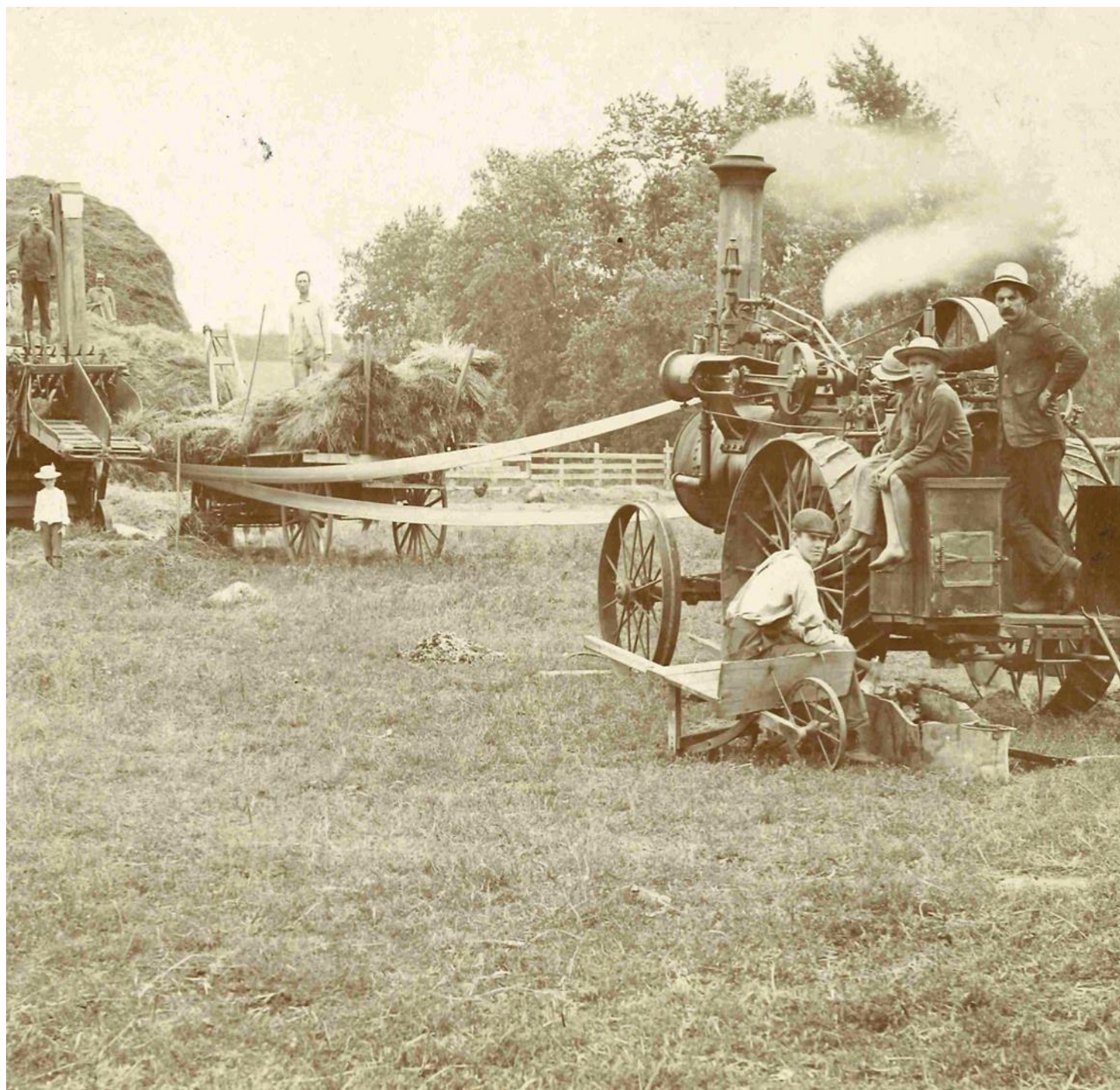


The Blue Earth County **HISTORIAN**

FALL 2023
Vol. 29 No. 4



A Publication of the Blue Earth County Historical Society

The Blue Earth County HISTORIAN

Fall 2023
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COVER PHOTO:

Quiggle Farm Threshing
Crew, Amboy c. 1890s.
Check out *Blue Earth
County Century Farms*
available in Gift Shop for
more farming history.

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Printed by Insty Prints of Mankato.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

By Jessica Potter, Executive Director

Happy Autumn! This year we are experiencing late summer, beautiful fall and early winter all in the same week. That's a little bit how it feels around the History Center too. The Hubbard House closed for the season on Labor Day weekend and now we are busy planning the annual "Christmas at Hubbard House" during the weekends in December. Check out the details of this year's special event on page 8.

This time of the year we host "A Night at the Speakeasy", our annual Prohibition Party with a Purpose. This single event raised \$20,000! Thank you to our generous sponsors, guests, Sky One Eleven, volunteers and our planning team for making the night a smashing success. I need to call out two very special people whose hard work collected all of the items available for our games of chance. Special thank you to Barb Bergman and Daardi Mixon (photo)!



As we move into the final two months of 2023, this time of year always fills me with gratitude. If you don't mind, I would like to share a few more.

Thank you to all who have attended the very popular Music and Memories exhibit. The exhibit will be on display through December 22. A new exhibit is now in the planning stages, see page 9 for more information about how you can be part of this exhibit.

Thank you to our History Heroes who have supported BECHS financially with your gifts and membership dues. I know it's not glamorous, but without your support in these ways, we wouldn't be able to pay the electric bill or have a great professional staff.

Thank you to the History Heroes who believed in the BOLD vision we have been sharing since 2021 and contributed to the purchase and demolition of the 5th Street house. The total project cost \$206,000 with \$90,000 of in-kind support! This was a goal that has been in the works since 2014 and YOU made it happen!



W. Lorentz Construction cleaning up after fire.

Thank you to the late Dr. William Lass, Professor Emeritus of History, for your stories, inquisitive mind and deep knowledge and passion for local history. You ignited this passion in me and so many others.

Finally, in appreciation of YOU, we hope you enjoy the programs, exhibits and events happening at the History Center and Hubbard House over the next couple of months. There are also unique volunteer opportunities available including joining the BECHS Board in 2024 (see page 8 or visit BECHSHistory.com).

From the BECHS Board and Staff, we wish each of you a very Happy Holiday Season!

BOLD VISION, BOLD STEP, BOLD HISTORY HEROES

In November of 2021, the Historical Society shared a BOLD vision to expand the History Center by 10,000 square feet. That's a big BOLD vision that will take many steps, partners, dollars and planning. To achieve this vision, we realized early on that we will need to take small steps to realize the big dream.

The first BOLD step was to purchase the house next to the History Center at 526 S. Fifth Street to allow for the first phase of growth and investment in our exterior infrastructure. The house was purchased on August 1st. We worked closely with multiple individuals who salvaged building materials from the house for their restoration projects. In September and October, we



collaborated with the City of Mankato Fire Department who held valuable fire training exercises in the

house concluding with a controlled burn on October 7. Now the site is ready for the next BOLD step, thanks to the in-kind support of W. Lorentz Construction.

In the Spring of 2024, the History Center's 30+ year old parking lot will be replaced. With the house gone, we will fully reconstruct the parking lot and add many new features – the next BOLD step.

New Parking Lot will include:

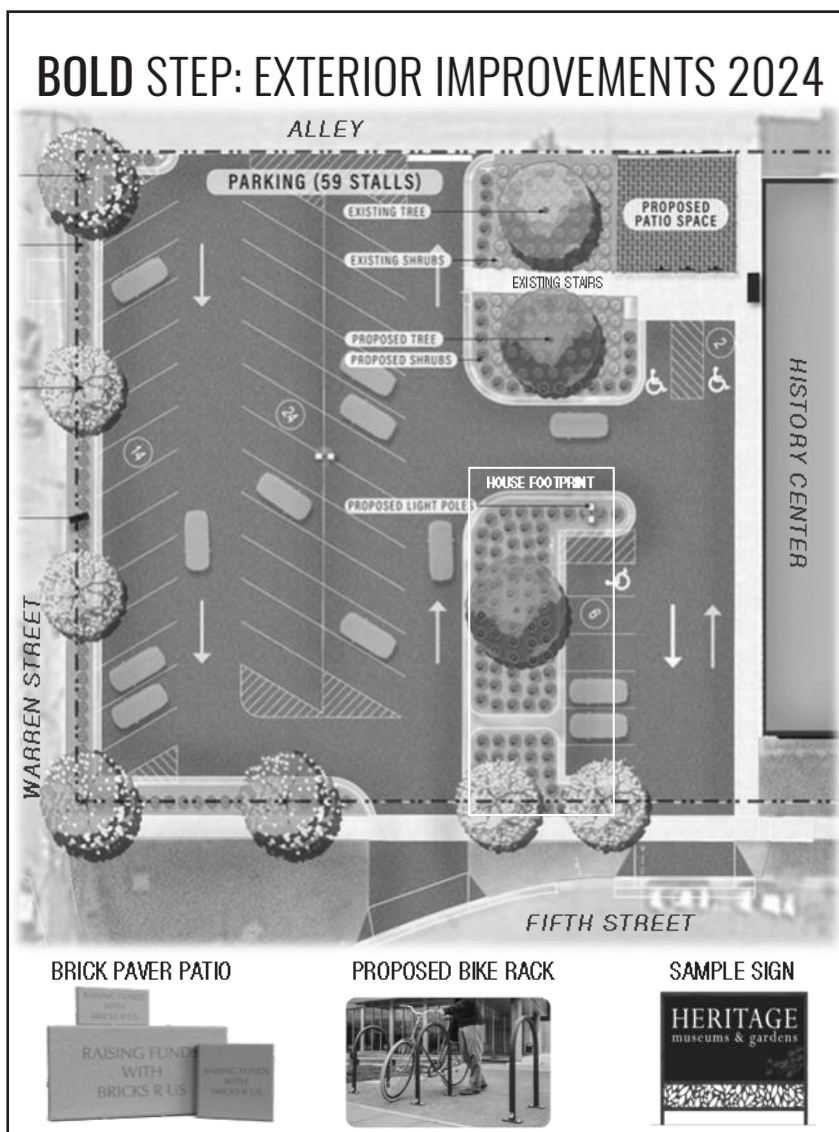
- Increased parking with eight spots at the same grade as the main entrance making the parking lot more accessible.
- Two entrances to the parking lot from South 5th Street; currently the only entrance is off the alley.
- Installation of parking lot lighting for History Center and neighborhood safety.
- Beautification projects like extension of our native pollinator gardens, outside gathering space with new commemorative brick patio, bike rack, public art and monument sign on Warren Street.

The Parking Lot and Exterior Improvements project is budgeted for

\$360,000. Thanks to generous History Heroes over the past three years, we need to raise just \$200,000 to start the project next Spring. We need BOLD History Heroes like you.

This project will transform the History Center and its neighborhood. You are invited to be part of history in the making. In fact, you can memorialize your family name, organization, or business in Blue Earth County history while supporting the Society's important mission to preserve, protect and share our local history. Our new commemorative brick program is available now. The bricks will be placed in the new patio/gathering space at the History Center. Funds raised will support the Parking Lot project and future capital improvement projects. To purchase your brick, stop by the History Center or visit our website to order online.

Thank you sincerely for believing in this BOLD vision and these BOLD steps!



NEW & NOTEWORTHY

The Twilight Garden Club Honored

The Twilight Garden Club and Hubbard Park Gardens was selected by the City Center Partnership to be this year's winner of the Creative Placemaking Award, which will be presented at the Greater Mankato Business Awards & Hall of Fame event on November 14, 2023. The Creative Placemaking Award recognizes projects that feature aesthetic improvements such as landscaping and beautification to foster interaction among community members, spark vitality, or create an environment conducive to creativity and social engagement. Congratulations and thank you to the Twilight Garden Club.

Updated History of the Mahkato Wacipi



In 2012, BECHS staff collaborated with Bud Lawrence to create a timeline history of the annual Mahkato Wacipi. The display has now been updated to reflect the 50-year history from 1972-2022.

The display now includes information about the creation of the arbor at Land of Memories Park, the City of Mankato's adoption of Indigenous Peoples Day, and

other local advancements led by Dave Brave Heart. It also features Guido van Helten's Silo Art Mural, which was inspired by his experiences at the 2018 and 2019 Wacipis.

The flipbook is displayed at the annual Mahkato Wacipi in the education tent and is available to view at the History Center year-round.

Special thanks to Oleson+Hobbie Architects for printing the updated display.

NEW ART EXHIBIT



"My Moms Agates" - Randy Wood

The Bend of the River Photography Club is a local group who encourages enthusiasm for the art of photography and provides opportunities to enhance one's photographic skills.

In their current History Center Art Exhibit titled "Collections", they ask the viewers to ponder and wonder about the things we collect, items other people have discarded that we find important enough to keep or the stuff left behind that no one wants. Not every collection is museum worthy, but every collection tells us something about the person who collected it. "Collections" is on display through December 22, 2023.



Hubbard House Stained Glass Windows

In the next few weeks, you may notice something missing from the Historic R.D. Hubbard House. The five stained glass panels above the first-floor windows will be removed for restoration.

Gaytee-Palmer Stained Glass Studio will be take the windows to their studio in Minneapolis to deconstruct them, clean the glass, remove the lead and reassemble with new leading. Gaytee-Palmer has extensive experience rebuilding historic windows which include work at many of churches including both the Cathedral of St. Paul and the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis as well as the State Capitol building. The project should take a couple of months before the refurbished windows are reinstalled.

Minnesota Digital Library Governance

BECHS Archives Assistant, Bri Krumwiede, has joined the Minnesota Digital Library (MDL) Governance Committee for the 2023-2026 term as a cultural heritage societies representative. The committee guides MDL in areas including policy, mission and vision, advocacy, and communication.

BECHS is proud to be a MDL contributor, and we're excited to see what the next three years will bring.



Kato Ballroom 2023

A LEGACY OF MUSIC, DANCE AND COMMUNITY

By BECHS Staff

From the 1940s through the 1960s, ballrooms were a staple of Americana. Almost every weekend there was a dance or an event at ballrooms across Minnesota, which had more active ballrooms than any other state by the 1980s.

However, the number of these historic buildings still in operation—or even in existence—is rapidly dwindling. Less than a dozen historic Minnesota ballrooms are still in operation, down from about 180 statewide over time. Ballrooms like the Kato Ballroom were just a short drive for residents living in rural areas, providing a chance to gather and socialize. Whether for polka, big band music, or rock ‘n’ roll, ballrooms have occupied a special place in the history of the Midwest—one that is quickly disappearing.

No story of the Minnesota ballroom scene would be complete without including the Kato Ballroom, which has held an iconic place at 200 Chestnut Street in Mankato since 1946. Herb Martinka, the original owner and operator of the Kato, was born in New Ulm in 1905. He attended St. John’s University in Collegeville and returned to New Ulm to work for Martinka Motors. By the time he founded the Kato, he was familiar with operating ballrooms. He built the Hilltop Ballroom between Courtland and New Ulm in 1935 and operated it until the early 1940s. Over the years he and his son Jerry also operated local bars and restaurants including the Town and Country and The Colony Club.

In the nearly 40 years the Kato was operated by the Martinkas, the ballroom exploded in popularity. It often held events every day of the weekend, every week of the year. The Kato held dances and events that drew in a thousand or more patrons per night. Even a fire that burned the building to the ground in June 1952 couldn’t stop the Kato’s

momentum.

When it reopened in February 1954, it was as in demand as ever. The Kato Ballroom often hosted big bands or orchestras from the area, usually on Friday nights. Saturday was generally reserved for polka night. While there were usually events three times a week, there were some weeks that the Kato would host a dance or concert almost every night, drawing in 800 people a night on average.

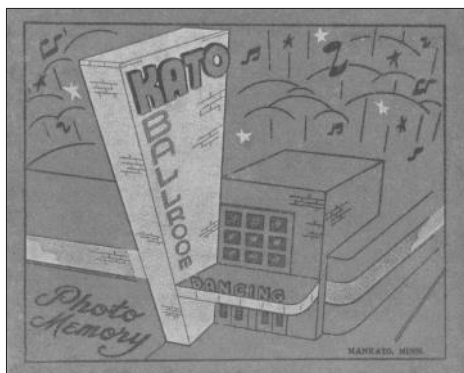
The largest crowd in the Kato’s history was for the Everly Brothers on November 22, 1964. That night roughly 2,400 eager fans crammed into the Kato, exceeding the building’s 2,200-person fire code occupancy limit. Violating the fire code only resulted in a \$75 fine, so Martinka let them all in and paid the fine.

The main ballroom, built in 1946 and rebuilt in 1954, still boasts the second-largest dance floor in Minnesota at 7,500 square feet. It featured three bars, a coat check, and a stage with a maximum occupancy of nearly 1,700.

Aside from musical entertainment, there were also countless wedding receptions held in the building, but they had a twist from today’s reception. During Martinka’s era, the wedding group wouldn’t have the entire ballroom to themselves. Instead, wedding parties would purchase tickets for the people attending their receptions and their whole group would sit on one side of the ballroom. At the same time, the general



The Everly Brothers Poster on loan from the collection of Greg Duffy.



Kato Ballroom Souvenir Card which held this photo of two unidentified men, c. 1940s.



Holly, Glenn Miller, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, Lawrence Welk, Louis Armstrong, the Beach Boys and the Everly Brothers. In the 1950s and 1960s, musicians tended to work a performance tour circuit from one city to the next. Mankato was a stop along this route.

Winter Dance Party

On January 25, 1959, the "Winter Dance Party" tour made a stop in Mankato at the Kato Ballroom. The 25-stop tour was held at ballrooms and armories across Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa in January and February of 1959. The tour featured Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Ritchie Valens, J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, and Dion and the Belmonts.

The following account of the Winter Dance Party comes from the book: *Everybody's Heard about the Bird: The True Story of 1960s Rock 'n' Roll in Minnesota* by Rick Shefchik.

After an all-night ride from Kenosha, Wisconsin the Winter Dance Party arrived around midday in downtown Mankato. They checked into the Burton Hotel and rested before their evening show at the Kato Ballroom.

public could buy a ticket to listen to live music or have dinner and sit on the other side of the ballroom. Sometimes, there would be more than one reception at the same time in different parts of the ballroom.

Over the decades, the Kato hosted thousands of concerts and attracted big-name performers including Buddy

The Kato planned for an overflow crowd of 1,500 teenagers who paid \$1.50 each to come dance to the music of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper. Bill Diehl, a popular Minneapolis DJ on WDGY, not only promoted the show, but drove 70 miles to be the emcee that night. Mankato area teens were excited to see their favorite radio songs performed in-person. They pressed near the stage as Holly and his band "The Crickets" came on. Between sets, the performers posed for pictures and signed autographs. In attendance at that show was an enthralled Tom Klugherz, a 13-year-old aspiring guitarist, who would soon be playing bass in a local band called "The Gestures". The band would go on to record their number-one hit "Run, Run, Run" in 1964.

The next morning, the tour bus loaded up for their next venue in Eau Claire, Wisconsin that evening only to turn around and go back to Minnesota the next day. On January 28, Holly and the Winter Dance Party drew an overcapacity crowd of 2,000 to the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul. From St. Paul, the Winter Dance Party bus took an oddly circuitous route. They traveled to Iowa for performances in Davenport and Fort Dodge, then 360 miles back north to Duluth where they played the Duluth Armory on the last night of January. Here, temperatures plunged to 30 degrees below zero. In attendance at this show was 17-year-old Bob Zimmerman, also known as Bob Dylan.

The performers left Duluth at midnight and

embarked on another 300-mile overnight drive to Appleton, Wisconsin for an afternoon matinee. When the bus broke down 100 miles into the trip, the musicians burned newspapers in the back of the bus to keep warm while waiting for help in temperatures of 25 degrees below zero. Eventually the Appleton show had to be canceled, but they all made it to Green Bay for a show that night. A new bus took them from Green Bay to a show on February 2nd at the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa.

After the show in Clear Lake, Holly was fed up with the bus and the extreme cold, so he chartered a small plane for himself and his band for the next leg of the tour, the 360-mile trip to Moorhead, Minnesota. "The Crickets" band



Winter Dance Party Poster, on loan from the collection of Greg Duffy.

member Waylon Jennings, gave up his seat to The Big Bopper, who had the flu, and Tommy Allsup gave up his seat to Valens on a coin toss.

The plane took off at 12:55 a.m. on February 3, 1959, with 21-year-old pilot Roger Peterson and the three musicians. Within five minutes it had crashed into a cornfield; all aboard died instantly. The rest of the musicians on the bus didn't hear about the tragedy until they arrived in Moorhead. The show in Moorhead went on as a tribute show with an overflow crowd of 2,000. The song "The Day the Music Died" pays homage to those three rock 'n' roll legends.

The Kato Ballroom Today

Herb and Jerry Martinka continued to own and operate the Kato Ballroom until 1982 when Herb retired. The Cordes family, who had owned a bowling alley, Mankato Bowl, took over ownership. At this time, there was little competition for local entertainment venues, but everything changed when the Mankato Civic Center was constructed in 1995. In 1996, The Kato's Banquet Room was added with its own dance floor, bar, and an entrance off the back parking lot.

In 2014 Tania Cordes purchased the 26,000 square-foot Kato Ballroom from her former in-laws. Cordes focused on transforming the building, inside and out. The Kato now has an upgraded Art Deco appearance. Cordes and her team kept many of the Kato Ballroom's signature touchstones, but made the look more consistent, modern, and appealing to a younger crowd. Over the years, they have painted inside and out, replaced every light bulb and replaced the hardwood dance floor.

While it still serves as a dance hall for big bands and polka nights, the Kato Ballroom now also hosts theater performances, fundraising events, high school proms and class reunions, corporate lunches and business meetings.

Today, the Kato Ballroom hosts KEYC-TV's "Bandwagon," which is Minnesota's longest-running locally produced television show. The program first hit the airwaves on November 21, 1960 to promote the launch of KEYC.

For over 40 years, KEYC-TV Studios hosted 200 or more people for three-hour tapings of live music and dancing on the first Monday of every month. Most of the music was, and still is, polka. The program would air on Sunday nights at 6 p.m.

The first "Bandwagon" host was Earl Lamont, who taught television production at Mankato State

College. Lamont's successor, Chuck Pasek, was the longest-running host. Pasek was a local broadcast legend who started in radio on KYSM. He hosted "Bandwagon" from 1961-1995.

In 2000, the 40th Anniversary of "Bandwagon" took place at the Kato Ballroom to accommodate the 1,000 people in attendance. Shortly after, the taping of the show was moved to the Kato Ballroom where it continues today.

The Kato Ballroom has served as a unique Mankato venue for entertainment and celebrations for over 75 years. Ask anyone, I'm sure they have a special memory or story about the Kato.

SOURCES

- BECHS Vertical Files and Archives
- *Connect*, Sept. 2, 2014 and May 1, 2018
- *Everybody's Heard about the Bird: The True Story of 1960s Rock 'n' Roll in Minnesota* by Rick Shefchik.
- *Mankato Free Press*
- *MankatoLife*, September 16, 2020
- Minnesota Ballroom Operators of Minnesota website

**MUSIC
AND
MEMORIES**

A Look Back at the Mankato Music Scene

APPEARING AT:

Blue Earth County History Center
424 Warren Street, Mankato
Closes December 22, 2023
Exhibit is FREE and open to the public.

www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHRISTMAS AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE

Mystery of the Missing Mitten

Kickstart the holiday season with a heart-warming journey through time at the Historic Hubbard House. Step into a Victorian Christmas and immerse yourself in the intriguing quest to uncover the mystery of a missing mitten. Engage in the search, lend an ear to the tales given by the house's family, guests and servants, collect your own clues, and unravel the history mystery.



WEEKENDS IN DECEMBER

606 South Broad Street, Mankato

SELF-GUIDED TOURS

Saturday, December 2, 3-7 pm

Sunday, December 3, 1-4 pm

Enjoy a lively cast of characters and History Mystery in this Self-Guided Tour.

GUIDED HOLIDAY TOURS

December 9 & 10, 1-4 p.m.

December 16 & 17, 1-4 p.m.

Enjoy a guided holiday tour

\$10/Adult; \$7/BECHS Member;
\$5/Child (5-17)

Advanced tickets on sale
November 14

*Tours begin in the
Carriage House
Holiday Gift Shop*



www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com

VOLUNTEERS MAKE HISTORY

Volunteers are truly the lifeblood of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. There is no aspect of work done at the History Center or Hubbard House that doesn't involve volunteers. **THANK YOU BECHS Volunteers for all you do!**

NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Front Desk and Gift Shop Assistant

History Center front desk helper. Duties include greeting visitors and ringing up store sales. This may be combined with data entry or archival work.

Rental Host

After-hours History Center Meeting Room Rental Host to greet and assist renters, stay on-site during the rental and lock-up when done.

Research Center Filing

Index and file newspaper articles into the Research Center's Subject and Biography Files.

GSR Fine Arts Festival

BECHS is participating in this community arts festival November 25 and 26. Volunteers needed to manage sales at our booth. Multiple shifts available.

Kiwanis Holiday Lights

BECHS is a participating non-profit at the Kiwanis Holiday Lights and needs volunteers to help in the park **Sunday, November 26 from 4:30-9 p.m.** Volunteers alternate between working outside and taking breaks to warm up. Dinner and snacks are provided. Volunteers are also needed **Sunday, January 7, 1-4 p.m.** to assist with tear-down.

Join BECHS' Board of Trustees

BECHS is seeking Blue Earth County individuals strong in fundraising and friend-raising, facility development, accounting/finance, and human resources, to serve on Board of Trustees.

Accepting applications January 1-31, 2024 for Board terms beginning March 2024. Details at BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/About

Training is provided and schedules are flexible for all opportunities. If you are interested in these opportunities or volunteering in general, please contact Heather or sign-up at BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Volunteer

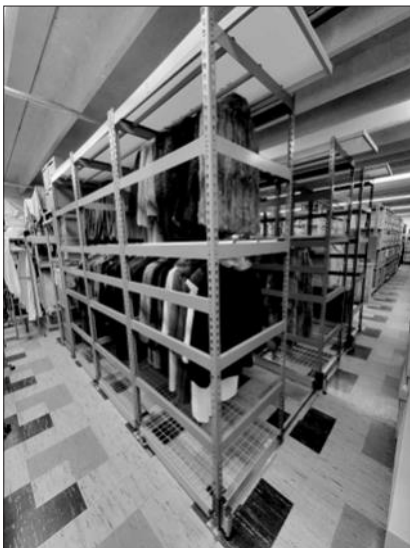
COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS: A TALE OF PERSEVERANCE

By Shelley Harrison, Collections Manager

We did it, we finally did it! It only took nine years, multiple plans, and a team of dedicated individuals. I am thrilled to announce the successful installation of a new-to-us industrial compact textile shelving unit in our Central Collections Storage Room.

The journey began in 2014. A clothing store in the River Hills Mall was closing and BECHS was able to acquire some of the store fixtures for the History Center including our gift shop furniture and an industrial compact textile shelving unit.

At that time, the Central Collections Storage Room was jam-packed and would require extensive rearranging to accommodate the new unit. While it is compactable, the unit consists of four rows of shelving mounted on carriages that move back and forth which requires significant floor space 12'(L) x 9'(W) x 9' (H). So, it would take a lot of planning to determine what to move out of Central Storage to make room for the new unit. In the end, we needed to relocate over 50 oversize



objects. In the Winter of 2022, we moved appliances, musical instruments and furniture to the old Research Center room (by the Cherry Street door) and created a new dedicated Oversize Collection Storage room.

This year, we focused our attention back on Central Storage to shift and rearrange shelving units holding artifact boxes to make room for the textile unit. Finally, assembly of the textile unit could begin, but again it had its challenges. When we had disassembled the unit back in 2014, we weren't thinking it would take this long to reassemble. As you can imagine, there weren't step-by-step directions, and we weren't even sure we had all the parts. So, with some creative engineering BECHS volunteer, John Larson, created missing parts including the stop brakes that had seemingly vanished.

Although this has been quite a journey, we view projects like this as a great opportunity to survey the condition of various collections and re-organize for better storage and accessibility. I would personally like to thank everyone who was involved over the years with this shelving project; those who disassembled and delivered them, those who moved all the artifacts and boxes, and especially to John Larson who made the project happen with his patience, ingenuity, and determination. Let's celebrate not only the achievement of this goal, but the exceptional teamwork, creativity, and determination of our talented team.

Did You Know?

The BECHS Textile Collection contains over 5,600 items ranging from 1850's bodices and skirts to 1980's wedding gowns, military uniforms, hats, and shoes, as well as quilts and needlework. Close to 300 of those items such as suit jackets, uniform coats, winter coats, and fur coats are stored by hanging on special padded hangers. Their strong shoulder structure allows for hanging. Whereas, items that are fragile, heavily decorated, or have weakened or no shoulders are stored flat in textile boxes.



Letterman's Jacket worn by Jerry Flanagan, who graduated from Mankato State College in 1959.

PLAYING WITH HISTORY NEEDS YOU



The Historical Society is currently on the hunt for toys to feature in an upcoming exhibit opening in early 2024. We will showcase the nostalgic childhood treasures

that have shaped generations of children's lives, and we need your help. The BECHS collection is lacking toys from the 1960s through 2000s, because, let's face it, in our minds our stuff cannot possibly be historic. We are inviting the community to contribute their cherished toys and memories to transform the exhibit into a delightful journey through the past and present of play. Items will be on loan with BECHS until July 2024.

GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY

By Heather Harren, Operations Manager

It's hard to believe after the hot summer we had, that Christmas is right around the corner. Now is a great time to start your holiday shopping. And the History Center Gift Shop, and Art Gallery has gifts for all ages on your list.

For the person who appreciates art, why not get them *The Art of Marian Anderson*. This coffee table book showcases Anderson's vast collection



of work from her lifetime, including images of paintings that were never reproduced into Fine Art Prints. Hardcover, \$49.95.

Looking for a Secret Santa gift and you don't really know the person? Why not get a Sota Crackler candle! These candles are made here in Minnesota and have great scents. My favorite is the "Corner Coffee Shop" or the "Sexy Lumberjack". 4 oz. candles, \$11.

Looking for something for the little ones in your life? The Gift Shop has both the *Betsy-Tacy* series and the *Little House on the Prairie* series of books, as well as several choose your own adventure type books. There is something for everyone!

For those who don't want stuff, consider a BECHS gift membership or give a donation in their name. Stop by and I can answer all your questions on how to do this!

HOLIDAY HOURS History Center Closed December 24 - January 2

This extended holiday break will provide both a break for our staff and an opportunity to gear up for 2024.

Staff will continue to have occasional access to their email during this time.

MEMBERS MATTER

Member dues support BECHS programs, facilities, exhibits and preservation of Blue Earth County's past for future generations. In exchange for member support, enjoy a variety of benefits for BECHS members-only. Thank you!

WELCOME NEW BECHS MEMBERS

July 16 - October 31, 2023

Kristine M. Anderson
Nancy Black
Bobby Drengler
Jeffrey Frederick
Judy Joecks
Rick and Patti Kramlinger
Tana Marthaler
Sarah and Tim McGuire
JoEllen Menke
David R. Pengra
Glenn and Carole Pestka
Karen Philipson
Michael Roy
Carol Tipler
Jeanette Ward

BECHS Member Benefits

- Free admission to the History Center, R.D. Hubbard House and Research Center for one year, plus free or reduced admission to most BECHS events
- *The Historian*, quarterly publication
- 10% off most items in the Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery, in store and online
- One 30-minute Research Center search by Staff, a \$15 value
- Annual Member's State-of-the Society meeting

Join or renew online at
BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Membership

LOCAL HISTORY PODCAST

Explore the history that
surrounds us!



New episodes air Saturdays at 11:05 a.m. on KTOE AM 1420/102.7 FM. You can find all previous episodes on our website at

BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Podcast

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME: SNOW PHOTOGRAPHY

By Bri Krumwiede, Archives Assistant

If you spend time looking at photographs in the Research Center, you might notice many of the studio portraits in our collection came from Snow Studios. Snow Studios was owned and operated by the Snow family from the early 1890s until 1960. Snow Studios is well-known because of its founder, John "J. R." Snow.



John "J. R." Snow

J. R. Snow was born in New Brunswick, Canada in 1868. He studied business at Dixon College in Illinois and learned the photography trade from his brother, H. H. Snow, in Zumbrota, Minnesota. He went on to own a studio in Fort Dodge, Iowa, where he met and married his wife Margaret. Margaret took an active role in the business, working in the darkroom and taking on other roles in the business throughout their careers.

They moved to Mankato and purchased a studio in 1892. Their first studio was on Jackson Street; it later moved to 313 South Front Street.

Snow was praised for staying up-to-date with the latest technology and techniques. Local news papers would announce when he purchased new

cameras or made improvements to the studio. He also offered unique services and continually experimented with new techniques. In 1903, Snow wrote, "We want at all times to treat our patrons honestly, and assure them that if they want the latest and best, they need not leave Mankato to get it."



J.R. Snow Logo

He was also known nationally for his work and was involved in a number of photography associations including as President of the Western Photographers Association, Vice President of the National Photographers Association of America, and honorary life member of the United States Cameracraftsmen. J. R. Snow died in 1956, and Margaret died in 1961.

Before his death, J. R. sold the business to his son Cecil "C. J." He went on to be successful in his own right and served as President of the Minnesota Photographs Association in 1940. He ran the business until 1960 and died in 1968. The Snow family is buried in Calvary Cemetery.

The BECHS Archives not only preserve thousands of Snow photos, but also houses papers from the Snow family including a certificate, diary, ledger, letters, notebook, and pamphlets dated 1899-1949. You can browse the collection's finding aid online and stop by the History Center to learn more about the Snow family and Snow Studios.



Thank you to our Speakeasy Sponsors, Games of Chance donors, and Attendees who made this year's Speakeasy a night to remember!

Watch for Speakeasy 2024 announcement!





BLUE EARTH HISTORICAL
COUNTY SOCIETY
1901 — 122 YEARS — 2023

**ANNIVERSARY WEEK
NOVEMBER 7 - 11, 2023**

**Visit the History Center for
FREE Museum Admission
and Daily Door Prizes**

**DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT
November 7 - 11**

To celebrate our Anniversary, a generous donor has offered to **match every gift** we receive on our anniversary week, **up to \$12,000**. Make a tax-deductible donation for our 122nd Anniversary of \$122 or any amount! All gifts will be **matched dollar-for-dollar!**

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS

Tuesday, November 7 - Saturday, November 11

Holiday Gift Shop Specials including
Double Shopping Discount*
for BECHS Members.

Give History for the Holidays

*Marian Anderson Art · Collectibles · Books
Local Handcrafted Items · Memberships · Donations*

*BECHS member 20% discount at History Center Gift Shop during
Appreciation Days ONLY. Does NOT include consignment or sale items,
memberships or to be combined with any other offer.

**IN MEMORY OF
Dr. William E. Lass
1928 - 2023**



Dr. William E. (Bill) Lass, Professor Emeritus of History at Minnesota State University, Mankato, came to Mankato in 1960 to teach at the then Mankato State College. He remained with the University until his retirement in 2002. During his life, Bill wrote many books and journal articles

chronically the history of Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. Three of his books are available in the History Center Gift Shop. A gift from Bill to raise funds for BECHS. He served on the BECHS Board of Trustees from 1985-1987 and remained active with the organization. A lifelong Historian, just a month before his passing, Bill was collaborating with BECHS staff on the history of Minnesota River steamboats. Dr. Lass touched the lives of so many "students". His extensive knowledge, passion for History and generosity will be greatly missed by BECHS and all who knew him.

IN MEMORIAM

*In Memory of Dr. William Lass
Erwin and Brenda Greishaber
Sharon Haley
Lori Lahlum*

*Tom and Theresa McLaughlin
Ken and Julie Schrader*

*In Memory of Richard LeClerc
Hal and Marsha Natvig*

*In Memory of Elisabeth Reinke
Pauline Hemingway*

*In Memory of Cecilia "Sue" Mueller-Story
Michael Frederick*

**Thank You for these memorial gifts to the
Blue Earth County Historical Society**

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July 16 - October 31, 2023

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COMMEMORATIVE BRICK PROGRAM

Commemorative bricks are a fun and unique way to memorialize your family name, organization, or business in Blue Earth County history while supporting the Society's important mission to preserve, protect and share our local history. The commemorative bricks will be placed in the new patio/gathering space outside the History Center as part of the 2024 Exterior Improvement Projects. Funds raised will support the overall capital improvement project.

Choose from two brick sizes, each includes your personal inscription. Customize and Order your Brick at www.BricksRUs.com/DonorSite/BECHS or contact us at the History Center. For questions about the overall project or how to get a free brick, please contact Jessica Potter, BECHS Director.

4x8

\$125

8x8

\$250

LEAVE YOUR MARK ON HISTORY

Get your commemorative brick for the new History Center outdoor gathering space.

give TO THE **MAX** 
Nov. 16, 2023

Join BECHS for
Minnesota's Annual Day of Giving
at www.GiveMN.org!

CELEBRATING ART IN MANKATO



Saturday, November 25
10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Sunday, November 26
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Mayo Clinic Health Systems
Event Center

Be sure to visit our booth featuring local books and Marian Anderson Fine Art prints.
Volunteer Opportunities Available

Book Your Next Special Event, Meeting or Gathering with BECHS



The Blue Earth County History Center meeting rooms and the Hubbard House Grounds have a number of rental options perfect for your next gathering.

Visit BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Rentals
for more information and rates.
Contact the History Center for availability.

KIDS CORNER: HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Every family has holiday traditions. It could be eating cranberry sauce with your Thanksgiving meal or displaying special decorations during Christmas. Many of these traditions are passed down through the generations. This holiday season, think about your traditions and ask your family why do you honor them? Where did they come from? You may be surprised to discover your favorite cookies were a simple recipe your great, great-grandmother made in Germany.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THAT TRADITION FROM?

The early Norwegian Christmas tree functioned as a "gift tree," holding gingerbread figures, apples and oranges, among other treats. Trees were also decorated with Christmas baskets shaped like cones and woven hearts to hold hard candies and raisins—the *julekurv*.



Many Christmas traditions were started in England and brought to the United States including Christmas stockings and Christmas carols. A unique and fun British Christmas tradition is the Christmas cracker. They are served with Christmas dinner, but they aren't to eat. Christmas crackers are a special way to wrap small gifts. When two people pull on the ends of the cracker, a popping or cracking noise would occur and the gift would pop out.



You can make your own *julekurv* (woven heart) and Christmas cracker at home. What family traditions do you have that are from another country? _____

O' CHRISTMAS TREE

Did you know that the idea of having a Christmas tree in our homes is not very old? The tradition of bringing something green into your home during the darkest days of the year is ancient, but in the United States we didn't start to bring evergreen trees into our homes until about the 1850s. German immigrants kept decorated trees outside, English immigrants brought them indoors and soon Americans were doing the same. By the early 1900s, people in Blue Earth County were decorating their trees with glass ornaments and lit candles.



Experience an 1899 Christmas with *Christmas at the Hubbard House* on December 2 from 3-7 p.m. and December 3 from 1-4 p.m. at the Historic R.D. Hubbard House and look for the candles and bucket by the tree. Why do you think there was a bucket near the tree? _____

WINTER HOLIDAYS

Discover the different holiday's celebrated in December

December 6	St. Nicholas Day
December 8 - 15	Chanukah/Hanukkah
December 21	Winter Solstice
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26 - January 1	Kwanzaa
January 1	New Year's Day

GRANDMA BOEHLKE'S BUTTERSCOTCH COOKIES

1 cup brown sugar
Yolk of one egg (reserve white)
1 cup butter or margarine
2 cups plus 2 Tbsp. flour

Mix well and roll into small balls. Dip in slightly beaten egg white and put on cookie sheet. Put a pecan half on top and press lightly. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

"Good luck to you if you can make them last. They disappear quickly. I always make them every Christmas." - Bonnie Boehlke Haugen

From the *Boehlke-Kiefer Family Cookbook*, 1993 in the Archives of the Blue Earth County Historical Society.

What is your favorite family recipe? These are traditions, too.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November— December 2023

NOVEMBER

- 7-11 122nd Anniversary Week!** Free Museum Admission and Daily Door Prizes. See page 12 for details.
- 11 Family Day at the History Center,** Hands-on History fun for the whole family with Free Museum Admission and activities.
- 16 Give to the Max Day,** All Day, Minnesota's Annual Day of Giving. Join thousands of donors from across the state and give to your favorite non-profits (BECHS) by visiting www.GiveMN.org.
Donations also accepted through traditional methods.
- 18 Author Talk: Dr. Earl Wood: Life at High G-Force by Andrew Wood,** 1 p.m. Dr. Earl H. Wood, is best-known for his ground-breaking work on the G-suit during World War II.
- 23-25 History Center Closed—Happy Thanksgiving!**
- 25-26 GSR Fine Art Festival,** Mayo Clinic Health Systems Event Center, visit the BECHS Booth for your holiday shopping.
- 26 BECHS Night at Kiwanis Holiday Lights!** Volunteer opportunities available.

DECEMBER

- 2-3 Christmas at the Hubbard House,** Self-Guided Tours and History Mystery, Saturday 3-7 p.m. and Sunday 1-4 p.m. (\$) Advanced tickets encouraged. See page 8.
- 9 Family Day at the History Center,** Hands-on History fun for the whole family with Free Museum Admission and activities.
- 9-10 Christmas at Hubbard House: Guided Holiday Tours** 1-4 p.m. (\$) Advanced tickets required. See page 8 for details.
- 16 Film Showing: History of Minnesota in Music: Legends, Heroes, Ghost's and Gangsters,** 1 p.m.
- 16 - 17 Christmas at Hubbard House: Guided Holiday Tours** 1-4 p.m. (\$) Advanced tickets required. See page 8 for details.
- 22 Last Day for "Music and Memories" Exhibit**
- 24 – Jan 2 History Center Closed—**This extended holiday will provide a break for our staff and an opportunity to gear up for 2024. Staff will continue to have occasional access to their email during this time. **Happy Holidays!**

All programs will be held at the History Center and are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. \$ = fee charged

For more information, to register or purchase tickets, visit BlueEarthCountyHistory.com

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COUNTY SOCIETY

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History Center
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Membership
Expiration Date

PLAN YOUR VISIT



HISTORY CENTER: MUSEUM, RESEARCH CENTER, GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY

424 Warren Street, Mankato
507-345-5566
Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

ADMISSION

\$7 Adults
\$3 Children 5-17
BECHS Members and
Children under 5 FREE



Proud Participating
Museum



R.D. HUBBARD HOUSE

606 S. Broad Street, Mankato
507-345-4154
Special December Events

VISIT US ONLINE

www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com



Facebook.com/BECHShistory



@BECHShistory (Instagram)



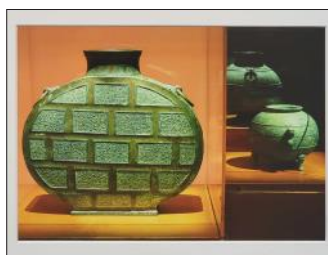
YouTube.com/c/BECHShistory

EXHIBITS



Music & Memories: A Look Back at the Mankato Music Scene

On display through
December 22



ART GALLERY Bend of the River Photography Club "Collections" On display through December 22

Shang and Chou Dynasty Ceremonial Bronzes Mary Gitter-Zehnder