

## The Blue Earth County HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# INDEX

Vol. 111, No. 2

Summer 1974.

### INDIAN LAKE

The following article is written by Ben Keenen, who has lived in the Indian Lake area since the turn of the century. Besides being an historian, Mr. Keenen is also a poet. Mostly he writes about this area as it used to be, but he also has poems about more recent friends and neighbors.

Indian Lake, which plays an important part in Mr. Keenen's memories, was drained starting in September 28, 1922. At that time the lake covered only 55 acres, but the land around it was so marshy that after the drainage, farmers were able to reclaim 340 acres for cultivation. It was the farmers themselves who paid for the drainage.<sup>1</sup> Donald True, who still lives in the area, says that while the drain was first an open tile drain, it was closed a couple of years later to keep the land arable. The lake was located near where Ski Haven is today.

I went down to the Blue Earth County Museum and while there they asked me to write about Red Jacket Valley.

Perhaps I should say I went to school there in the Valley, at the Indian Lake School, District Number 72, from about 1898 to 1906. It was a large school for a country school, having in 1901 fifty-five students, under one teacher, Miss Maud Felton. The school house had not always been there in the Indian Lake Valley. In the early days when the flour mill was built over on the LeSueur River, and was called the Red Jacket Flour Mill, the school house was built over against the hill east of the mill, for that was then the center of population of that area. Then when the mill burned and more people populated the area, the population center shifted, so the school was built in the Indian Lake Valley.

The photograph on the right is Indian Lake from Fred True's hill. (Taken about 1910.)

This is one of two original photographs of the lake. It is Ben Keenen's; Donald True has the other.



<sup>1</sup>I. Bert Burns, Artificial Drainage in Blue Earth County, Minnesota, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nebraska, April, 1954.

The school was a single room brick building with a long hall, or clock room across the front. It was heated by a central furnace and fired with wood. Some farmers would bring several cords of cord wood to the school and some boy got the job of "bucking" it up with a buck saw, throwing it into the basement, where it was carefully corded. I know. I sawed it and got 50¢ a cord.

The Indian Lake School was about one fourth of a mile from the south end of Indian Lake, where we often went skating, or maybe to watch horse races on the ice. Men who raced had sharp-shod horses, hitched to a rig with runners. There would be two runners, and the driver would sit up close to the horse's tail on a high seat, where he could control the horse. They had a quarter mile straight track, and sometimes there were several men in the race.

The north end of Indian Lake came to the Red Jacket Valley, and was eventually drained into Indian Creek, that wound thru' the hills, down past Tin-coville, past the High School and Madsens' store to the river.

Red Jacket Valley was so named because of the flour mill that was built up about one fourth mile north of the river crossing or what is known now as the Red Jacket Bridge. The men who built the mill either knew Chief Red Jacket of the Seneca tribe back in New York or Pennsylvania or knew of him, and admired him, and so called the mill the Red Jacket Mill. Of course then the flour was called Red Jacket flour and the valley soon became the Red Jacket Valley, and it seems to me that years after I saw a flour sack with the picture of the Chief Red Jacket on it, as we do now of Mother Hubbard.

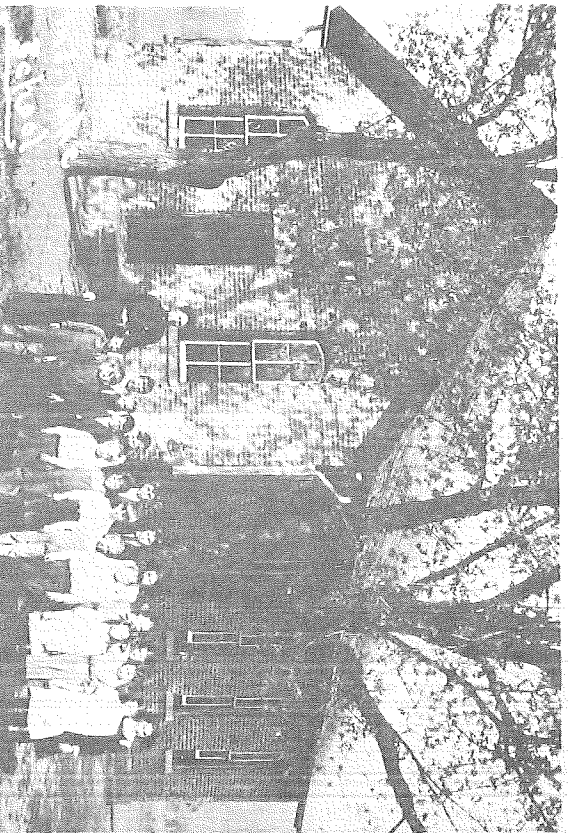
At the time when I first knew the valley, the railroad had been built, and the wagon road came down the hill to the south of the bridge, where later in the Sandon home was. But there was only a ford then. The bridge was built in 1911, but washed out years later and rebuilt. Before the bridge was built, the mail carriers, or anyone had to ford the river. When there was high water, the carrier had to go back to Rapidan, then east to the Good Thunder road, then north down the hill to the Yeager Bridge, (Kern's bridge then, named after Joe Kern), then over the hill to take a side road past the Joe Ulman place, over the ridge past where the school used to be and down to the north side of the ford, and on with his route. The carriers those days didn't generally have heavy loads and used a two wheeled cart or top buggy, or a cutter. I remember seeing one carrier with a pair of skis on the runners of his cutter so it wouldn't cut into the snow.

In the early days, everybody burned wood. Farmers along the railroad would engage freight flat cars to haul their wood to market. I have been told that many men had many cords of wood piled near the railroad and there was sharp competition as to who would get the cars first. When they saw the line of cars coming each man would grab a cord woodstick with his name on it and throw it onto the first empty car he saw. Then that was his car.

Much cordwood was hauled to town to sales yards and homes. Every home had to burn wood, unless they could use coal. Out back of many houses were piles of wood for some man or boy to saw up and split. Not only that but many of those homes kept a cow, and perhaps a horse. Each had its well, and its outdoor toilet. As a boy we had neither electricity, phone, or refrigerator.

As a boy I helped on the farm. The only engine ever heard on our place was the threshing machine in the fall to thresh our grain stacks. Working on a threshing crew wasn't just like union wages either. You went to work at day break, and if you quit at dark you were lucky. Then you ate at long tables the farmers wives prepared. Generally good. But to go to bed, that was different.

Few farmers had enough bedrooms for the men and some had none. Then you slept where you could. After the first week, I took a horse blanket with me, and when we slept in a barn I could at least roll up in a blanket. Many never removed their clothes all week, working in that dust and dirt. Big money? Oh, yes! Perhaps \$1.00 or \$1.50 per day. And remember that was at least ten hours.



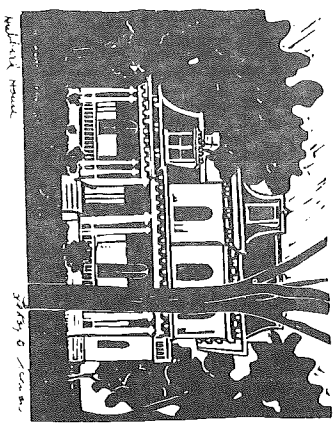
The photograph on the left is Indian Lake School taken in 1911. The school was located where the Mankato Saddle Club is today.

## Museum Sundays

Since May, there have been two Sundays of open house at the museum. One hundred and fourteen people came to the reception in honor of Cornelia DuBois Andrews which took place before the Guthrie's Pioneer and Prairie Show. Then in the early summer, the museum was opened to honor the leather and saddlery industries. Nick Kranz, a harness maker from Cleveland, Minnesota, spoke and gave demonstrations to over 260 people. We would like to have more Museum Sundays worked around particular themes; they are good ways for people to get acquainted with the Historical Society.

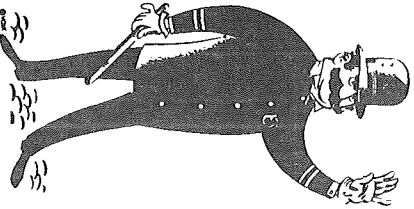
## Repairs and Renovations

Most likely as a result of vibrations from the new Warren Street construction, at least half of the lavender bedroom ceiling and some of the upstairs hall ceiling fell. That damage is now being repaired. At the same time, the kitchen is being restored. The board wants a working kitchen, complete with fireplace. However, since the chimney had previously been removed at the second floor level, a new chimney is being installed while roof and ceiling work are in their early stages.

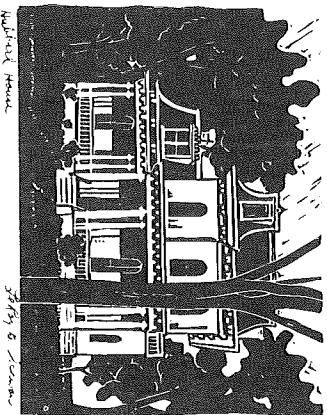


## DISTRICT MEETING

If you are interested in attending the First District Historical Assembly annual meeting, this year to be held in Albert Lea on September 7, call the Museum. Car pools can be arranged! After coffee, welcome and orientation, there will be mini-group discussions. Some topics covered will be: architectural preservation and restoration, oral history, and school coordination with museums. You will be served lunch, after which each county society will present ten slides with a short commentary on outstanding displays or parts of their collections. Some of our county's slides will depict Schmidt's Saddlery displays, demonstration areas downstairs at the Hubbard House, and sketches of the park area which will replace the old Warren Street.



A special THANK YOU to Mr. C.W.Pennington and Mr. Loren Swenson of KATOLIGHT CORPORATION, for help in the publication of this newsletter.



# The Blue Earth County HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## MEMORIAL

Vol. 111, No. 1

Spring 1974.

IN MEMORIAM

ANNA WIECKING (1887 - 1973)

When Dr. Anna Wiecking died in November, the Blue Earth County Historical Society lost a good friend and a loyal supporter. We would like to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to her. To that end we have asked some of her closest friends and colleagues to share their recollections of her with our readers.

Cora F. Sletten remembers the first day they met fifty years ago:

Do you remember your first impression of people you meet and the place where you met them? After an interval of fifty years, I recall mine of Anna Wiecking and her home.

I had been at Mankato State Teachers College for five days when I received a telephone call from Agnes Larson of the History Department. She wanted to take me to meet the two Wiecking sisters and Adelaide Linnell who lived in the Wiecking home. I asked: "Do you take the street car, wear gloves and hat, take a calling card?" She answered: "No, we'll walk there, it will be an informal visit. The girls always wear hats when they go out, but I don't, so you do as you like."

As we stepped up on the porch of the big house, Agnes pulled a handle that rang the door bell. Through the window came the voices of the women and that of a man. We entered a narrow hall with a steep stairway on one side opposite the door leading to the parlor. Introductions followed. The man proved to be Harold Orvis Ross who had just given one of the girls a music lesson. We walked past a Steinway grand piano on the top of which were copies of etudes and exercises by Bach and Czerny, (I didn't see a copy of Alexander's Rag Time Band) and entered the back parlor. I was seated on a tete a tete (now called a love seat) near a library table. Do modern homes now have a library table? On it were a plate of chocolate creams, many neatly arranged books, and a copy of the Saturday Review. Pretty heavy and sophisticated readings, I thought. Other furnishings were similar to those in my childhood home. In an adjoining room were windows with a shelf for house plants. I recognized a Christmas cactus and geraniums. Through the window came a glimpse of a garden in neat, weedless rows, screened from street viewers by shrubbery and trees.

The girls wore cotton dresses, lisle socks, and oxfords. I don't remember details of our conversation. Music must have been part of it, as Orvis was there - one of Mankato's outstanding musicians. They plied me with questions. I remember they said there were several wooded trails on the nearby sides and rims of the bluffs along the slough leading to Maurice J. Nelson's pasture. They hoped I would like a hike and a picnic out that way soon.

After being served a chocolate cream, Agnes and I departed. I had a feeling I would like to better know these people who apparently respected the best of the old traditions; enjoyed music, books, gardening, and the beauty of the natural environment of Mankato. As the years passed, other impressions of Anna followed, but the first one never changed.





Bert Burns, present president of the Historical Society, reflects on what it meant to be a co-worker of Anna Wiecking:

"Do you have a few minutes to talk just now?" would come the familiar voice on the phone and sometimes for half an hour we would discuss some particular situation or circumstance or need which Anna's sharp perception had come upon. Now and then we'd exchange a quip, stop for a good chuckle, but always, we got on with the business at hand. What a splendid mentor, particularly for a Society President prone to procrastination. Anna was not one to promote the status quo. When something required doing her sense of urgency and need came to the fore and those who could or should take action were gently, tactfully but firmly nudged along. Some of the happiest hours of my work with the Society have been spent on the big front porch of the Wiecking home, talking over some of Anna's current writings, chatting about contemporary happenings, recalling circumstances or events of an earlier day. Few people have the sense of continuity, the perspective of time and place which were first nature with Anna. And even fewer have her energy and drive to put such attributes into action. Only a short time before her final illness, she called to read me a letter she had sent off, in her words, "to the powers that be" in which she effectively challenged a concept of history and definition which had been presented to the Board during the autumn. "I just couldn't let that go without some comment."

It's that kind of spirit which has kept this Society alive and functioning during the past decades and which will continue to move us toward fuller times ahead. Thank you, Anna, for helping us on our way.

Verona Burton, who was not only a colleague and fellow member of the A.A.U.W. (whose local chapter Anna Wiecking founded) but also a special friend, shares the following incident with us:

Those who knew her only as an efficient administrator might not have realized her delightful humor. In those early years all faculty were expected to participate in the June graduation but we received our last pay check for the year sometime during exam week. In the early fifties a faculty member who had been dismissed picked up his paycheck, and literally thumbed his nose at the whole graduation gathering, faculty, administration, students, parents, and visitors and left town. Dr. Crawford, not wishing a repeat of that episode, ruled that the last pay checks were not to be issued until after graduation and those faculty not in the ceremony would be docked. This policy was resented by the faculty. My husband, Dan Burton, and Anna marched directly from the auditorium attired in their gowns to the pay window which was in full view of the assembled members of the graduation ceremony. They put on quite a performance of elbowing each other out of the pay line-up. The next year Dr. Crawford moved the pay period back to the afternoon before graduation. No more would the public enjoy the view of their distinguished faculty in academic gowns eager for their pay checks.

She then concludes on a more serious note:

She was a teacher, a great teacher. When I first knew her she was sharing this art with young faculty members, including my husband and myself. When I last saw her, she was sharing the history of Blue Earth County with their children, including my son. Because she shared her many talents, she helped shape the professional life of teachers and she helped to develop the learning attitudes of children.

Another special friend, Earl Wigley, talks of the legacy she left as a teacher:

My recollections of Anna Wiecking span a half century and embrace a relationship from student, to colleague, to friend. During that long period, whatever differences we may have had were more than off-set by our friendship and our mutual concern for education, and more particularly, for children.

One could not know Anna without being impressed by her dedication to her profession, her deep concern for the over-all welfare of children, and her devoted interest in the training of teachers who would share with her the philosophy that the individual child was something special, and that his or her development as a whole person must receive the highest priority if the child and the teacher were to succeed in the educational process.

Anna was a teacher, a counselor, and an administrator, and in each capacity she left ample proof of her skill, her knowledge, her dedication to her profession, and her deep and consistent interest in children. Such a person leaves an endowment for those who survive her that makes monuments and other material forms of recognition superfluous. Her memorial lies in the hearts and minds of those children and teachers whom she taught and counseled. It would be a better world if this could be said of more people. It is good to be able to say it about a long-time friend.

R.Signe Sletten writes of Miss Wiecking's contribution to education and to the Historical Society:

Dr. Anna Wiecking, a dear friend, a wise counselor, a progressive educator, and an unselfish leader has left an indelible mark on the lives of many people. She set high standards for herself in her scholarly achievements and was one of the earliest members of the college staff to get a Doctorial Degree. However, she did not confine her studies to those required, but included those which might give her an insight into the behavior of children at various levels; or into various new programs for children and adults.

One quality that made her a friend, counselor, and leader was her sense of humor. Many times she turned a rather tense situation into a pleasant experience. She had the ability to get an individual to laugh at himself for his behavior and to laugh with him, but never at him. She had a great sympathy for the slow learner and tried to discover the causes for his difficulties. Children, students, or teachers could bring problems to her knowing that she was a "good listener" and would try to help if possible.

Miss Wiecking was a firm believer in helping people to appreciate their heritage from the family and the community. It was natural then that she devoted time and effort to historical preservation of these. She insisted on accuracy in facts and encouraged truth, not sentimentality! She wrote materials for children and adults, which were verified by careful research, and wrote in an interesting and readable style. The Historical Society owes much to her efforts in getting materials organized and preserved, and in arousing interest in our fine museum and in protecting it for posterity.

Anna Wiecking has left an example of a rich and meaningful life and a heritage of memories of that life!

The final remarks come from Darwin A. Slocum, former student and staff member at Mankato State and now assistant vice-chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Center System:

She was so gentle in her approach, but determined in her beliefs; she was so intent on accomplishing things that mattered but so able to give her participation the light touch; she was always a lady but with a delightful sense of humor; and she was so dedicated to those ideals, works, and beliefs that made Mankato State what it is today.

Her contributions to Mankato State, the City of Mankato, and Blue Earth County are immeasurable; she will be sorely missed by those who care for any or all of the three.

# REPORTS

## Preservation of Historic Sites

On January 15 Drs. Charles Nelson and Dave Nystuen of the State Historical Society spoke to friends and members of our local Historical Society about having sites of local historical interest added to the National Registry. If a site can be enrolled with the Registry, it becomes immune to such forces of civilization as the bulldozer and the wrecking crane.

When Dr. Nelson toured Blue Earth County last summer, he remarked upon several likely spots, including the Post Office and the Y.W.C.A. on Mankato and the Baptist Church (1868) in Garden City. He was extremely impressed with the whole town of Good Thunder, saying that the 1870's town has escaped most signs of progress and that it includes "prize historical buildings" in a good state of maintenance. He also cited Mankato's First National Bank building as one of the best examples of Sullivanesque Architecture in the state. Hopefully, with the owner's permission this building will not be torn down.

Two other sites that sparked the interest of Drs. Nystuen and Nelson were the Sterling Church in Mapleton and the Blue Earth County Fair Grounds in Garden City. An eloquent plea for the latter was made by Verl Rollings and Ernest Hansen of the County Fair Board. They argued that it is the oldest county fair in Minnesota and that in fact it is several years older than the State Fair. Garden City has been its permanent home since the year 1860. Except for a brief hiatus during the Sioux uprising, the fair has been held every summer.

## IMPORTANT

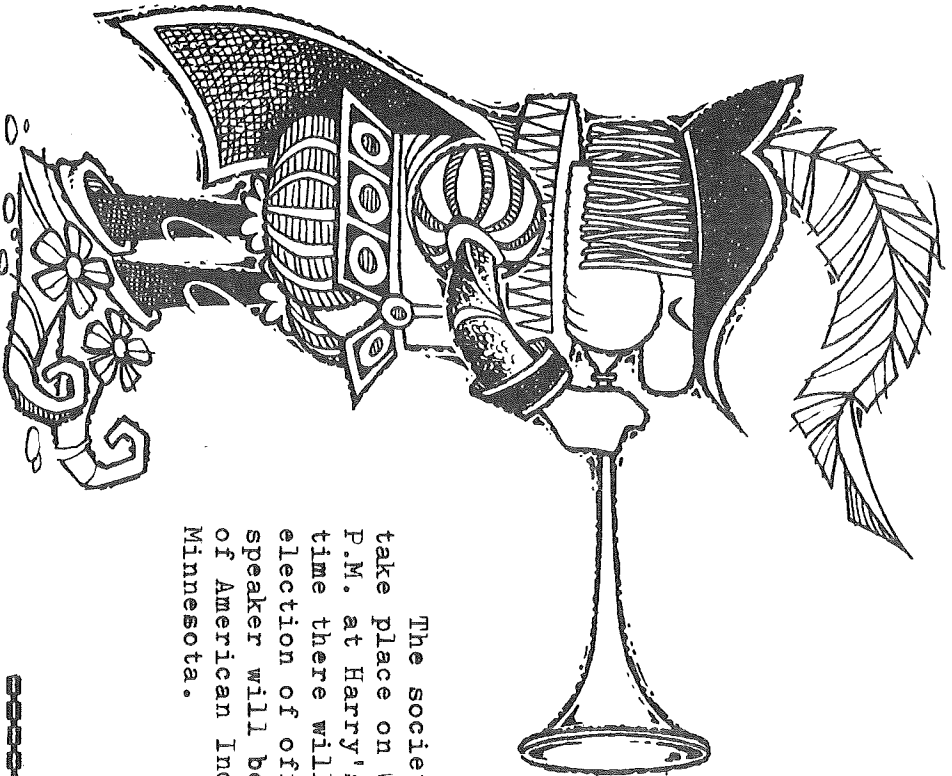
This is first notice that the Board of Directors of the Blue Earth County Historical Society is recommending that the number of Trustees authorized by the Society's By-Laws be increased from nine to thirteen. This change will be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

### Museum Gets A Facelifting

The museum has received numerous repairs - both outside and in - during the past few months. The exterior and porch decks have been repainted. Storm windows have been installed to conserve heat and to prevent moisture from dripping in and rotting out window sills and frames. The Director's office has been completely redecorated and rewired so that Betty Cords can now get to her desk without tripping on loose floor boards or bumping into misplaced pieces of furniture. The kitchen area will be fixed up next. Old utensils will be brought out of storage to stock the drawers and shelves. Inella Burns is making period curtains for the kitchen windows. And finally, there is talk of utilizing the basement as a craft area. There are to be weaving and spinning exhibits, perhaps a carpenter's bench, and other "working" displays.

### Student Intern

Lyle Peelen, a graduate student at Mankato State College who has a double major in history and library science, is the new intern at the museum. He has been helping with our Indian collection and within the next few weeks should have the materials exhibited so that they tell a sequential story. The City Park Department has also helped by making special drawers for the museum's numerous arrowheads.



## ANNUAL MEETING

The society's annual dinner meeting will take place on Wednesday, the 17 of April at 6:30 P.M. at Harry's Hofbrauhaus in Mankato. At that time there will be the usual business meeting and election of officers and new board members. Guest speaker will be Dr. H. Roger Bufalohead, professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota.



### Can You Help?

Wanted: Money! \$\$\$ Would anyone care to make a contribution to aid in the restoration of our antique Pontiac and electric car? If so, call Betty Cords at the Museum.

Wanted: A complete set of the Maude Hart Lovelace books for the Society's library.

Wanted: One loom - preferably a floor model- to go into the lower floor craft area. It should be in workable condition.

Wanted: Guides to conduct tours of the Museum for third and fourth graders. Please contact the Museum.

The Blue Earth County Historical Society extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Sally E. Baringer  
Patricia Bengtson  
Nancy Borne  
William Carlson  
Jean E. Carlstrom  
The Century Club  
Ellen M. Chase  
Mr. & Mrs. George Chesley  
Richard Daly  
Marcia Coonce  
Pat Coopman  
Ruby Ellingson  
Dr. & Mrs. John Eustermann  
Mr. & Mrs. Garner Ewen  
Barbara J. Finseth  
Tom Frederick  
Richard Fleming  
B.R.Geurs  
Ernest Hansen  
Ralph H. Huntzicker  
Mr. & Mrs. M.C.James  
Martin Jenson  
Mr. C.A.(Gus) Johnson, Sr.  
Johnson-Boman Mortuary  
Marjorie Karson  
Mr. & Mrs. Garry Kiffe  
Kathleen Komaridis  
Ronald Kvittek  
Mr. & Mrs. J.R.Lander  
Robert B. Layman  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Lofty  
Adolph Lundin  
Mankato Oil Co.  
Kathleen Maschka  
Mr. & Mrs. Dean Meixell  
Mr. & Mrs. K.P.Molitor  
Mrs. William Moran

Jim Murray  
Mrs. C.D.Nelson  
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Nordgren  
A.C.Norland  
Bruce Paradis  
Mrs. Esther Pearson  
Lucie Ward Phillipson  
Bob Redhead  
John E. Regan  
Verl Rollings  
Dave Ruthenbeck  
Dr. & Mrs. A.M.Scheidel  
Mrs. John Scheidel  
Larry Schnoor  
Mrs. Georgia Schultz  
Joseph Schulze  
H. Roger Smith  
Mrs. Bill Steiner  
Paul L. Stevens  
Brad Theissen  
Mildred G. Thro  
Theonilia Troumbly  
Mary Lou White  
Joe Willaert  
Ruth Ann Engstrom  
John P. Habinger  
Frank Hecht  
Erwin Jones  
Ms. Jo Lawson  
Mrs. Bert Mahowald  
Arnulf Ueland, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Wigley  
Kaye Corporation  
First National Bank of Mankato  
Minnesota Natural Gas Co.  
Carlson Craft  
Mr. & Mrs. Roy Frentz

Gifts to the Historical Society

As of March 14 the Society had received \$1183.50 in memory of Anna Wiecking and \$37.00 in memory of Mary Sugden. These moneys are earmarked for the Restoration Fund.

Wallpaper for the Director's office was donated by Walter and Mildred Zeno and by Joe and Carol Manderfeld.

Cecil Jones sent an electrician to make extensive electrical repairs at the Museum. The work took a week. He also sent a carpenter who installed shelving, counters, drawers, and a downstairs sink.

Volunteer help, without which we could not survive, should also be mentioned here. Those who have given their time are too numerous to name, but their work is appreciated and we thank them.

The following have contributed money and/or parts and labor toward the restoration of our antique cars:

H. Roger Smith  
D. Ruthenbeck  
Sam Baker  
Erwin Jones  
Jay Willaert  
Pat Brunner  
NAPA Parts Service Co.

Bowen Trailor Sales, Inc.  
Bix Furniture Restoration, Inc.  
Becker Auto Supply  
Bob and Jerry Olinger  
Bill Stapleman  
Carlson Wedding Service  
Mankato Area Vo-Tech Institute

A special THANK YOU to Mr. C.W.Pennington and Mr. Loren Swenson of KATOLIGHT CORPORATION, for help in the publication of this newsletter.