



BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

July 1990

Calendar of Events

- July 4 **Offices Closed** in observance of Independence Day.
- July 7 **Tour of Homes**, 10am-3pm, call 507/345-5566 for ticket information.
- July 11 **Cemetery Day**, Lake Crystal and Holy Family Cemeteries, call Audrey at 507/345-5566 for more information.
- July 23 **Membership Drive**, call Mary at 345-5566 for details.

Notes from the Director

-Susan M. Monk-Kjos

Welcome to Jane Kolars who began work on June 18 as our new Program Director. Jane comes to us from working at local television station KEYC. We're excited to have her enthusiasm and public relation skills. If you're in the area, stop by and say hi to Jane! Thank you to all of the people who have volunteered to work at the Tour of Homes this year. We anticipate an exciting day and hope our extended hours will allow all of the visitors time to tour the six buildings. Special thanks go to the anonymous editor who sent me a spelling correction from last month's newsletter. If you are interested in volunteering on a regular basis to proof the newsletter, just give me a call, preferably before it gets printed. Busy times are ahead and we are still looking for a few more volunteers for the membership drive phone-a-thon on Monday night, July 23 from 7-9pm. Call Mary Brown if you can help for a one hour shift. We are also looking for volunteers to staff our exhibit at the Blue Earth County fair, August 2-5. We're making changes in the Ag Heritage building this year and anticipate Homestead Player performances and lots more room for visitors and displays. We are in need of the 1988 and 1989 Polk Mankato City Directories for the Archives collection. Please give us a call at 345-5566 if you can donate a copy of either publication. Thanks to Intern Kelly Nelson who completed a draft disaster management plan for us during her final quarter of school at Mankato State University.

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Edited by Susan Monk-Kjos

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**Blue Earth County
Historical Society**
415 Cherry St.
Mankato, MN 56001

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Tour of Homes

The 4th annual TOUR OF HOMES will be held Saturday, July 7 from 10am-3pm. Six unique structures will be open for viewing. Tickets are on sale before the event at both the Heritage Center and Hubbard House Gift Shops and at the Hubbard House the day of the event. Ticket prices for non-members of the Historical Society are \$8.00 and \$6.00 for members. Free refreshments will be provided at the Hubbard House. All proceeds benefit the Blue Earth County Historical Society. Please call 507/345-5566 or 345-4154 for ticket information.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

-Mary Brown

New Members

Welcome to the following new members:

Kylie Ahlschwede, Mankato
Carl & Diana Bauman, Mankato
Sharla Whalen, Naperville, IL.
Mrs. Earl M. Peterson, Amboy
Katherine Hughes, Mankato

General Donations

Thanks to the following for their support this past month.

Margaret Buck, Mankato
Decoria Township
Beauford Township

On Monday, July 23, 1990, from 7-9 pm the Society has planned a phone-a-thon and will be contacting perspective new members. Each of the persons we approach that evening will have received a letter and membership brochure prior to the phone call and will be awaiting personal contact from a volunteer. If anyone is interested in volunteering for an hour that evening, please call Mary Brown at the Heritage Center at 345-5566.

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.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Help us achieve our goal of 50 new members during the July membership drive. Recruit your friends and relatives; share the benefits of membership!

For every **NEW** member you sign up we will put your name in a drawing to be held at our annual meeting in August. The lucky winner will receive a \$25 gift certificate for any purchase in either gift shop. Send your nominations to BECHS Memberships, 415 Cherry St., Mankato 56001 or send the membership coupon below with payment as a gift for a friend.

I would like to suggest the following for membership:

Name _____ Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 My Name _____ Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____

The anchor of our culture

Perceiving and preserving the historic house

By Mario di Valmarana

In 1983 a survey published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated that more than 13.6 million owner-occupied houses built before 1939 were still standing.

Some of these houses may have since been demolished, but the sheer numbers of this housing stock offer powerful testimony of the immense historical wealth this nation has at its disposal. From this wealth we can extract an understanding of our cultural past, the preservation of which is essential.

The term "historic", of course, embraces several interpretations. In order to focus on the possible meanings of the term, the Advisory Council of the Center for Historic Houses, a component of the National Trust, in March 1989 proposed the following definition:

A historic house is one that possesses characteristics important to the development of history either because of its architectural significance, or through the occurrence of notable events, or due to its association with notable personages, or its placement within a historical context.

This definition implies that however large the number of old houses may be, not all historic houses may be old, and not all old houses may be historic. Therefore, we should not save any and all old structures. In fact, some weeding out among old, rundown, nonsignificant, unstable dwellings would be advisable.

It is essential that we keep the essence of our culture alive and perpetuate it through values that determine and protect our heritage. It is in our common interest to consider carefully our resources and our options in order to assess the total set of values that affect decisions on individual buildings. The survival of our cultural heritage is held, ultimately, in the hands of the individual who, by his

or her initiative—and through the support of government—administers, promotes, and actualizes preservation projects.

Historic houses are, by and large, privately owned dwellings that range from humble log cabins of the first settlers to the stately manor houses of the moguls of American finance. The historic house, with its historic associations, its contents of cultural and social significance, and its intergrated setting, represents the best, tangible document of the past. The owners' efforts to preserve their houses constitutes the continuum in our culture from the past into the future. This continuum should be available to, and benefitted by, a society whose future requirements are unknown.

Le Corbusier stated that the "house is a living machine." A historic house is a living document that helps us understand history through the human process rather than through archival interpretation. The owner of the historic house is the steward and the legitimate keeper of our heritage. The owner's rapport with the house is an intimate dialogue between the past and the present, between demand and supply, hard decisions and nostalgia, reason and judgment.

A most revealing document of the rapport between owner and house was published in the January/February 1990 issue of *Historic Preservation*: the article "Winning Big" by Jane Gillette. The article describes how the owners attempted, and succeeded, in preserving their houses, sometimes through heroic efforts, sometimes through naive approaches, but always through a genuine desire to make these houses useful, relevant, and appealing to the eye.

To preserve a historic structure is not an easy task. To help alleviate the hardship of preservation "Homefront" (A **Preservation News** column), advises owners with technical, financial, and legal advice; the column has been a valuable and essential source of information. But preservation is a participatory event

that encompasses many interests and issues. Whatever its implications, preservation should never be undertaken singlehandedly, for it is, after all, a communal effort. The significance of a historic house encompasses more than the structure itself; its contents, the setting, either urban or rural, and its social heritage are equally important components and should be addressed by experts.

Because of the network of information that a restoration requires, the Center for Historic Houses's primary concern is to help owners of historic houses preserve their structures. The center advises and counsels in such matters as normal upkeep, taxes, insurance, legal and financial issues, easement processes, land use, property disposal, and inheritance. The center organizes group meetings, hands-on workshops, real estate sessions, and such major conferences as the forthcoming meeting at Lyndhurst, a National Trust house museum located in Tarrytown, N.Y., on how to preserve a house, how to restore its garden, and how to alter the use of the property.

(continued next month)

Heritage Center Entrance Construction

Construction on the new entrance at the Heritage Center is nearly complete with finishing touches to be finalized the first week of July. For those of you who can't stop by and see the new entrance here are a few photos. This entrance was made possible through donations during the 1988 capital campaign from the Ortleby-Lundin families as well as the Coughlan family of Mankato/Kasota Stone Co.

