us at 507/345-5566 (ask for Audrey or Susan). We can make a copy of the photograph so the owner can retain the original.

Dakota village sites, activity related to agriculture, and the provision of food, shelter, and clothing
Winnebago Agency and people
pioneer surveying, timber cutting, prairie breaking, building, and beginning agriculture
towns in the county which no longer exist (Cream, Shelbyville, etc.)

Lake Crystal's commercial and residential areas
Mapleton's telephone office/exchange
rural mail delivery vehicles and activity
television crews filming in the county
people viewing early television (1940s or 1950s)
radio stations and crews
newspaper offices and staffs
Marlow Milking Machine company or use of Marlow equipment
creameries and dairies
dairying activity
flour mills and millers
early electrical appliances at work
REA activity during its early years
electric power sites in the county
early road building
early buses and freight trucks
stage coach lines
quarrying and/or work crews
stonecarvers
cement making and/or work crews
bricklaying activity and/or work crews
early brick buildings
Gilbert Fletcher and/or his work
county dance bands (1852 to present)
county marching bands (1852 to present)
persons quilting or doing other needlework
persons painting or sculpting
early Sunday school meetings
early church services
early school scenes (including the normal school & business schools)

Sibley Park museum (especially interior views)
museum exhibits in Carnegie Library
early museum exhibits in the Hubbard House
railroads and depots in 19th century county towns

Membership

Welcome to the following new members:

C.A. "Gus" Johnson, III, Mankato
Don R. Marben, Lake Crystal
G.W. Fisher, Mankato
David Walters, Mankato
Mrs. Evelyn Deike Mikkelsen, Mankato
Michelle A. Loveall, Mankato
Susan Briney, Mankato
Pamela A. Johnson, Mankato
Judith S. Vosbeck, Cleveland
Alms & Alms Agricultural Consulting, Lake Crystal
Letha Moutz, Knob Noster, MO
Janet M. Larson, N. Mankato
Pam Pietan, Mankato
Carmelia Doring, Mankato
Donna Butler, Mankato

Memorials

Memorials Received:

In memory of Darlene Radichel from Donald and Betty Freeman

In memory of Marie Bruce from Bert and Inella Burns, Lorraine Wright, and Anita Stone

In memory of Ogden P. Confer from Jean E. Carlstrom, Kay and Randall Lamb and Ruth Confer

In memory of Fred Lutz, Sr. from Jean E. Carlstrom

In memory of Nolan Johnson from Marion Johnson

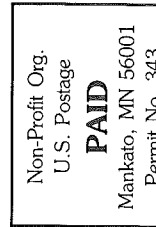
In memory of Frank and Josyphine Pay from Kelsey and Mary Pay Johnson

In memory of Lyle Webb Roberts from Craig Roberts

Thanks to the following who have so generously donated to the Historical Society this holiday season:

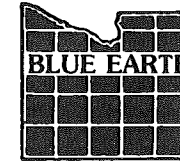
Ev and Hank Schmanski
Arthur and Lois Schrader
Peace Pipe Girl Scout Council Troop #394
George Shanahan and Diane Cooper

*Please note that if we received your memorial, membership or donation after the 15th of the month when our newsletter goes to press, your name will appear in next month's newsletter.



Blue Earth County
Historical Society
606 South Broad
Mankato, MN 56001
Address Correction Requested

Published monthly by the Blue Earth County
Historical Society, 606 So. Broad St.,
Mankato, MN 56001



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

January 1989 Calendar of Events

- Jan. 1 **Museum closed for New Years Day**
Jan. 2 **Museum closed for New Years Observance**
Jan. 14 **Young Historians**, Saturday, 9:00 am at the Heritage Center taught by local fiber artist, Jill Stoffregan. Class is FREE but size is limited call 507/345-4154 for reservations.
Jan. 16 **Museum closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration.**

Notes from the Director

-Susan Monk-Kjos

With the year coming to an end, I am proud to be looking back over 1988—an outstanding year of achievement for the Blue Earth County Historical Society—and forward with anticipation for all that 1989 holds. All of these thoughts are very gratifying, for I feel truly fortunate to be part of an organization dedicated toward preserving the Heritage of Blue Earth County. Support shown over the past year means a great deal to all of us at the Historical Society. As a member of this growing, dynamic organization, you should also take pride in the incredible successes that have marked 1988. As always, there is unfinished business to address and important goals to be met in the new year, together we can make 1989 an unbeatable year. The Christmas open house which took place on December 4 at the Hubbard House was a terrific finale to a year full of great moments. I thank all of you who helped make the event so successful and thank the over 250 people who celebrated with us that beautiful winter evening. As the Holiday Season comes to a close each of you can take heart in knowing that the gift of a preserved Blue Earth County heritage is more possible than ever before because of you! Happy New Year from the staff of the Historical Society.

The Railroads Reach Out

"Red Jacket Mills, Post Office and all, are on tip toe! Already we hear, 'in the dim distant future,' the snorting of the iron horse, and the heavy rumbling of his twenty iron wheeled wagons as they come over the hills... freighted with their precious cargo of human life." Although tongue-in-cheek, columnist "Rusticus" in the October 31, 1868, Mankato *Record* thus expressed the excitement sparked by the much celebrated arrival of the first train into Mankato and the speculation throughout Blue Earth County about routes the railroad might take. But along with this excitement, he was skeptical as he perceived the potential for exploitive speculation by "land sharks blessed with a greater amount of greenbacks than good sense" and "paper cities" with the coming of the railroads.

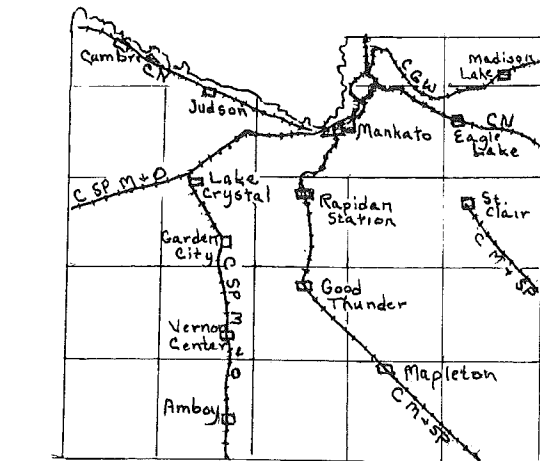
Not all farmers welcomed the railroads either. Kelly Dethloff Reuter in her Amboy centennial book includes excerpts from Curtis Louer's diary in which he records his father's antipathy to the "gol-durned" railroads: "Huh-h-h! Scare our horses to death and run over any durned thing that dasts set a foot on them danmed tracks. And spread fires all over our prairies!" Having had to pay for his Railroad Relinquishment land twice, the elder Louer predicted that once they got their "crooked hooks into us"... the railroads would "own the whole country!"

But the railroads did come. Between 1870 and 1907, a network of rail lines extended throughout Blue Earth County, totaling seven in all, five of which radiated from Mankato. In conjunction with the rail lines, a number of new townsites were platted, usually near existing settlements.

By the summer of 1869, the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad (originally the Minnesota Valley and eventually the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad) reached Crystal Lake. In anticipation of its arrival, the new town of Lake Crystal was laid out in May, and in four months what had been a field was a thriving village of forty buildings. By 1882 there were six hotels which did a "land office business" in the '80's after a second rail line was laid, and 23 trains a day were coming to Lake Crystal.

Other booming villages followed as soon as stations on the developing rail lines were designated. Besides the depot and the post office, elevators were a priority for the rich agricultural area. Quick to follow were businesses that provided the basic needs for a thriving town.

Minneopa village, platted in 1870, provides an interesting illustration of a new railroad townsite in a resort area. Besides the Minneopa depot, the railroad constructed an elevator from which 19,000 bushels of wheat were shipped to St. Paul in November. J. Dean's lumberyard, Daniel Rowland's store, a blacksmith shop, hotel, and other buildings soon followed. As the railroad brought excursionists and artists from as far away as St. Paul and Winona, the Falls area was cleared and im-



Outline map of Blue Earth County, showing approximate location of rail lines and stations. Adapted from the *Standard Atlas of Blue Earth County, Minnesota, 1914.*

Key:

CGW - Chicago Great Western RR - (originally the Cannon Valley RR)

CN - Chicago Northwestern RR - (originally the Winona and St. Peter RR)

C, M & SP - Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul RR - (originally the Central RR of Minnesota)

C, SP, M & O - Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha RR - (originally the Minnesota Valley RR, then the St. Paul & Sioux City RR. From 1882 on, controlled by the Chicago Northwestern. Locally called the *Omaha*)

proved with foot bridges, trails, and stairs down into the glen below the Falls. Huge camp meetings of 3,000 to 5,000 as well as groups from lodges, schools and granges gathered during the summer. Business flourished, but even the railroads could not save the town from the devastation of the grasshopper plagues in the mid-'70's. Minneopa village declined, although the railroad continued to bring excursionists to this noted pleasure resort well into the 1900's when the village land had become part of Minneopa State Park.

The second railroad to extend into Blue Earth County was the Winona and St. Peter line, a part of the Chicago Northwestern Railway system. By August 1870, the track was completed to Burgess' Mill (Eagle Lake) and the first train arrived in Mankato on August 26.

In 1874 the Mankato to Wells track was laid, the third line in the county and the first connection south. Three years earlier as designated stations on the route became known, three new townsites were platted: Rapidan (Station), Good Thunder, and Mapleton. By the end of September 1874,

daily trains were running to Good Thunder, and on November 17, a celebration of the completion of the rail line to Wells was held. In 1879 the line was sold to the Chicago Milwaukee Railroad, much to the consternation of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad whose officers had all but sealed the purchase contract. Piqued by such underhanded dealings, the St. Paul and Sioux City company built a rival line from Lake Crystal via Garden City, Vernon Center, and Amboy on its way south to a major east-west rail line. Originally a station was planned at Shelbyville, but when the town voted down a \$10,000 railroad bonus, the St. Paul and Sioux City platted the new village of Amboy for their station, a mile and half north, causing Shelbyville to become deserted within a few years. Eventually the line carried eight passenger trains and two freight trains a day.



The Presidential Special in Madison Lake. President William Howard Taft (center) is greeted by Mayor H.G. Wirig (second from right) at the Madison Lake Depot, October 24, 1911.

The Chicago Great Western Railroad (originally the Cannon Valley line) being built westward from Faribault, reached Madison Lake in 1884 and Mankato in 1887. Madison Lake was already a popular summer resort with guests coming to Point Pleasant from as far as Chicago, Kansas City and Omaha, and the new townsite platted with the arrival of the railroad became a thriving business center, shipping grain, potatoes, and sometimes over ten carloads of lumber a day.

To accommodate the government requirement for passenger service, the Chicago Great Western in 1910 began running the Dan Patch, a fast gasoline-fired motor coach and baggage car, between Madison Lake and Mankato. In 1902 the Chicago Great Western built the present Union Depot in Mankato, contracting to share it with the Chicago Milwaukee line which was already sharing their roundhouse.

In 1899 the Chicago Northwestern laid their "Short Line" up the Minnesota river valley from Mankato to New Ulm, adding two new townsites—Judson and Cambria—both platted in the early spring of 1900.

The last rail line constructed in Blue Earth County was Chicago Milwaukee's "Alphabet Line," laid in 1906-07 from Albert Lea north through Pemberton to St. Clair. As in the case of Amboy and Shelbyville, the newly platted town of Pemberton prospered while the by-passed settlement of Cream declined.

Exploitive and underhanded as they may have been in some of their dealings, the railroads obviously did not prove to "own the whole country." With the coming of automobiles, trucks, and highway systems, many of the tracks have fallen into disuse or have been removed for bicycle, hiking, or cross-country skiing trails. But the railroads in their day proved to be a much needed catalyst in the stabilizing of settlements and in the growth of agriculture, business, and industry in Blue Earth County.

Sources

Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County*; Jeanne Kress, "Railroads in Blue Earth County—Chronology of Railroad Construction," 1980; Lake Crystal Area Historical Society, *Beginnings*, 1979; Madison Lake Area Historical Society, *Madison Lake's Historical Quilt*, 1983; Kelly Dethloff Reuter, *Amboy, Minnesota—A Heritage Rooted in Rural America*, 1979; Mankato *Record*, October 31, 1868, *Standard Atlas of Blue Earth County, Minnesota, 1914.*

NOTE: A special thanks to Jeanne Kress for her thorough research and well-organized compilation of railroad history, which was the major source of information for this article.

by Inella Burns

Sing A Joyous Song

"It put me in the Christmas Spirit..."

I want to personally thank all of the generous people who helped to make the Christmas Open House at the Hubbard House a huge success. Your time and efforts show a genuine interest in your Historical Society. "We couldn't have done it without you." Thanks again, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Margaret-Greta Hurlbut	Audrey Burmeister-Hicks
Pam Johnson	Michelle Loveall
Iris Nigg	Erna Stock
Karen Wright	Susan Monk-Kjos
Faye Mattison	Jo Schultz
Chuck Christianson	Kay Lamb
Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kubicek	Dean Pettis
Friederike Loveall	Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Goodrich
Ethel Medalan	Ann & John Christenson
Sue Chambers	Mrs. Margaret Schreyer
Marty Wiltgen	Helen Jones
Tom Weigt	Pat Nienow
Peter McGuire	Matt Crouch
Jessica Fox	Patti Tryhus
Girl Scouts of Mankato	- Peacepipe Council

Please continue to stop by the Hubbard House and enjoy the up-coming seasonal and historical exhibits.