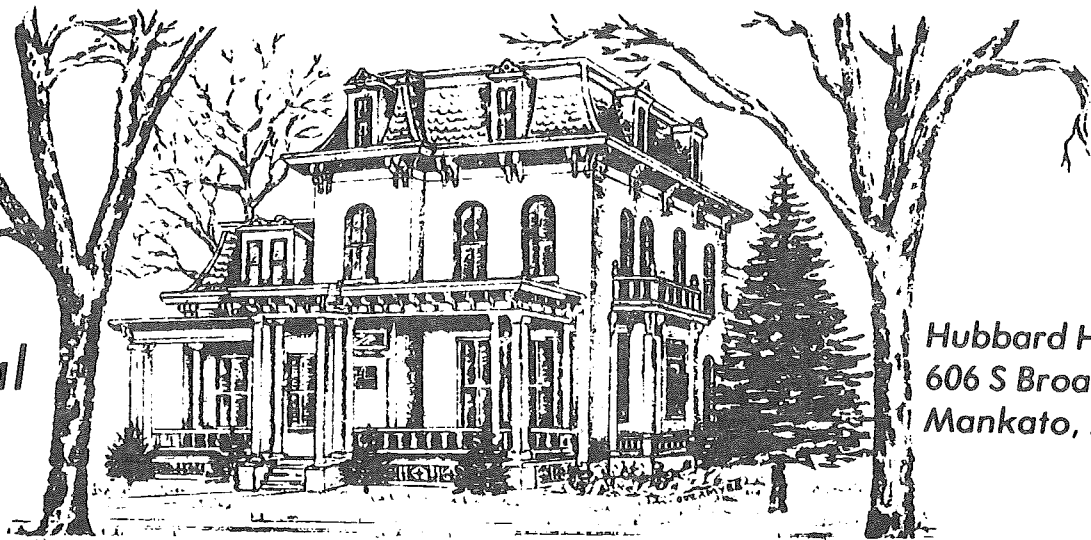


Blue Earth County Historical Society



Hubbard House
606 S Broad St.
Mankato, Minn.

Volume 8, Number 4

NEWS LETTER

January, 1980

LIFE AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE +++++ A REVIEW OF THE YEAR 1979

MUSEUM ATTENDANCE

Visitors who registered at the Hubbard House during the year numbered 5,065; and the Carriage House guest book was signed by 2,640 people. As in previous years, the majority of visitors - somewhat more than 60% - were residents of the Mankato area and Blue Earth County. Approximately 20% were Minnesotans from all over the state. A large number indicated residence in the Twin Cities area: in addition to Minneapolis and St. Paul, 32 different communities in the greater metropolitan area were named. The rest of the state was represented by residents of 107 other cities. The remaining 20% of our visitors registered as coming from 36 different states, as well as the District of Columbia, and from 19 foreign countries. Foreign visitors from Canada, West Germany, England and the Scandinavian countries were the most numerous.

RESEARCH SERVICE

The Museum Archives received 363 requests in 1979 - an increase of more than 25% over the previous year's total of 287. Percentagewise, Blue Earth County people account for most of the inquiries (73%). Requests from other places in Minnesota amount to 11%, and those from outside the state have increased about 2%, to 16% of this year's total.

The greatest number of requests is for help in tracing family history. Other numerous inquiries reflect the general interest in historic sites and buildings which has developed in the past few years. Prospective buyers and owners, university students working in the fields of social and environmental studies, researchers for various public agencies, and individual citizens and groups concerned about urban development projects all apply to us for information on particular structures or entire areas in Mankato or elsewhere in the county. Businessmen inquire about the history of their own companies - or their predecessors. Several artists use our photographic collection as resource material in designing their own work. The most unusual request this year was for information on tornadoes in the area, from a researcher preparing a course of instruction for weather observers!

Proportionately, our services are divided about as before, but the percentage of inquirers who came to the Museum has dropped by 5%, to 45%, and telephone and mail requests have increased correspondingly. Many inquiries made in person are from out-of-town visitors, and require further work by the staff, including telephone or mail replies. This, together with the increase in actual volume of requests,

(Continued on Page 2)

THE YEAR IN REVIEW Continued

has made us feel somewhat swamped. This year's total of 363 represents one request per day, if we worked every day in the year except Christmas and Easter! But the interest of the search and the appreciation expressed by our patrons make the effort worthwhile.

ACCESSIONS

Accessions received during the year numbered forty. Of these gifts, twenty-four were of artifacts of various kinds, principally tools, clothing, glassware and ceramics. Sixteen gifts were primarily of archival materials: books, photographs, family memorabilia, newspapers and records of individuals and organizations in Blue Earth County. Some donations included items in both categories. (See Page 8 for a list of accessions received in the second half of the year, or not described in previous issues of the Newsletter.)

SPECIAL FINANCIAL GIFTS

Special financial gifts were made by the Townships of Judson, Lime and Mapleton. The Cities of Madison Lake, Mankato and St. Clair also made special contributions, as did School District No. 77. The total of gifts from these sources was \$1,360. During the year memorials in the amount of \$370. and other special contributions totalling \$1,255. were received. (See Page 6 for memorials and gifts in the last quarter of the year.)

EXHIBITS

Exhibits dismantled when the re-wiring of the Hubbard House began are gradually being restored. The Maud Hart Lovelace exhibit has been re-designed. The Wiecking toy collection, formerly in the basement, is again on display, re-arranged and better located on the second floor. On the first floor (North Parlor) we have an entirely new exhibit of decorative and useful objects - glass, china and silver - selected from our recent accessions and now displayed for the first time. All three exhibits are the work of Donna Winter.

SPECIAL EVENTS OF THE YEAR

The Society's Annual Meeting and Dinner took place in April at the Torchlight Supper Club near Mapleton. Two highly

successful bus tours were organized and conducted by Bert Burns, one to Mantorville and Mayowood in May, and another in October to historic and scenic places from Fari-bault to Frontenac. A rummage sale was held in June, under the energetic management of Karen Sundstrom. End-of-the-year events were the Members' Tea, on November fourth, followed by the week-long Museum Shop Bazaar.

PROGRESS ON THE RESTORATION OF THE HUBBARD HOUSE

The complete re-wiring and re-conditioning of the original electrical fixtures by Kunkel Electric Company of Mapleton began in June and continued throughout the summer. The work was carried out with careful attention to the integrity of the building, in the face of unexpected discoveries about the old electrical system, which complicated and prolonged the job. Though its results are largely invisible, the completion of this highly necessary project is a major achievement in the restoration process.

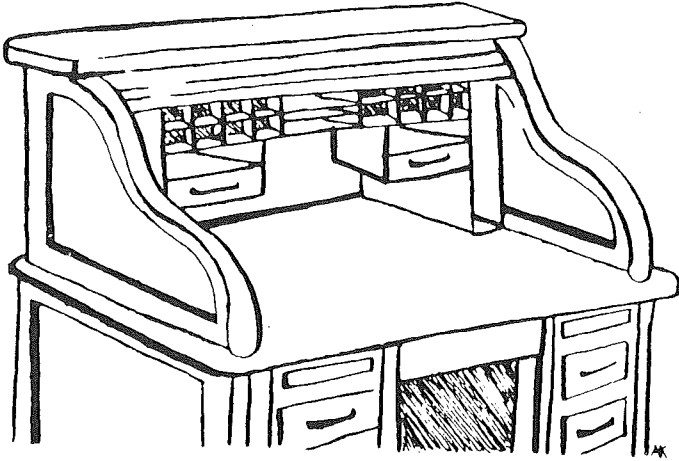
The Editor



GLASS PITCHER - A RECENT ACCESSION

Gift of Mrs. H. G. Stangland

(See EXHIBITS, This Page)



If there is anything I have learned while working at the Museum, it is that life is never dull. The old image of a museum being a musty old building where nothing ever changes certainly does not apply to us.

Our bazaar did well, though not as well as last year, partly because of fewer donations of things to sell, but also because of the proliferation of bazaars in the community at about the same time. However, the Museum Shop does more business each year, and 1979 was the best yet. We are still planning a rummage sale in June, and urge you to save your contributions for us - anything except clothing. You will be notified of a definite date.

Dennis Gimmetstad, of the State Historical Society, has completed his survey of historic structures in Blue Earth County, and nominations for National Register status will be made soon. We have asked Dennis to be our speaker at the Annual Meeting on April 16, to tell us about the survey, the survey process, and which structures met the strict requirements. Please put that date on your calendar right away.

A community event coming in March is the Betsy-Tacy Festival, at which time a Betsy-Tacy mural in the Maud Hart Lovelace Wing of the Regional Library will be dedicated, and the Sweet Adelines will give the premier performance of a new song by Carol Grimmer - "Betsy, Tacy and Tib" - at their spring concert. The Museum Shop will introduce a new series of Maud Hart Lovelace notepaper by Le Sueur artist Lucille Sunderman, whose Mankato scenes

are extremely popular. (By the way, the Shop has a few of her 1980 calendars left, at 25% off.)

The 1979 "Red Jacket Bridges" plate by Rapidan artist Donna Sandon has been selling like hot cakes. More and more persons are buying her new plate each year, to add to their collections. Her 1980 plate, available next fall, will depict the Blue Earth County Courthouse. (Incidentally, any purchaser of a "Red Jacket Bridges" plate whose package did not include the historical leaflet which should have gone with it, may pick up a copy here at the Museum Shop.)

We deeply appreciate the most generous offer of the Dotson Company to make brass plaques for the Hubbard House and the Carriage House. We are awaiting measured drawings from Foster Dunwiddie, our restoration architect, who will decide exactly where the plaques should be mounted. Incidentally, his firm, Miller-Dunwiddie, Inc., received a Merit Award for their restoration of the Commandant's House and Officers' Quarters at Ft. Snelling. One jury comment was that this restoration

"shows concern for accuracy in historic architectural detailing (i.e., treatment of tooled stone surfaces, woodwork, interior paint colors and finishes.) Serious archeological, architectural and historical research were an integral part of the restoration process. A careful and thoughtfully executed project."

Congratulations, Foster!

The Board honored the staff at a potluck supper Christmas party early in December. Good food, good company and a good time! Evelyn Weisgram was recognized for her more than 500 hours of volunteer work in our archives, while Ben Jones was honored for his many contributions to the management of the Society's treasury books.

The opportunity to assist author John Koblas of Minneapolis with local research on Sinclair Lewis in Mankato has been an exciting project. Mr. Koblas is under contract to Voyageur Press to write a biography of Lewis, and he appealed to us for help in checking out local facts. This included interviewing persons who remembered Lewis during his residence here in the

A MUSEUM MYSTERY



PLASTER BAS-RELIEF
by
OTTO KOKE

Among the "unknowns" in the Museum collection, kept in storage on the third floor of the Hubbard House, is a large medallion-shaped bas-relief sculpture in plaster, showing the portrait of a man. No mention of it has been found in the Museum records. Because it was very large (almost three feet in diameter) and difficult to reach, where it leaned against a wall behind pieces of furniture and doors removed from various rooms of the house, this sculpture continued in the category of un-investigated "unknowns" until this summer. Then the work of re-wiring the house made it necessary to clear the wall and floor areas of our storage room. The plaster sculpture was rolled from its hiding place and closely examined for the first time. It bore no Museum record number and no hint of the identity of the man portrayed. But, incised in the flat outside edge of the moulding, we discovered the letters: O KOKE MKTO MINN. So the sculpture must have some connection with Mankato! But what was Okoke? A closer look revealed a period after the letter "O". O. Koke must be a name, though probably not the

name of the man portrayed. His appearance suggested a turn-of-the-century date. Accordingly, I referred to the "K's" in the Mankato city directory of 1900 and found, to my delight, the following entry: "Koke, Otto marble cutter A. G. Meyer". The name of the sculptor! But who was his subject?

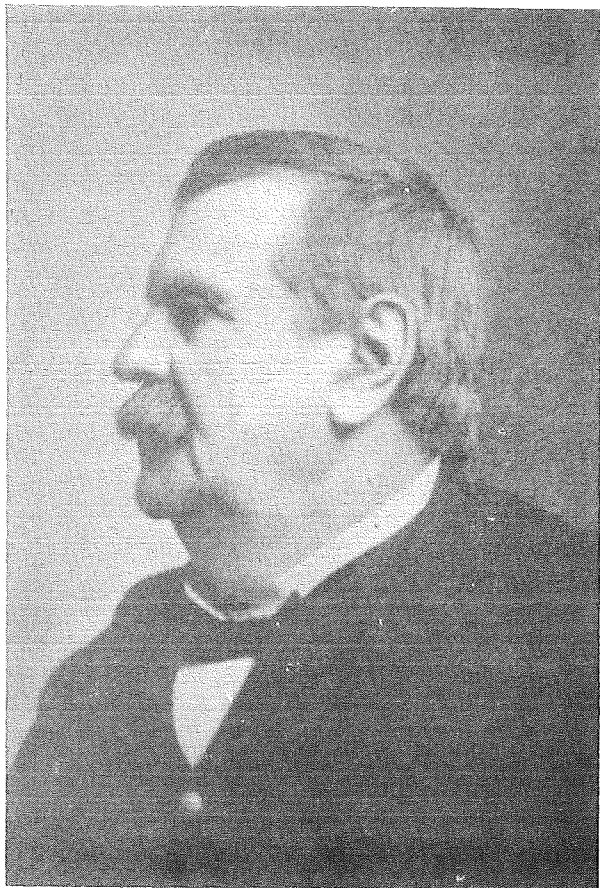
This question smouldered in the back of my mind during the summer. Then, suddenly, a flicker of inspiration! The bas-relief portrait reminded me of a man whose portrait photograph I recalled seeing among those of distinguished citizens of Mankato, in the old Encyclopedia of Biography of Minnesota, issued in 1900 by the Century Publishing Company. The man was John C. Wise, editor of the Mankato Review, the leading journalist of Mankato from 1869 to his retirement and the merging of the Review with the Mankato Free Press around 1895.

I am fairly convinced as to the correctness of this identification. However, I would still like to know more about the plaster bas-relief. When, and for what purpose was it made? Where and when (if ever) was it displayed? (There is a wire hanger in the top moulding.) And how did it come into the Museum collection? Perhaps these questions can never be answered. Poking around for information about Otto Koke, the sculptor, I found that he lived in Mankato between at least 1897 and 1903. He was secretary of the North Mankato Fire Department, and the "Fire Boys" and other friends gave a farewell party for him and his wife and family when he resigned that post, December 5, 1902. The occasion was described at length in a local newspaper. (The account was found in one of our old scrapbooks, which are a mine of information!)

(Continued on Page 5)

REQUEST FOR CHANGE OF ADDRESS INFORMATION !

PLEASE let us know DIRECTLY (phone 345-4154) of ANY change of address. The U. S. Postal Service (!) charges us 25¢ for this information, plus 15¢ to re-mail.



PORTRAIT of JOHN C. WISE
From The
Encyclopedia of Biography of
Minnesota - 1900

NOTE OF EXPLANATION on the UNIDENTIFIED
PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS in the OCTOBER 1979
ISSUE of the NEWSLETTER:

The captions for two illustrations in
Mr. George Scherer's article on the Man-
kato Post were accidentally cut out in
printing. The photograph on Page 4 is of
George Traub, who succeeded George Scherer
Sr. as publisher of the Post. The portrait
on Page 5 is August Blissenbach, the third
editor and publisher of the paper. Both
are from the Blue Earth County Atlas of
1895.

Just this past week, a chance find
which adds to our knowledge about Otto
Koke the sculptor and to the history of
(I believe) the oldest and best-preserved
office building still standing in Mankato:
the I.O.O.F. Building at Jackson and Second
Streets! Leafing through old issues of the
Free Press in search of information on
another subject, I came upon this exciting
item, dating from September, 1897:

"Otto Koke, of A.G. Meyer's marble
shop, has just completed a large
stone tablet for the Odd Fellows
block, and it was placed in position
today, over the center of the third
story facing Jackson Street. It is
six feet four inches long and four
feet two inches high. The figures are
emblematic of the four local Odd Fel-
lows organizations that will hold
their meetings in the hall. In the
center are three columns, to indicate
Blue Earth Encampment No. 8; across
the top are three links, to denote
Mankato Lodge No. 15, IOOF; to the
right is a crown encircling a shep-
herd's crook and a sword, to symbolize
Canton Colfax No. 9; and to the left
is a flying dove, representing Minne-
opa Lodge No. 72, Daughters of Rebekah.

The tablet is a fine piece of work,
and Mr. Koke donates it to No. 15,
which fully appreciates the gift. He
is a member of this lodge and also
of the canton and encampment.

Mr. Koke is at work on some superior
statuary for a New Ulm man."

Another bit added to the record of
Mankato's past! Jeanne Kress

HELP SOUGHT ON RESEARCH PROJECT

Jean Caspers, with support from the
Minnesota Historical Society, is enga-
ged in a research project on dug-out
houses in Minnesota. Write her, c/o Dug-
Out Project, Fort Ridgely State Park,
Fairfax, MN 55332, if you know of any
such structure in our area.

summer of 1919, making many phone calls, and reading back issues of the Free Press in an attempt to find documentation for a speech by Lewis at Mankato Normal School. When I finally found this information (in the process of looking for something else) it was exciting indeed! One of the side benefits of this research was a gift from one of our kind members, of some cookies made from a recipe known in Mankato as "Sinclair Lewis cookies". I have now re-read Main Street (the novel Lewis was writing the summer he was here) and am struck by the similarities to some of the local situations I have read about in the women's clubs minutes in our archives. It seems to me that some events which Lewis depicts are too coincidental to be accidental, and that they must refer to Mankato.

Our photography consultant from the American Association for State and Local History is scheduled to come some time in January. We are very anxious to get this consultation completed, so that we can learn what we need to do to make our photographic collection safer and easier to use.

Annual Membership bills are in the mail. We hope that some of you may want to change your membership from Annual (\$8.00) to Annual Patron (\$100.) If this is impossible, would you recruit a new member for us? Society members must have friends who share the same interests and would want to become members also. We depend heavily on your annual support. (Incidentally, in order to save on postage costs, we will not mail you a receipt or a membership card, unless you so request.)

Again we thank all of you who have given so generously of your time, talents and money. We send a special thank-you to the anonymous donor who has made substantial contributions for the expense of publishing this newsletter. We could not continue to function without your kindnesses and generosity.

Happy New Year to All!

Marcia T. Schuster

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ACKNOWLEDGES WITH THANKS
THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS RECENTLY RECEIVED

MEMORIALS TO: Curtis Brooks
Frank Cuddy
Archie McGregor
Roy Ramy

SPECIAL GIFTS FROM:

An Anonymous Donor
(For the Newsletter)
Blanche Barnhart
William Carlson
Mary Dooley
Emma Wiecking



DETAIL FROM THE OIL PAINTING:
"PORTRAIT OF A DOG" by MRS. J. R. SNOW

This painting was recently given to the Historical society by Mrs. C. J. Snow of Mankato. It is the work of Margaret Snow, the wife of the well-known Mankato photographer, John R. Snow. The donor was not sure of any date for the painting, but said that it was the portrait of a family pet. By great good luck, I found the following item in the Free Press of November 26, 1897:

"Mrs. J. R. Snow has just completed a beautiful painting of a hunting dog retrieving a duck. It is worth anyone's time to stop at the gallery and see it."

A LOAN BECOMES A GIFT

The Museum's exhibit on the Welsh churches of Blue Earth County has long included a hand-made pulpit of walnut, dating from 1871, loaned by the late Emrys Lloyd, into whose possession it came when the Salem Congregational Church of Cambria closed. Now, thanks to the good offices of Mr. Wallace Harris, the pulpit has been given to the Historical Society for its permanent collection. Society members, particularly those of Welsh descent, will appreciate the information contained in Mr. Harris' letter, which we print in full:

Dear Marcia Schuster, Director,

The former members of the Salem Congregational Church of Cambria, Minnesota, which was organized on October 14, 1855 in the log cabin of John Watkins, under the leadership of Rev. Jenkin Jenkins, with thirteen charters, do hereby give full possession of the pulpit that was used by this church.

The church building was built in 1871, by Mr. John L. Evans who was a member of this church. After the building was completed, Mr. Evans made the pulpit of walnut wood and presented it to the church as a gift, from his family.

Sincerely,
Wallace Harris
the last church clerk.

NEWSLETTER

of the
BLUE EARTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Annual subscription (4 issues) - \$ 3.00

ATTENTION
SOCIETY MEMBERS!

THE NEW YEAR
IS HERE
TIME TO RENEW
ANNUAL
MEMBERSHIPS

+ + + +

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

NEWSLETTER
BLUE EARTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
606 South Broad
Mankato, MN 56001



Address Correction
Requested

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RECENT ACCESSIONS

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Received July - December, 1979

1. Historical Account of the F. W. and Caroline Uhlhorn Family.
Gift of Arnold Meyer, Mankato.
2. Minutes and Records of the Maple River Literary Society, 1892 - 1913.
Gift of Malcolm Lang, Mapleton.
3. Welsh Pulpit Bible, with engraved illustrations. Belonged to Peter Roberts and Griffith Roberts, who preached in Blue Earth County.
Gift of Mrs. Iva Roberts, New Ulm.
4. Reminiscences of Myrtle I. Halverson: "Pioneer Life in Blue Earth County".
Gift of Mrs. H. G. Stangland, Mankato.
5. Books: An Account of the Great Chicago Fire, published 1872; and Textbooks used in Mankato schools, 1890's - 1918.
Gift of Mrs. Anna Schwabe Foley, Mankato.
6. Book: Warner & Foote's History of the Minnesota Valley, Minneapolis, 1882.
Gift of Mrs. E. Pommerenke, Mankato.
7. The Katonian (Student Yearbook of Mankato State College). Issues for 12 years.
Gift of Dr. Roy B. Moore, Mankato.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS (Cont'd.)

8. Memorabilia: Scrapbooks, Photographs, etc., of J. R. Brandrup, the Mankato Commercial College and the Brandrup Family. Also Architect's Specifications for the Brandrup House, 704 Byron Street, Mankato, dated May 7, 1904.
Gift of Morgan H. Brandrup, Mankato.

ARTIFACTS RECEIVED October- December, 1979.

1. Man's Vest (brown velvet) and Beaver Felt Hat. Belonged to Mankato pioneer W. W. Paddock.
Woman's Hat (black plush) and Ostrich Feather Boa. Belonged to Ellen Eaton Paddock, wife of W. W. Paddock.
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. James Pengra, Mankato.
2. Sandon Limited Edition Historical Plate for 1979: The Red Jacket Bridges.
Gift of the artist, Donna Sandon.
3. Dress Jacket (bodice) of a Two-Piece Wedding Dress. Worn by Amelia Maria Johanna Hoffman at her wedding to John Felber, November 22, 1887.
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. John J. Felber, Route 4, Mankato.
4. Fur Muff and Stole (Mink). Belonged to Mrs. C. J. Laurisch of Mankato. Date about 1906 - 1908.
Gift of Mrs. Blanche Barnhart, Mankato.