

Volume 7, Number 3

NEWS LETTER

October, 1978

COMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

OCTOBER 20 - 21 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Friday, 7:30 - 9:15 pm, Business Meeting & Open House.

James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Avenue, St. Paul.

Saturday, 8:00 am to 9:30 pm, History Conference, Lunche

Saturday, 8:00 am to 9:30 pm, History Conference, Luncheon and Dinner Meetings.

Sheraton Ritz Hotel, Minneapolis.

OCTOBER 28 - 29 YWCA CRAFT SHOW 603 S. 2nd Street, Mankato.

Saturday 10 am - 6 pm; Sunday 11 am - 5 pm.

Admission \$1.00 (includes chance on a handmade quilt.)
YWCA SALE OF CHRISTMAS GREENS throughout October.

Phone 345-4629 to order for delivery in December.

Wreaths, holly, garlands, kits.

DECEMBER 3 (Sunday)

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS' VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS TEA and

ADVANCE SALE, MUSEUM SHOP CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

2 to 4 pm - Hubbard House, 606 S. Broad Street, Mankato.

YWCA HANGING OF THE GREENS. Program and Refreshments.

2 to 4 pm - Cray House, 603 S. 2nd Street, Mankato.

DECEMBER 4 - 15

MUSEUM SHOP CHRISTMAS BAZAAR - Hubbard House, 606 S. Broad Street.

Hours 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesday through Saturday; 1 - 5 pm Sunday.

DECEMBER 4-5-6

YWCA CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENT SALE - 603 S. 2nd Street, Mankato.

LAKE CRYSTAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENT

The Lake Crystal Historical Society's latest project was "Portrait of a Bride", a show of bridal fashions presented on two evenings, September 21 and 22, in the High School auditorium. Your editor was very glad that she was able to get to the first performance, as the entire event proved to be thoroughly enjoyable.

The staging was both simple and effective: the illusion of a series of wedding pictures was produced by the appearance of one model after another. posed in a life-size gilt frame set in the center of the stage and flanked by formal bouquets in tall wicker baskets. A small step down brought the model out of the picture, to walk across the wide stage, with ample room to display her gown to full advantage. Each costume was identified and described in a running commentary by Elaine Peterson, who enlivened her narration with anecdotes of the weddings at which the dresses had been worn.

(Continued on Page 7)

CENTURY FARMS - 1978

The Minnesota State Fair Board's Centennial Farm project, begun in 1976, named five farms in Blue Earth County this year. Their location and history are an interesting reflection of patterns of settlement in the county. Four are in the northern part, fairly close to Mankato, the principal point of arrival in the area, from which settlers moved out into the country. Two are situated west of Mankato and two to the east.

The fifth farm, in the southwestern part of the county, shows a different line of the early settlers' movement, coming northward from Iowa. This farm, which belongs to Mr. Wilmar Bethke of Vernon Center, is located in Ceresco Township (Sections 33 & 34). Mr. Bethke's grandfather, August Bethke, was the first owner. He is named in Thomas Hughes' history as being among the first German settlers who came to that part of the county in the 1860's. Mr. Bethke says that his grandfather came in 1869.He acquired the farm which his grandson now owns in 1874.

The two oldest farms again illustrate a major line of movement, that of the Welsh who came into the area along the Minnesota River and rapidly made Lake Crystal a separate trade center for the western part of the county. The farm now owned by Mrs. Virginia Howard McCarthy belonged originally to one of the founders of Lake Crystal, Henry C. Howard. He settled on the south shore of Loon Lake (Sections 9-10, Garden City Township), in 1856, and played an important part in the history of Lake Crystal as first postmaster, schoolteacher and representative to the state legislature. The farm was held in turn by a son and a grandson, Burt Boynton Howard, the father of the present owner. The other farm in the area of Welsh settlement is located in Butternut Valley Township (Section 10). Established in 1862 by John Rome Jones, it has been held in turn by his son Edwin and grandson Donald E. Jones, the present owner, who resides in the state of Washington.

Judge Leslie Morse's farm near the old townsite of Tivoli (Section 24, Mankato Township) marks the direction of early settlement eastward from Mankato, which occurred concurrently with the westward movement. Judge Morse's grandfather Enoch, who came



THE ARVID WILDER FARM Decoria Township

to Mankato in 1856, bought the farm in 1864. His son, John W. Morse, followed him, living on the farm until reaching his 70's, when he moved to Mankato. His son Leslie went into the legal profession, but continued the family association with the Tivoli area. Like his father, Judge Morse has been president of the Tivoli Cemetery Association for many years. His Century farm has been occupied for two generations by the family who took over its operation for the retiring John Morse in the 1920's.

The most recent Century Farm of this year is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Arvid Wilder, located on the LeSueur River in Decoria Township (Section 7). The Wilder family's ownership dates back to 1876. The original owner, Fayette Wilder, was one of those New Englanders who came westward by stages. Born in Vermont, he spent his childhood and youth in Ohio. As a young man he moved to Wisconsin, and then shortly came to Minnesota, where he spent the years between 1863 and 1872 in Martin County. The early 70's were the "grasshopper years" when many farmers left the prairie areas of Blue Earth and and the counties to the southwest. So, as I learned from his grandson Fayette (Arvid's brother) the first Fayette Wilder walked into Decoria Township in 1872, carrying his plough on his shoulder.

His descendants have lived and farmed in the LeSueur valley on both sides of the river crossing of the "old Mapleton road" (County Road 8) ever since that time. His son Ross had six sons, of whom three still live there. Several members of the fourth

NOTES ON A PAINTING

An object familiar to Museum visitors over many years and one which consistently evokes interest and admiration is the landscape of Minneopa Falls which hangs in the archives room of the Hubbard House. It has received attention from people outside Blue Earth County. The University of Minnesota, searching the state for works by Minnesota artists, considered our picture a sufficiently good example of 19th century Romantic painting to be included in the Bicentennial exhibition of Minnesota art at Dayton's (Minneapolis) in 1976.

At that time all we could say about it was that it had been painted by "artist Herrst" before 1910 and had been given to the Historical Society by Mrs. Orange Little. We knew that Mr. and Mrs. Orange Little owned the farm on which Minneopa Falls was located, and that the falls had been a favorite resort of artists as early as the 1860's. An old display label for our painting said that Herrst painted it "while vacationing in Minnesota." The actual painting is unsigned. The style is much earlier than 1910. The picture had to be produced after 1883, because the corner braces of the stretchers are stamped with the patent date "Feb 18 1883".

Some time ago, looking through our city directory for 1888, my eye chanced upon this entry: "Haerst, John, artist, studio Union Block, r(esidence) same."

So "artist Herrst" had a studio on Front Street in 1887! Directories are always a year behind, and the spelling variation 'e' for 'ae' a common one in German names. Alas, our incomplete run of directories gives nothing more. The artist's name does not appear in 1885, or in 1895.

DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING at THE HUBBARD HOUSE !!!

NEW: Hubbard Milling Company Centennial Plates. Solid pewter; bas-relief of the Hubbard Mill. Already a collector's item! \$35.00.

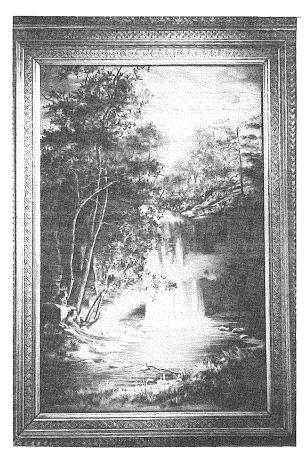
Sandon Historical Series Plate, 1978: Minneopa Falls. Limited edition. Booklet on history of the falls by artist Donna Sandon included. \$12.00.

Minnesota Historical Society Picture Packet: Minnesota Transportation. \$1.00.

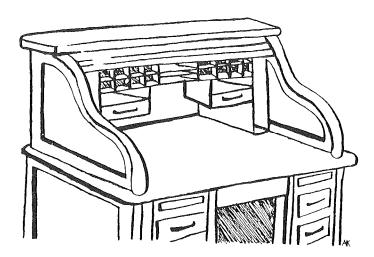
More recently, trying to find out about George Lang's prize Clydesdale horses, I was looking through lists of awards at the county fairs. In the Mankato Review of Sept. 27, 1887, I found: "Division M. (art): J. Haerst, finest collection paintings in oil," exhibited at the Southern Minnesota Livestock Association Fair held in Mankato. An even greater find was the Mankato Free Press review of the exhibits: "Mr. J. Haerst's art exhibit is attracting the favorable notice of everyone who enters the hall. Mr. Haerst is a young man who has won his way through the world by his own exertions, and his success is very gratifying to his friends. A representation of Minneopa Falls occupies a conspicuous position and is a good likeness of the original."

Did the Littles buy the painting of their falls to help the struggling young artist? The temptation to identify our "Minneopa Falls" as the painting which Haerst showed at the Mankato fair in 1887 is irresistible!

J. Kress



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S ROLLTOP



Fall is meeting time, and the Museum staff and Board members have attended several.

The Labor Day weekend found me at the National Gymanfa Ganu in Minneapolis - a most inspiring event. Singing, singing and more singing - soloists and small groups, choirs and group hymn singing. The Noson Lawen (talent show) had more Southern Minnesotans than came from any other area. The concert in Orchestra Hall was magnificent. Only a Welshman could announce that "We will have a 20-minute intermission, but if you want to come back after ten minutes, we will all sing until the formal program starts again." The very crowded church service on Sunday at the Westminster Presbyterian Church brought the wry comment from their minister that the Gymmanfa Ganu drew an Easter congregation on a Labor Day weekend!

I was honored to have been asked to write a brief account of the Welsh in Minnesota for the program booklet.

Before leaving for Minneapolis, the Director was asked if the Museum would lend some of its Welsh artifacts for display at the Gymanfa. After much discussion with Society officers, it was decided that there was no way to guarantee their security, so the matter was dropped. But we did do some checking on several objects and learned some interesting history:

James D. Price, who immigrated to Blue Earth County in May, 1856 and located in Cambria, was chaired a bard at an Eisteddfod held in Mankato February 18, 1891, and given the name of Ap Dewi. Professor Ap Madoc of Chicago judged the poetry and made the presentation. Evidently Mr. Price was given, in addition to his bardic chair, a very large framed cetificate showing 128 small photographs of Welsh and Welsh-American poets, including Prof. Ap Madoc. They were all members of the National Cymrodorion Society, and an attempt was made to form a chapter here. Mr. Price's bardic chair and the certificate were given to the Museum and form a part of our Welsh display.

We also found a large oilcloth banner which was made for the 1905 Eisteddfod in Mankato. It measures approximately four by nine feet and has the wording Eisteddfod Croesaw 1905 painted in red, blue and black letters on a white ground.

The Southern Minnesota Historical Assembly (Betty Cords is now its past president) met at the Brown County Historical Society in New Ulm on September 9th. The Museum staff there is doing yeoman service against great odds of limited budget, limited personnel and shortage of space. The date for their move to the old Post Office has not been set.

Attendance at these events gave me the opportunity to hear three men's singing groups - all very different styles and all excellent. Two were at the National Gymanfa Ganu in Minneapolis: the River Blenders, from Mankato and surrounding area, sang at the Noson Lawen; and the 3M Men's Choir sang at the Gala Concert in Orchestra Hall. The Concord Singers of New Ulm sang at the Historical Assembly meeting there.

Our Society's first in a series of bus trips led by Bert Burns - to the Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa brought much community interest. A magnificent fall day, plus the opportunity to see an excellent museum, made it a great experience for all of us. The Director, Dr. Marion Nelson, who spoke at our annual meeting last spring, was our guide. Their operations are financed entirely by admissions and proceeds from their Museum Shop. They hold occasional fund drives for specific restoration projects. We are honored that our Norwegian immigrant loom, long in storage here, will go to the Decorah museum, where it will be restored and displayed.

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Our next project is our Museum Shop Bazaar in December. We hope to raise enough money to make up the deficit caused by the County Commissioners' reducing our appropriation by 20%. You are all urged to contribute your craft items or baked goods for sale, and to do your Christmas shopping here. Carol Kvale has been named chairperson for the grand opening tea for our membership.

Personnel changes at the Museum: Mike Eigen, Carriage House Curator, has left us to do archaeological work for a private corporation. We do not have funds to replace him, but Sue Monk will be with us part-time through the Work Study program at Mankato State. She, Stewart Simpson and Mary Pongratz will take turns staffing the Carriage House on weekends. Holly Ahern has announced her retirement at the end of December. If you know of anyone qualified to replace her, please let us know. John Burton, now a sophomore at St. Olaf's, who worked weekends this past summer, will return from Northfield to work an occasional weekend here this fall. Evelyn Weisgram continues to volunteer her time two mornings a week to do special archives projects. Janice Krueger, our former intern, guide, weekend worker and volunteer, is enjoying her Museology courses at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

Marcia T. Schuster

CENTURY FARMS (Cont'd.)

generation are established in their own homes, set throughout the valley, from points low beside the river to the top of the bluffs. The Arvid Wilder house, situated halfway up the hillside, is the original farmstead. Though somewhat modified, it retains a definitely 19th century air. Viewing the Wilders' properties, one has the impression of reviewing a hundred years of Blue Earth County history, presented in a single picture by this Century Farm.

J. Kress

(I am obliged to the owners and also to Mrs. Med James and Mrs. Russell Jones of Lake Crystal and Mr. Bert Hanson of Vernon Center, for information. Other sources are Hughes' <u>History of Blue Earth County</u>, newspaper files of the <u>Free Press</u> and the <u>Review</u>, and county directories.)
October, 1978

PLANS FOR CHRISTMAS

The holiday season will soon be upon us, and those of us involved in the Christmas Bazaar are beginning to get things underway. It looks like we will have a wonderful variety of merchandise, from Christmas ornaments and decorations to jewelry, along with home - baked breads and cookies. The Museum Shop will also be stocked with our usual assortment of children's books and toys for Christmas giving. Marge Meredith, of the Twilight Garden Club, who has done such a magnificent job with the gardens, will be taking over the kitchen and filling it with a variety of dried flower arrangements, and possibly some live plants, for sale.

Historical Society members are invited to join us on Sunday afternoon, December 3, between 2:00 and 4:00 pm, for a Victorian Christmas Tea and grand opening of the Bazaar. This will be your chance to make your purchases from the best and largest selection. The bazaar will then be advertised to the public. Beginning Monday, December 4, it will run through Friday, December 15. Hours will be 10 am to 5 pm.

We need more items to sell, so if you have not offered to donate your handiwork and would like to, please give us a call at the Museum, 345-4154, or phone the chairperson, Holly Ahern, at 625-5281. We also need people to wait on customers. If you can volunteer a couple of afternoons, or even a few hours, please let us know.

Be sure to tell everyone you know about the lovely things that will be available, and urge them to do their Christmas shopping at the Museum first!

Holly Ahern

NEWSLETTER

of the

BLUE EARTH COUNTY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Free to members of the Historical Society
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HISTORIC TRIUMPH OF TECHNOLOGY

A Blue Earth County landmark which has been in the news recently is the Red Jacket railroad bridge over the LeSueur river and Highway 66, south of Mankato. Public attention has been aroused by the proposal that the right of way (which is soon to be abandoned) be made into a State recreational trail for non-motorized activities. Abandonment by the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Company threatens the imminent destruction of the historic structure, a fate which people interested in historic preservation foresaw a number of years ago. In 1970, a committee headed by Dr. Bert Burns, then president of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, recommended the bridge to the State Society's Historic Sites Survey as a structure of historic significance. As a consequence, it is listed in the State Inventory of Historic Places (1975), which makes it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Recent interest prompted Ken Berg to review the history of the two Red Jacket bridges. (Mankato Free Press. August 11.) As he notes, the railroad bridge and trestle have frequently been confused with the concrete road bridge, the dedication of which was the occasion of the great celebration of August 22, 1911, recorded in J.R. Snow's famous panoramic photograph. Berg points out that in 1911 the concrete bridge was regarded as far more remarkable than the railroad bridge. Of course ! It represented a newer technology, while the railroad structure was old and familiar. and hence ordinary. The concrete bridge is long gone. According to Dr. Burns, it was washed out by a major flood in 1950, and was replaced by the present iron truss bridge.

The railroad bridge and trestle have survived, a monument to the engineering technology of the 19th century and a vivid reminder of one of the most dramatic developments in the history of the United States, the building of the railroads. Blue Earth County had, in the building of the Central Railroad from Mankato to Wells, a piece of this drama, as full of excitement as the story of such giants as the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern and the Union Pacific. The papers of John A. Willard, one of the principal promoters, and the newspaper files in our Museum

archives reveal the day-by-day struggle to finance and build the line. It was quite an achievement!

The entire line was built in less than five months in the year 1874. In April, bond issues were being voted in Mankato and various townships, with the proviso that the line should be "bridged and ironed" to Good Thunder by August 1st, the entire road to be completed and in operation by January, 1875. Construction contracts were still being negotiated in mid-May, and it was the end of June before clearing and grading actually began. By the first of July, 200 men were at work, "all that can be used to advantage until it is decided who will build the bridge." To that date only one contractor had bid on it, and the company was hoping for a lower one. Meanwhile the contractors had asked for a 60-day extension on the construction deadline, and were assuring the citizens of Mankato that they would try to see that their workmen (non-residents) did not vote in the election July first.

The first shipment of rails left Johnstown, Pa. on June 27, and reached West Mankato via Duluth and St. Paul on July 21. Track-laying began the next day. But problems in procuring materials for the bridge and trestle developed. The contractor had to make a special trip to Pittsburgh to get iron work for them. Not until August 1st did the timbers for the structure begin to arrive. By August 18, the ravine was lined with timbers waiting to be erected. This was all done by manpower; the construction train only hauled materials to the site. Little more could be done until the iron for the bridge came. The Pittsburgh supplier was "at least ten days behind" on the contract delivery date. The shipments finally arrived on September 4 (a Saturday) and on Sunday the full crew was working twelve hours a day "to push the work forward." By Tuesday, September 8, the Review reported jubilantly, the "long trestle through the Red Jacket ravine is up and workmen are engaged in putting in the irons and bolting the timbers together."

On September 29, the contractors and railroad officials were able to take a party of some fifty Mankato dignitaries, "including a number of ex-councilmen, most of the city officers, quite a number of prominent citizens and a few regular passengers," over the new road as far as Good Thunder. The train made the 15-mile run in

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forty-five minutes, "including several stoppages", traveling at a rate of "25 to 30 miles an hour from the Red Jacket Ravine over the prairie portions of the route." They found the workmen "putting the finishing touches to the LeSueur river bridge, which is a fine substantial structure and lifts the train more than fifty feet into the air."

On this occasion, more than a hundred years ago, "the attention of the party was divided between the engineering achievements of the road and the beauty of the wild and charming scenery." After lunch in Good Thunder, the excursion returned to Mankato "without mishap of any kind," and the city fathers declared themselves satisfied "that the company had well fulfilled their contract to build and put in operation their road from this city (Mankato) to Good Thunder by the first of October."

One deadline had been met! They made the final one also, at the end of November. In the week before November 24, 1874, the completion of the line to Wells was celebrated by excursions from both ends.

LAKE CRYSTAL EVENT (Cont'd.)

Altogether, over fifty different costumes were shown. The earliest was a dress worn by Mrs. Ed Cornish in 1868; the most recent was modelled by Mrs. Michael Miest, a bride of 1978. The 19th century and early 20th century years were naturally represented by only a few models. Among these, Mrs. Lorin Cray's dress of 1892 was of particular interest to a Mankatoan. Beginning with the 1920's the showing for each decade included six to eight costumes. Changes in styles were most striking in the early 1900's. It was interesting to note that the silhouette of 1868, with its wide full skirt, seemed to be repeated in many of the more recent models.

The musical accompaniment underscored the wedding theme very effectively. The organ, played by Mrs. Ellis Norman, provided a soft sound background in the intervals between Mrs. Peterson's comments. Vocal numbers by six different soloists were interspersed throughout the performance, each song being appropriate in date to the period of the costume displayed.

After the presentation, wedding reception-style refreshments were served to audience and performers, who mingled

Despite "cold and disagreeable weather," the Mankato celebrants filled three passenger cars and four boxcars. An extra train was improvised at Good Thunder, but could not accomodate "upwards of 700 men, women and children, ... many of whom were forced to stay home." The group which traveled in the opposite direction the next day included people from La Crosse, Wisconsin, as well as Wells and Winnebago, who were entertained overnight in Mankato. A third excursion for the benefit of people from Wells and Minnesota Lake took place on Thursday. That same day, the 19th, the contractors officially turned over the line to the company.

We have, alas, no photographs of these events, to match the celebration of 1911, though some must have been taken. But the bridge and trestle are still intact, and the scenery along the right of way still remains beautiful in the autumn of 1978.

J. Kress
(Quotations are from the Mankato Review and the Mankato Union of 1874.)

in festive mood in the lobby of the auditorium at the close of the evening.

The president of the Lake Crystal Society, Jim Zwickey, gives chief credit for the whole performance to Mrs. Ellis Norman. the official chairperson, and Mrs. Lloyd (Alice) Hollingsworth, whose names were not even on the program. When asked about the omission, Mrs. Norman said that so many people had worked on the event that it was impossible to list them all; therefore only those who actually appeared in the performance were named. (She forgot herself as organist!) The organizers were generally pleased at the outcome of their efforts. They estimate the total attendance for the two evenings at something over 400; and they hope that when all accounts are settled, they will have at least that number of dollars to add to the Society's treasury.

J. Kress

ATTENTION!

SOCIETY MEMBERS!

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR SALE ITEMS NEEDED!

S E E
PLANS for CHRISTMAS,
Page 7.

NEWSLETTER Blue Earth County
Historical Society
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Mankato, MN 56001



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RECENT ACCESSIONS (June-September, 1978)

- 1. Dominion Electric Waffle Iron. 1920's ? Given by Betty Cords, Lake Crystal.
- 2. Patchwork Quilt. Handmade by Antoinette Cram Mead, and Pin of the Women's Relief Corps (Grand Army of the Republic) 1883. Belonged to Jessie Daniels Tanner. Given by Jessie D. Tanner, South Gate; CA
- 3. Wedding Dress (1893) of Lizzie Merrill
 Jones (Mrs. Ed Jones) and Black Taffeta
 Bonnet, 1870's, which belonged to Mrs.
 Evan D. Jones.
 Given by Mrs. Florence Powers, Mankato.
- 4. Miscellaneous Curios, including "George Washington Cut Plug" Tobacco Pouch, Capewell Horseshoe Nail, and Mechanical Lead Pencil (advertising item of Olson Texaco Bulk Service Co., Mankato). Given by Don Klingbeil, Mankato.
- 5. Photographs of Col. & Mrs. C. E. Johnson, Mankato, and B. Eleanor Johnson, 1908. Graduation Dress, 1904; Basque and Camisole, 1910; Bedspread; Pin Cushion, 1871; Silk Scarf & Apron. Given by B. Eleanor Johnson, Tucson, AZ
- 6. Pressed Glass Pitcher, forget-me-not pattern, ca. 1900; Cut Glass Salt Shakers; Clothing, early 1900's, including Wedding Dress of Ellen Engstrom Kroon (with photograph), 1914; Long Skirt and Woman's Undergarment. Given by Mr. & Mrs. H. Clifton Kroon, Minneapolis.

- 7. Demi-tasse Cups & Saucers; Glass Powder Box; Sewing Tools; Greeting Cards. Given by Mrs. Mabel Gerth, Clackmas, OR
- 8. Feed Sack, Hubbard Egg Mash Concentrate. 100 #. Hubbard Milling Company, Mankato. Given by Bert Burns, Mankato.
- 9. Plate Sandon Historical Series, 1978: Minneopa Falls. No. 13 of 250. Given by the artist, Doma Sandon.
- 10. Railroad Spike from the right of way of the Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Omaha Railroad, North 4th St., Mankato. Given by Mike Ulman, Seattle, WA
- 11. Hubbard Milling Company Centennial
 Souvenir Plate. Pewter.
 Given by Hubbard Milling Co., Mankato.
- 12. Book: The Victorian Architecture of Iowa, by William Plymat, Jr. C. 1976. Des Moines, IA. 98 pp., photographs. Given by William Plymat, Jr.

THOUGHTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS: WHAT THE HUBBARD HOUSE WANTS FOR CHRISTMAS

- 1. Rugs for the North Parlor and the Dining Room. Size needed, 9' x 12' approximately. Oriental type most suitable.
- 2. Folding Table(s), card-table size, or other. At present Museum workers have to bring their own for special events (teas, etc.), and for everyday work projects.
- 3. Laundry Service: Volunteers to wash and iron Museum curtains at home.

If YOU can make the Museum staff happy at Christmas by giving any of the above, please phone the Director, 345 - 4154.