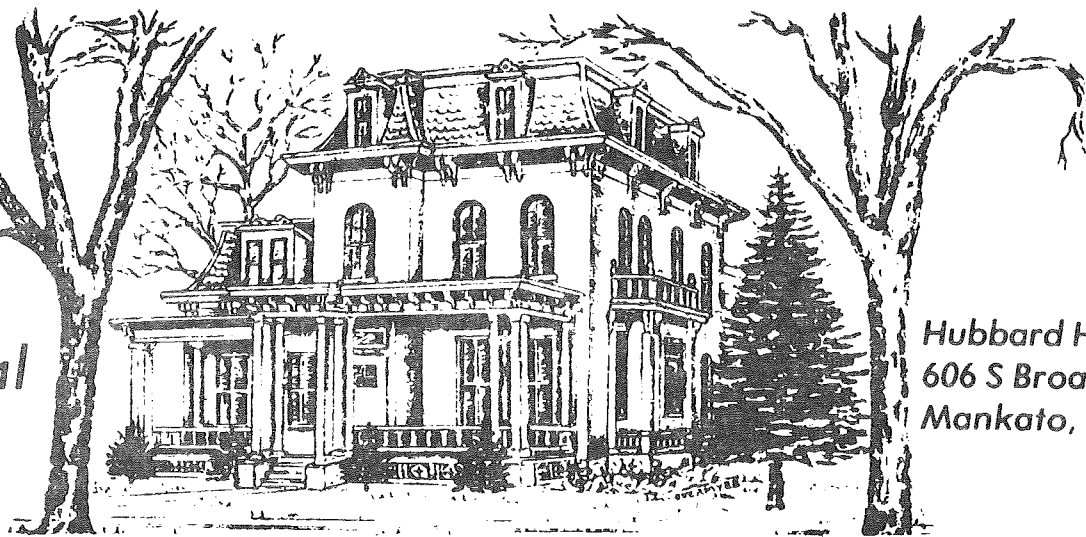


Blue Earth County Historical Society



Hubbard House
606 S Broad St.
Mankato, Minn.

NEWS LETTER

Volume 9, Number 4

January, 1981

THE YEAR IN REVIEW + + + ACTIVITIES AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE IN 1980

MUSEUM ATTENDANCE

The number of visitors to the Hubbard House during the year came to 6,164. Registrations at the Carriage House totaled 3,711. Both figures represent a sizable increase over last year's attendance, 20% for the Hubbard House and 30% for the Carriage House. Approximately 60% of our visitors were residents of Mankato and Blue Earth County. About 25% were other Minnesotans; and 10% came from other states, including Hawaii and Alaska. As always, we have some visitors from other countries and a number who give no address, accounting for the discrepancy in the percentage total.

ARCHIVES RESEARCH SERVICE

Requests received in 1980 totaled 390, an increase of 7% over 1979. Those from Blue Earth County people amount to a somewhat smaller proportion of the total - about 66%, as compared to 73% last year. Requests from other Minnesotans increased markedly, to 18%. Many of these inquirers are people who have family connections in Blue Earth County. The same is true of inquirers living outside of Minnesota, who represent 16%, the same as in 1979.

About 25% of our inquirers are seeking help in tracing family history. Almost as many requests - 23% - are concerned with the history of Mankato and Blue Earth County in general. Some thirty inquiries were specifically in regard to the historic places in the county admitted to the National Register this year.

A trend noticeable in 1979 has continued to develop: an increase, percentage-wise, in the number of inquiries by telephone and mail, and a corresponding drop in the number of inquirers who come to the Museum. The latter category is about 42% (compared to 45% in 1979), while telephone requests amount to 40% and mail requests to 18% of the total. Marcia Schuster and Jeanne Kress share the work, which often involves extensive research. Marcia would probably say that her most interesting project was researching Sinclair Lewis connections in Mankato. (See Director's Rolltop, p. 5). Jeanne derived her greatest satisfaction from two intriguing searches: one digging out the history of Mankato houses for the YWCA tour, and another finding information about County Ditch No. 5 in Danville Township, this for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, concerned with State and local rights and jurisdiction in a wildlife conservation area.

A special event related to our Archives service was the visit of Mr. George Talbot, Curator of the Wisconsin State Historical Society's Iconographic Collections. Mr. Talbot spent two days here at the end of October, examining our collection of photographs and manuscript materials and advising us on their care and better organization for research purposes. We learned a great deal from Mr. Talbot's consultation, which was arranged through a grant program of the American Association for State and Local History.

(Continued on Page 3)

THEATER IN MANKATO

A SKETCHY HISTORY +++ PART II

by
Jeanne Kress

In the previous issue of the Newsletter (October, 1980) the history of the Mankato Opera House, both the building and the business and cultural enterprise, was traced through its first stage, which ended with the fire of 1882, and the opening of the second period, which began with the reconstruction of the theater in 1883.

Materials in our archives are scanty for the decade 1883 - 1893, but they show that the ownership and management again underwent a number of changes. Printed programs of 1889 list A. G. Bierbauer (son of William) as proprietor and manager. Bierbauer's principal business in Mankato was the brewery, which he shared with his brother Rudolph.

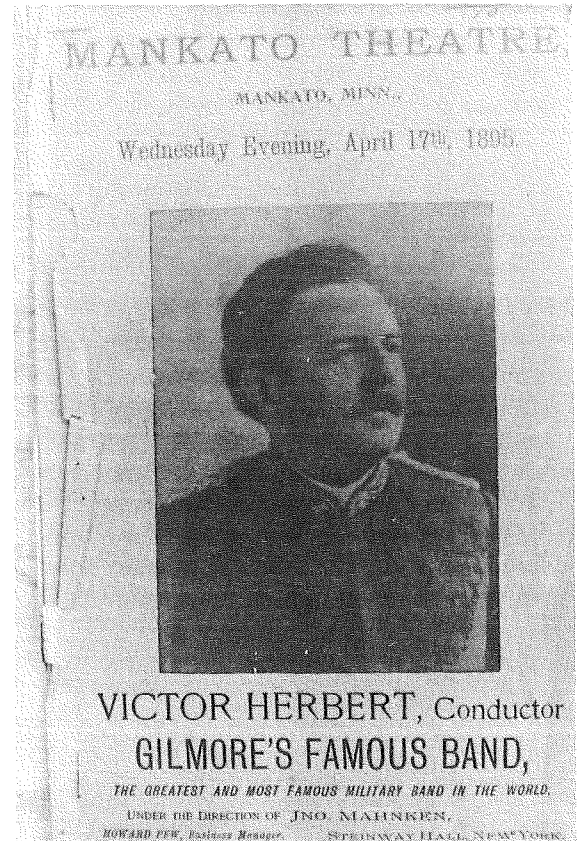
The year 1893 marked the start of a new era. Charles Saulpaugh, son of the hotel-builder and its owner, leased the theater. Under his aegis, it seems, the interior of the building was extensively improved. At the same time its name was changed to the "Mankato Theatre". By the following year the actual management was entrusted to Charles H. Griebel, thus continuing the family interest of one of the founders of Harmonia Hall to another generation.

Griebel's tenure as manager (and eventual proprietor) of the Mankato Theatre over the years 1895 to 1920 coincided with the golden age of the American theater. Mankato's location on a major railroad route between the Twin Cities and Omaha, plus the fact that it possessed a real theater, gained the city a recognized place on regular tour circuits organized by the New York impresarios who controlled the American theater in this period. Thus Charles Griebel, interviewed by the Mankato Review in 1909, could announce that Mankato would be included in a circuit organized by Klaw and Erlanger, consisting of Superior, Duluth, the Twin Cities, Sioux Falls and Omaha. Another circuit, which seemingly was used even longer, into the 1920's, went from Chicago via Madison, Eau Claire, Winona and Rochester to Mankato and then westward into South Dakota.

Griebel seems to have made yearly trips to New York, to arrange bookings for Mankato. The playbills and programs in our archives, supplemented by reviews in the Mankato newspapers, provide a fascinating picture of the fare offered and the response of the theater-going public.

MAJOR ATTRACTION OF 1895

Theater Brochure from the Hoerr Collection



The program for this performance (also in the Hoerr Collection) indicates the type of concert that was extremely popular. It included "classical" numbers performed by the 58-piece band: the overture to Wagner's Tannhauser and Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite; solo arias by a "prima donna soprano" from Verdi's La Traviata and a Gounod opera; a 'cello solo by Victor Herbert himself; and numbers from his "new comic opera, 'Prince Ananias'." The finale was another Herbert composition, "Grand American Fantasy".

(Continued on Page 3)

DRAMA IN THE DESERT

As in Italy in Shakespeare's time, anything could happen in the African desert between Cairo and Algiers in the early 20th century. Plays in this setting, derived from popular novels, were numerous. "The Garden of Allah", which was produced in New York in 1911, came to Mankato on March 18, 1917. Advertised as a "Stupendous Spectacle ... Bigger than Ben Hur" (Daily Free Press, 3-12-1917), it provided ample excitement. Frank and Clifford Manning recall the special train of eight cars which brought the elaborate scenery, staging equipment and the unusual extras, including camels and real Arabs - Algerian Arabs, according to the Free Press. The Arabs "... excited no small amount of interest ... when they walked about the streets in Arab attire." (Free Press, 3-19-1917.) Both the Free Press reviewer and the Manning brothers (whose job was to help with the mechanics) were impressed by the sandstorm created, Frank Manning recounts, by dropping a screen across the front of the stage and blowing ground cork around behind it.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd. from Page 1)

ACCESSIONS

The Society received forty-four accessions during the year, of which twenty-four were of artifacts, the rest of archival materials. Our collection of clothing was considerably augmented, and likewise our photograph collection. Amounts of these donations were the largest in the categories of artifacts and archives respectively. (See P. 8 for a list of accessions received in the second half of the year.)

MEMBERSHIP

Our most valuable kind of accession - members - increased also by eleven new annual memberships, 14 life and one new patron membership. This brings our total membership to 348, of which 139 are annual, 204 life, and five annual patrons.

SPECIAL FINANCIAL GIFTS

Seven governments of the county made contributions: Cambria, Lime, Le Ray and Mapleton Townships and the cities of Madison Lake and Mankato; and also School District No. 77. Gifts from individuals included fifteen memorials and eight other special contributions, two specifically designated for the Newsletter.

PLAYBILL FOR A DESERT DRAMA

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Orpheum Theatre
Monday, May 2, 1927

WALKER WHITESIDE
-IN-
"The Arabian"
A Modern Comedy Drama - by the Author of "The Hindu"

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In order of appearance)

Walter	Mr. A. Duval
Colonel Gordon	Mr. Barry Whitcomb
Captain Farway	Mr. Frank Henderson
Major Crawford	Mr. Paul McGrath
Diana	Miss Camille Campbell
Abd El Ray	MR. WHITESIDE
Hassan	Mr. J. Irving White
Sheik	Mr. John J. Burns, Jr.
Ta Um	Mr. Edward de Silva
Yasid	Mr. Michael Hale
Farrida	Miss Mary Kay
Amrah	Miss Alana Chester
Ninah	Miss Wiva Davis
Myra	Miss Irene McGowan
Bess	Mr. Carl Voss

Arabs, Soldiers, Servants, Etc.

SCENES
ACT I - Corner of a Roof Top Cafe in Cairo, Egypt.
ACT II - Interior of Abd el Ray's tent in the desert (two weeks later)
ACT III - Continuation of Act II.
TIME - The Present

Production Directed and Staged by Mr. Whiteside.
Costumes, scenes and effects designed by Mr. Carl Voss.
Mr. Whiteside acknowledges his indebtedness to the Music Store for the use of their Brunswick Phonographs.

STAFF

G. E. Brown	General Representative
J. E. Brown	Advance
Paul McGrath	Stage Director
John J. Burns, Jr.	Stage Manager
John Nard	Carpenter
Thomas Harper	Property Man
G. C. Corbett	Electrician

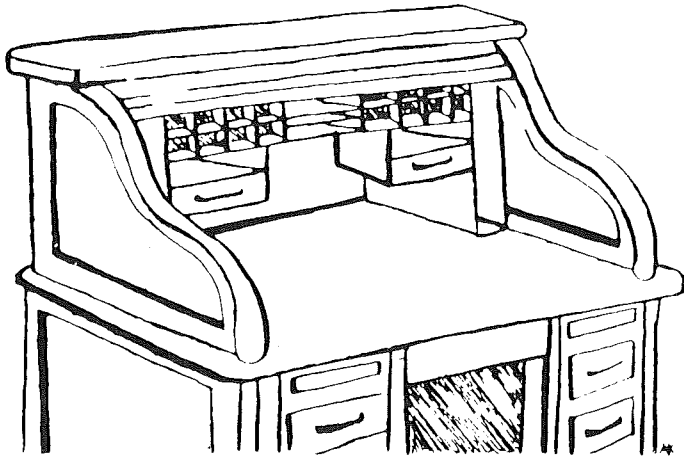
MUSIC PROGRAM

Overture - Egyptian	J. S. Zencnik
INTERMISSION BETWEEN ACTS I AND 2	
A Stroll Through Cairo	J. J. Darwin
The Dervishes	Theo. Bendix
Three Arabian Dances (1 and 2)	Edwina Ring
INTERMISSION BETWEEN ACTS 2 AND 3	

"The Arabian" was brought to Mankato for a benefit performance by the local chapter of the American Association of University Women, and according to the Free Press (5-3-1927) was well-received by a capacity audience. The leading man (also producer and presumably author), Walker Whiteside, was well-known in Mankato, having played here several times previously. (He appeared in "The Master of Ballantrae" in 1921.) The plot of "The Arabian" is typical, with English heroine-adventuress, kidnapped or beguiled into marriage by the macho alien who is both hero and villain. It has numerous similarities to The Sheik, the novel of 1921, which furnished the scenario for Rudolph Valentino's famous screen performance.

(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued on Page 6)



The Museum has just completed another busy year with progress on a number of fronts.

The exterior woodwork repair and restoration on the Hubbard House has been substantially completed and is such an improvement! No more hole in the front porch floor! The Hobco Company of Minneapolis, specializing in restoration, did the work for us. They also kindly donated the installation of the identification plaques for the Hubbard House and the Carriage House, donated to us by the Dotson Company. Our exterior is doubly enhanced.

The fall bazaar was a great success again, bringing in \$667.37, and vastly increasing the Museum Shop business at the same time. Our opening day tea was extremely well attended; many persons came to see the Doris car (our 1890s' horseless carriage) on display in the Carriage House for the first time. Fred Cords and others completed the restoration this past summer. The vehicle is truly unique and we are proud to display it.

Early in December we took the Museum Shop to Madison East for three days, which was an excellent opportunity to acquaint a larger public with our merchandise. The staff was especially grateful to the Board members and their spouses, as well as to Lucille Sunderman, the artist, who "kept the store" during the three days. We were most appreciative of the kindness of Lon Coulter, manager of Wilson's Clothing, who allowed us to store our merchandise and tables in his store each night.

A fine donation received in November was a beautiful walnut chest of drawers, made by Alvin J. Barber of Smith's Mill, great-grandfather of Violet Panzram, for many years a teacher at Franklin School in Mankato. Although Vi is retired and now lives in Waseca and is very active with the Historical Society there, she still has many ties to Blue Earth County and visits us here frequently.

There is another new face on the Society Board. Scott Parker replaces Dianne Goldstaub, whose new duties at the Free Press forced her resignation. Welcome aboard, Scott!

There have been several meetings with the County Commissioners concerning a new museum building. Progress is being made, though slowly. The hangup, of course, is money. Are there any rich uncles or aunts out there?? A committee of the Board is working on the next step - possibly a building fund drive.

The Museum staff and their spouses were honored by the Board at a Christmas dinner at the Museum on December 16. Thirty-four attended and enjoyed a fine dinner and a pleasant evening. Thanks so much to the Board and to the hardworking committee who organized the event!

Does anyone have a copy of Mankato, Its First 50 Years (the semi-centennial book) which they would like to dispose of? The Minnesota Valley Regional Library needs to replace its copy, which was stolen. Call Marcia at the Museum.

The recent dedication of the new third floor District Courtroom of the Blue Earth County Courthouse was impressive. The Society loaned photographs, newspaper clippings and four artifacts for the occasion: the courthouse model entered in competition (and not accepted!) by architect George Pass, Sr., in 1884; the courtroom call bell and the "pencil pointer" both used in the early days of the courthouse; and a photograph of Judge Samuel Bailey Wilson. We were proud to have been a part of the celebration. The courthouse model is temporarily on view in the director's office. Stop in and see it.

(Continued on Page 5)

DIRECTOR'S ROLLTOP (Cont'd.)

Please make a New Year's resolution to give to the Historical Society Endowment Fund. This money is invested and the interest goes into the Society's operating funds. (A large endowment fund will be a tremendous boost to the operating budget of a new museum. Projected annual operating costs for the first year are \$115,341, and \$141,426 for the second year.) The names of donors to the Fund will be published in the April Newsletter and they will be recognized at the Annual Meeting April 18. By decision of the Board, any memorials or gifts not specified for other funds will go to the Endowment Fund. Please help us by adding to it. Tax deductible, of course. Categories include: Friend of the Society - up to \$199. Supporter of the Society, \$200 to \$499. Endowment Patron, \$500 and up.

Our third annual rummage sale will be held in early summer again. Please keep us in mind as you houseclean. No clothing, please. You will be notified later of details.

Early this winter we will start to plan for our exhibit at the Agricultural Heritage Building at the Blue Earth County Fair. Anyone interested in working on this project, please speak up. Present committee includes John Burton (who has informed us that he may not be available), Mary Dooley, Dean Pettis and Marcia Schuster.

The biography of Sinclair Lewis by John Koblas is taking shape. The first draft is to be at the publisher's (Voyageur Press) in March. One chapter is devoted to the Mankato period. Your director was asked to contribute "a couple of paragraphs" about what was happening in Mankato in the summer of 1919, when Lewis was writing here. When the book is published we hope to have an autographing party for the author at the Museum. His next book will be a biography of Zona Gale, the Wisconsin novelist.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Marcia T. Schuster

THE SOCIETY'S THANKS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

Anonymous - For the Newsletter
The City of Mankato - \$500
Memorial to Fern Williams

RECENT ACCESSIONS (Cont'd. from Page 8)

3. Map of the City of Mankato, showing political divisions as of April, 1978.
Gift of the Office of the County Auditor.
4. Book: Amboy, Minnesota. A Heritage Rooted in Rural America. Centennial History, 1979.
Gift of the author, Kelly Dethloff Reuter.
5. Minnesota Historic Properties Inventory of Blue Earth County. Prepared by Dennis Gimmetad, Minnesota Historical Society Office of Historic Preservation, 1980.
6. Charley Brown Nursery School Cookbook, 1980.
Gift of Charley Brown Nursery School, Mankato.
7. Panoramic Postcard Photograph of Mankato, ca. 1895.
Gift of Florence Garlitz, Winnebago, MN.
8. Photograph of Garden City Old Log Schoolhouse Reunion, 1910.
Gift of John Ward, Mankato.
9. Photograph: Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners, ca. 1910.
Gift of Mrs. Ward Gray, Minnetonka, MN.
10. Original Sketches & Prints (etchings) by Anders Anderson.
Gift of Sherri Scheurer, Mankato.
11. Catalogues of Mankato Commercial College, 1902-03 and 1912-13.
Gift of Arlene Brooks, Woodland Hills, CA.
12. Plat Maps (26 photo reprints) of Blue Earth County, Warner & Foote, 1879.
Gift of Mary Dooley, Mankato.
13. Stereoscopic Photographs (3): State Normal School, 1870; Front Street; and Railroad Trestle over Minneopa Creek.
Source: Bert Burns, Mankato.
14. Laminated Page: Article on the Jones-Robertson Farmstead, Judson, MN, from the Mankato Free Press, 3/12/1980.
Gift of Mrs. Irwin Williams, Lake Crystal.
15. Photograph: Mankato State Normal School, 1884 (?).
Gift of Mrs. Ernest Hansen, Garden City.
16. Photographs (33): Osman Shrine Parade, Mankato, April 21, 1922; and portraits and scenes of traveling actors and performers.
Gift of William Kjarum & Mankato Area Shrine Club, Mankato.

FISKE O'HARA

From a Theater Brochure of about 1920
John Vogt Collection



O'Hara was a popular "Irish tenor" of the early years of the 20th century. Like his older counterpart, Chauncey Olcott, he had a new musical with an Irish title every other year or so, which played in New York and then went on the road. Frank Manning recalls that he appeared in Mankato "almost annually." His popularity is indicated by the Mankato Review's preview of the season of 1919: "Mankato's favorite actor, Fiske O'Hara, will formally open the season, appearing two nights, Sept. 13 and 14, in his new play, 'Down Limerick Way'." (MR Aug. 15, 1919.)

As was characteristic of the "stars" of this period, O'Hara upheld his image by shows of artistic temperament. Clifford Manning recalls that O'Hara would stop singing if a baby cried, and would not continue his performance until the offending infant was removed. O'Hara also refused to use the theater's basement dressing rooms and insisted on having a tent set up backstage as a substitute. Apparently this was his custom everywhere. A work assignment note from John Vogt's time as property man indicates that: "When Mr. O'Hara's dressing room is not on stage, we require a wash basin, pitcher and small carpet. We carry everything else."

(Continued on Page 7)

THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd from P. 3)

EXHIBITS

In keeping with our wish to display new accessions as space and compatibility permit, we have in the North Parlor an exhibit of wedding dresses and accessories, all recently donated and originally worn by brides in Blue Earth County. Several of the dresses are complemented by wedding photographs. The period range is from 1887 to 1914.

We have collected all our souvenir dishes of Mankato and Blue Earth County in one display. (Southeast Room, Second Floor.) The oldest items are porcelain plates decorated with pictures of early Mankato buildings, and flashed glass dishes. The most recent is a metal souvenir plate of the Hubbard Milling Company Centennial.

Our third and prize new exhibit item is the restored Doris "horseless carriage", on display in the Carriage House. (See Director's Rolltop, p. 4.)

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Society's Annual Meeting took place April 16, at Mr. Rene's Banquet Hall in Mankato, with Dennis Gimmetstad of the Minnesota Historical Society's Office of Historic Preservation as speaker. He presented a detailed history and description and showed slides of the 23 sites in the county which he researched and which were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in August of this year..

Bert Burns again organized and conducted a spring bus tour, which explored "Historic St. Paul" on May 17.

Events of the summer were our third annual rummage sale, June 7, and the dedication of the Agricultural Heritage Building at the Blue Earth County Fairgrounds, August 18. Members of the Board and staff also organized an informational exhibit at the new building, which was open to the public throughout the duration of the Fair.

(Cont'd. on Page 7)

PROGRAM FROM A PERFORMANCE IN MANKATO
At the MANKATO THEATRE
John Vogt Collection



The "musical extravaganza" was one highly popular type of show which appeared at the Mankato Theatre throughout its history. Musicals ranged from comic operas such as "The Merry Widow" and "The Mikado" to productions which were close to burlesque. According to one historian, 25% of all the productions playing in New York and on the road in 1903 were musicals. "Take It From Me" played in Mankato about 1921.

THEATER IN MANKATO (Cont'd from Page 6.)

The movies spelled the doom of live theatrical entertainment for Mankato, as for the country as a whole. By 1908, the town had four hole-in-the-wall movie spots. The Grand Theatre (Front St. at Walnut), designed as a movie house and with a seating capacity equal to the Mankato Theatre, opened in 1913. A second real movie house, the Sandon, later State Theater, (Walnut between Front & 2nd Sts.), opened in 1914. In this decade movies shared booking with live performances at the Mankato Theatre. Frank Manning recalls beating the drums for the battle scenes in "The Birth of a Nation" in 1916. Another D. W. Griffith spectacular, "Intolerance", advertised as "greater than 'Birth of a Nation'," was shown in 1917. This film showing was accompanied by its own special orchestra! (Daily Free Press, 3-30-1917.)

By 1921, Charles Griebel had retired; and the Mankato Theatre, re-named the Orpheum by Harry French, who was its manager for a brief time, became a second-rate movie house where live performances - usually benefits or school theatricals - were given from time to time. The last of these seems to have been in 1928. In that year the building was marked for demolition, which did not, however, occur until 1931. It was replaced by a new showroom and service building of the Holt Motor Company.

THE END

THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd. from Page 6)

On September 10 the Society was co-host when Mankato State University's reception for new faculty members was held at the Museum. The Museum Shop Bazaar opened with the traditional Sunday afternoon tea for members, friends and the public on November 9, and continued through November 16. The final event of the year was the Board's dinner party for the Museum staff on December 16, a most pleasant ending!

The Editor

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS (Since October)

ANNUAL: Terry Flynn
Carol Hannick
Eleanor Kudrle
Patrick McDonnell
Anita Stone
Tim Sullivan
LIFE: Joanne Bierbauer DeWitt
Mr. & Mrs. Gary Kratzke
Colleen Mattsson
James Norman
Mr. & Mrs. Karl G. Reuter

NEWSLETTER
of the
BLUE EARTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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



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ACCESSIONS + + JULY - DECEMBER, 1980

ARTIFACTS

1. Singer Sewing Machine, Class 27.
Treadle machine in table-cabinet. Belonged to Jessie Bissell of Mapleton ca. 1890 & her daughter-in-law, Ruth Bissell.
Gift of Mrs. Ruth A. Bissell Broberg, Lincoln, Nebraska.
2. United States Flag, 48 Stars.
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Schmanski, Mankato.
3. Belgrade Township Band Uniform and Bass Horn, used by Herman Holtze, prior to 1917.
Gift of Mrs. Herman Holtze, Mankato.
4. Women's Clothing, including wedding dress of Mary Mertesdorf Schultz, 1898; and garments from 1870's, 1890's and 1914.
Gift of Mrs. Ward Gray, Minnetonka, MN.
5. Homoeopathic Medicine Kit: Wood Chest with 40 pill bottles. Belonged to Dr. Alvin G. Dornberg, who practiced in Mankato 1856-1879.
Gift of Misses Elvira & Norma Bierbauer, Bloomington, MN.
6. Clothing (Women's and Children's), including dress hoops, corset, shoes, cape and child's coat.
Gift of Dorothy Jefferson, Mankato.
7. Linen Damask Tablecloth, handloomed, about 100 years old.
Gift of Mrs. Robert Gitter, Brainerd, MN.
8. Sandon Historical Plate for 1980:
The Blue Earth County Courthouse.
Gift of the artist, Donna Sandon.
9. Hub Cap from KRIT motor vehicle, found in a field near Cambria; Sheep Shears; Board with stamp of Dan W. Harris, Cambria lumber dealer, from a house built by James Price, ca. 1915.
Gift of Harry D. Deopere, Cambria, MN..
10. Glove Stretcher, ca. 1900. Belonged to Madeline Roberts Fry, (wife of donor), who lived in Mankato 1946-1972.
Gift of Paul H. Fry, Mankato.
11. Walnut Chest of Drawers, made by Alvin J. Barber (1817-1908), Smith's Mill, MN.
Gift of Violet Panzram, Waseca, MN.
12. Women's Accessories: Battenberg Lace Collar made by Inga Johnson (Mrs. M.N. Mickelson), 1904; suede bag, ca. 1922; velvet evening bag, ca. 1930.
Gift of B. Eleanor Johnson, Tucson, AZ.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

1. Family Papers & Letters of Horace B. Perrin Family, found in Perrin house, 618 Byron Street, Mankato.
Gift of William Krueger, Mankato.
2. Polk's Directory of Mankato and Blue Earth County, Vol. I (1892).
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Hansen, Garden City, MN.
3. Polk's Directories of Mankato & Blue Earth County, 1976, 1978 & 1979.
Gift of Dean Milton Pettis, Mankato.

(Continued on Page 5)