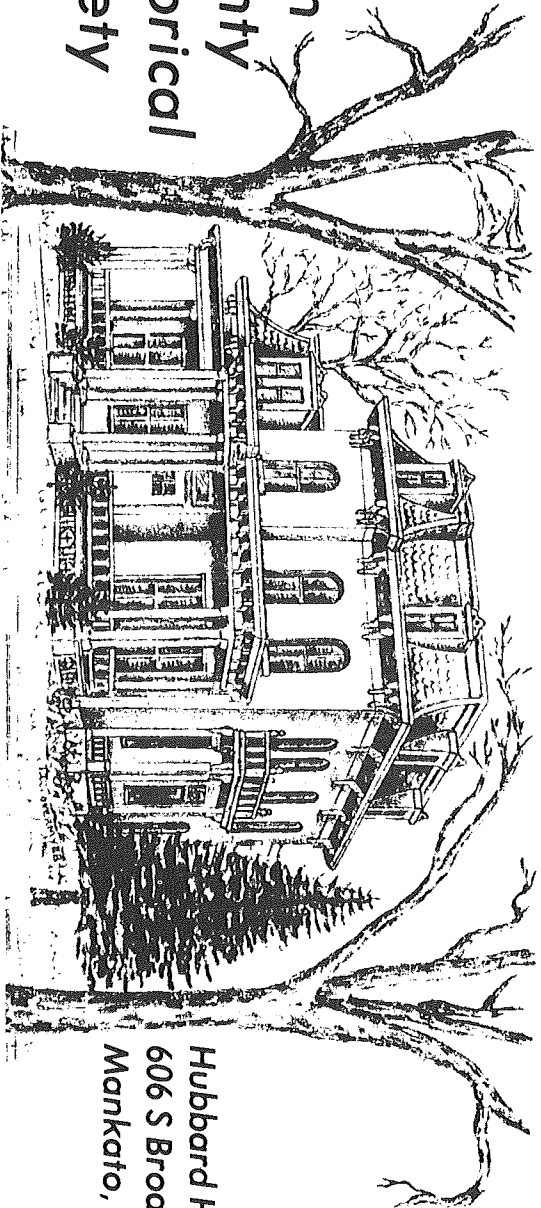


# Blue Earth County Historical Society



Hubbard House  
606 S Broad St.  
Mankato, Minn.

Volume 5, Number 1

## NEWS LETTER

April, 1976

### GREETINGS

To members of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, and to all our readers !

The NEWSLETTER, which has struggled through a period of uncertainty and managed to appear only once in 1975, is reviving.

The Board of Directors is happy to announce that now, thanks to the generous financial support of the HUBBARD MILLING COMPANY, we are able in 1976 to resume publication on a regular basis. The NEWSLETTER will be a quarterly, with issues appearing in April, July, October, and January.

We would like it to offer a way for Society members to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the history of our county, and to communicate their interest to others. We want it to provide a variety of information for our readers. Your contributions: articles, comments, criticisms and suggestions (including inspirations for a title!) will be appreciated.

The Editor

### COMING EVENTS

APRIL 21 (WED.)      ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MANKATO YWCA      Social Hour 6:30 pm      Gray House Living Room  
Dinner 7:00 pm      Gray House Attic

MICHAEL SCULLIN, MSU Dep't. of Anthropology, will  
talk on "A Thousand Years of Agriculture in Blue  
Earth County."  
Dinner \$5.50 per person      Reservation form enclosed

MAY 2 (SUNDAY)      AFTERNOON AT HOME      THE HUBBARD HOUSE      2:00 to 4:00 pm  
FRANK HAYS, expert on American Art Nouveau, will  
talk on art glass, pottery & children's books in  
our collection, and show slides of his collection.

MAY 21 - 30      MINNESOTA BICENTENNIAL TRAVELING EXHIBITION  
MSU CENTENNIAL UNION GALLERY      Hours 9 am to 8 pm  
Our painting of Minneopa Falls (1885) by JOHN HERST will be there.

JUNE 6 (SUNDAY)      JOINT YWCA & HISTORICAL SOCIETY ICE CREAM SOCIAL & OPEN HOUSE  
GRAY HOUSE and HUBBARD HOUSE      1:00 to 4:00 pm  
Tours of the two houses and announcement of winners of the  
YWCA Bicentennial Poster Contest.

# Limited funding cuts museum

By GARY OLSON

Free Press Staff Writer

Faced with funding limitations and cutbacks, the Blue Earth County Historical Society's Board of Directors Tuesday curtailed museum services and considered methods of generating additional income.

The changes were prompted in part by the end of the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act's Title VI job program. One of the 32 temporary full-time county jobs funded by the program during the last year was that of museum director.

Federal funding for that job (some \$8,700 a year) meant the historical society could divert county funds previously supporting a part-time museum director's job to other uses, primarily a part-time cataloging and filing position.

Losing the CETA funds and recognizing a full-time museum director is needed, the board of directors decided to eliminate the cataloging job (although the job is only about one-third completed) and one of the museum's two part-time librarian positions.

Museum staff size, as a result, will shrink from six to four, not including a group of tour guides paid on a per-tour basis.

CETA funding accounted for more than one-third of the his-

torical society's formal budget.

Despite a request for additional money to offset the CETA funding loss, the county board was forced by state taxing limitations to increase the historical society's budget only 6 per cent this year, from \$8,500 to \$9,000.

The museum derives another approximately \$800 a year from selling historical society memberships and through contributions. The City of Mankato helps by maintaining the museum and its grounds.

In an effort to maintain existing service levels while coping with funding cutbacks, the board also:

- curtailed operating hours for the Hubbard House museum at Broad and Warren streets. Effective March 27, the museum will be closed Fridays and Mondays and hours the remainder of

the week will be 1 to 4 p.m. instead of 1 to 5 p.m.

- museum tours for school children will continue to be for District 77 students but separate funding arrangements but other school districts have to pay a tour charge.

- local Boy Scouts will serve as volunteer receptionists at museum on weekends, replacing persons paid to serve in capacity.

- historical society representatives are to request a year funding from Blue Earth County's township government at a meeting of county town officers Thursday. If approved about \$2,000 a year would be created.

- a business membership drive may be conducted to increase income derived from

Members and friends of the Historical Society, the general public, may wonder why the Board announced that our Museum will be open fewer hours, at the very time we are publicizing attendance and expanding demand for tours and the Board's efforts to meet it, that re-printing it here by way of explanation

## Our Dilemma

Gary Olson's article in the Mankato Free Press, March 17, 1976 sets forth so clearly both the Board's efforts to meet it, that re-printing it here by way of explanation

ENCOURAGEMENT  
FROM  
THE YOUNGER GENERATION

Dear ladies at the blue earth county

CHANGES IN

BEGINNING

## EXPLORING MANKATO'S HISTORY AT THE MUSEUM

Recently students in the MSU Department of Home Economics asked if we could help them with a study project on early sewing machines.

We knew off-hand of two old machines which stand in the upstairs servants' hall of the Hubbard House. And there was the tiny hand-cranked machine which had come from Maud Hart's family, which we presumed was a toy.

A search through records and storage shelves revealed two more machines similar to Maud Hart's. One, our records say, was brought to Garden City from Vermont in 1860. The other came from the Bierbauer family. It may have belonged to the wife of William Bierbauer, organizer and captain of the Mankato militia in the defense of New Ulm in 1862, and founder of Mankato's first brewery. Or it could have belonged to the wife of his brother Jacob. We just don't know.

These charmingly decorated little machines are only 10 inches wide and 8 inches high, but they were not toys. Quite the contrary: they are examples of the "Improved Common Sense," a single chain-stitch home sewing machine, the simplest and least expensive on the market in the 1860's and 1870's. Like the slightly earlier "New England" from which it was copied, it was manufactured in Vermont and Massachusetts, but without benefit of patent. It was a mass-production item for two decades; and, at a price of about \$25, it was an investment that an ordinary housewife could afford.

The Museum's two large machines are in the luxury class. One is a Wheeler and Wilson Model No. 8. The finest machine of its time, it was first produced in 1876 by the company which dominated a fiercely competitive industry. It cost \$125, and outsold Singer's cheaper family machine (\$100, later lowered to \$75) well into the 1880's.

Our machine is set in a heavy iron table stand with treadle and flywheel. It has a fine drop-leaf rosewood top, small side drawers and a separate box cover. It is in good condition basically and appears to be restorable to working order. An examination of its mechanical features gives ample explanation for its popularity. At the touch of a finger its round stationary bobbin pops up in the easily accessible bobbin case. It has the

Wilson rotary hook, which sewed more smoothly than Singer's reciprocating shuttle, and the famous glass presser foot, which allowed the seamstress to see her stitching much better than does the conventional type still used on present-day machines.

Our other luxury machine is comparatively rare. It is a Weed "Family Favorite" cabinet model of 1871. The cabinet, patented in that year, was a handsome piece of furniture. Its front cupboard-type doors, when closed, completely concealed the treadle mechanism and flywheel; and the machine head dropped down inside, to be covered by a table leaf (now missing) which closed over as a lid. The machine itself is in rather bad shape. We have the instruction book for it, but the limited illustrations, alas, do not show what the bobbin was like. The long shuttle (the reciprocating type) moved horizontally under the needle plate. The cabinet conceals other intriguing items: tiny wrenches used for adjusting various machine parts, needles carefully labelled as to size and thread number, and sets of attachments for hemming, tucking and ruffling, with printed directions, some in their original boxes.

According to our records, this Weed must have belonged to Mrs. George H. Brewster of Mankato. Her daughter Grace gave it to the Historical Society with the note, "Bought 1871. Sold by John Lind." The Weed Sewing Machine Company did indeed have an agent in Mankato in 1871; his name, as it appears in the full-page ad on the back cover of the city directory, was W.G. Walz. The Wheeler and Wilson Company had a full-page ad on the front cover that year. Other name-brand manufacturers who had agents in town were Florence, Grover and Baker, and Singer. According to the Mankato Board of Trade, sales of sewing machines totaled \$31,195 in 1872. In the following year, 377 brand-name machines, valued at the sum of \$31,205, were reported sold by agents of six manufacturers. Such figures, and the machines in our collection, are evidence that a hundred years ago Mankato and Blue Earth County had a good share in the boom which brought the first major labor-saving device of modern times into thousands of American households.

## LIFE AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE

EMPATHY (4th GRADE)

Dear Mrs. Kleinschmidt,

Thank you for the tour very much. You are very nice. I like you. I liked the log cabin best.

Your friend Jody

Dear Mrs. Nelson,

Thank you for letting us come to the museum. I really enjoyed it. The parts I liked best are the bed room and the log cabin.

When you are trying to get on the bike on the curb, what if you could not reach.

I bet it takes you hours to clean the house.

Your friend, Beth

WHAT A LIBRARIAN HAS TO KNOW !!  
(OR FIND OUT)

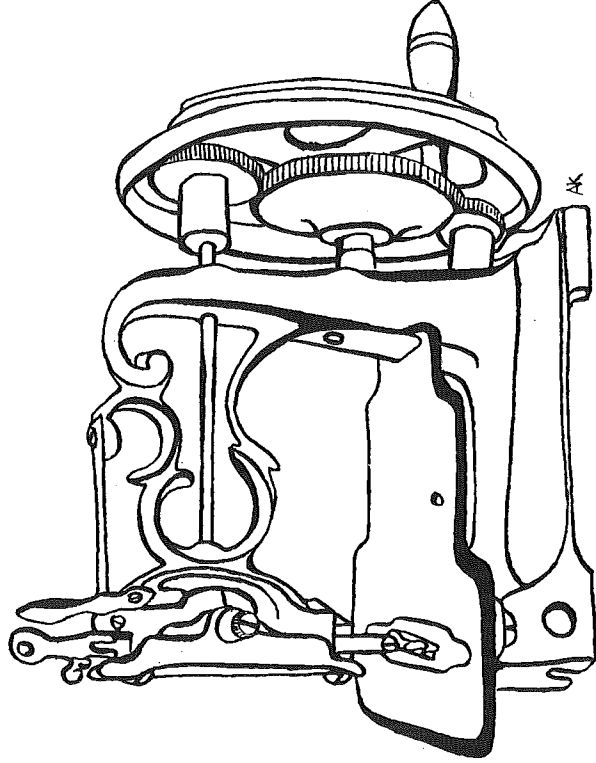
When someone recently asked me to categorize the reference questions I deal with at the Museum, I considered, "Most frequent? Most unusual? Why not both!"

Though I don't compile statistics, I can say that the subjects most often brought up are the Seppmann Mill, Maud Hart Lovelace, and the Sioux uprising and execution of 1862. One request for information on Maud Hart came from a real devotee - a California girl who had asked for (and received) a complete set of the Betsy-Tacy stories as a gift upon her graduation from college.

Our steady parade of grade-school visitors ask the questions that take the most hunting. They want to know about odd and obscure items from Mankato's past; for example, the Lincoln Park fountain; horse-drawn streetcars (they had to be horse-drawn); and the First Presbyterian Church bell.

I haven't decided yet which is my favorite question of the year: "the interiors of restaurants and ice cream parlors in Mankato in the 1920's" or "the first verse of Hail, Minnesota!" It's a difficult choice.

Mary Keefe, Librarian



### APPRECIATION (3rd GRADE)

Dear madam

It sure was cool seeing that stuff, although I saw it about 400,000 times but it was interesting.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Museum,

Thank you for letting us visit the museum. We rilly enjoyed it. Best of all I liked the outside of the log cabin and the razor blades in the barbar shop.

From, Mark

Dear Mrs. Nelson,

Thank you very much for touring us through the museum. I espeisiely liked the upstairs and downstairs!

Sincerely, Steven

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Society has received gifts  
in memory of

CECIL H. JONES

ROY TRYHUS

RUTH F. WILLIAMS

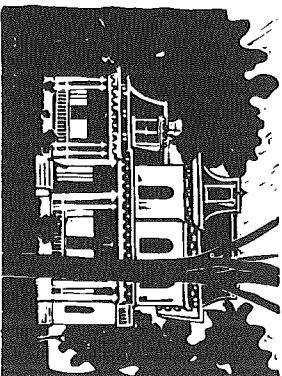
Mr. Jones was a life member of the Historical Society and had served as President and Member of the Board of Directors  
Mrs. Williams was a sister of Board Member Howard Williams

ATTENTION  
SOCIETY MEMBERS !!

ANNUAL MEETING  
APRIL 21

INFORMATION  
and  
RESERVATION FORM  
ENCLOSED

NEWSLETTER  
Blue Earth County  
Historical Society  
606 South Broad  
Mankato, MN 56001



Address Correction  
Requested

#### A FIRST FOR THE BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mankato is the meeting place, and we are hosts for a Minnesota State Historical Society Southwest Regional Workshop on April 10th. The first of a series, it is a new venture in making State Society services more available throughout Minnesota.

David W. Nystuen, Director of Field Services, and eight State Society staff members are presenting a program designed in consultation with the staffs of local societies. Topics selected for one-hour sessions are: Historical Societies and Fund-Raising; How To Do A Community Historical Survey; Historical Society Libraries: What To Collect?; and Organizing Minnesota's Museums. In addition, State Society and Blue Earth County Society plans for 1976 will be presented at two half-hour sessions.

The Workshop will be held at the YWCA from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, with meetings in the Annex and lunch at noon in the Attic. \$3.50 covers the cost of registration and lunch.

Our staff hopes that participants will find time to visit the Hubbard House during the lunch hour or after Workshop sessions.

BLUE EARTH COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

Editor: Jeanne D. Kress  
Design Artist: Anne Kress

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Mankato, Minn. 56001

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MANKATO, MN 56001

BIRDS EYE VIEW OF MANKATO IN 1870  
(Lithograph)

Bicentennial Project facsimile  
published for the Mankato Chapter  
of the League of Women Voters

Available in the Museum Shop Price \$3.50

One of the Museum's two originals  
is on view in the second floor hall

#### GHOST TOWNS OF BLUE EARTH COUNTY

In connection with the project of the Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners to establish parkettes commemorating places of historic interest, Betty Cords, our former Museum Director, has been investigating the history of early communities which no longer exist. So far her attention has been concentrated on Cream, a hamlet formerly located close to Pemberton, and Faley, one-time post office station for Medo Township.

Betty has discovered an astonishing number of settlements which sprang up in the past, only to disappear from the map and from people's memories. There was Tivoli, near St. Clair; and Sterling Center, on the Maple River east of Amboy. Myrna-Perkinsville, Shelbyville and Castle Garden are also on Betty's list. She would like to investigate them too, but has had to give up at least temporarily, because of other demands on her time and energies. She would be glad to have collaborators interested in carrying on the project. Does anyone want to re-discover Blaine ? Lortz ? Prion ? Willow Creek ?