

Blue  
Earth  
County  
Historical  
Society



Hubbard House  
606 S Broad St.  
Mankato, Minn.

Volume 10, Number 3

## NEWS LETTER

October, 1981

### COMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

OCTOBER 11 & 18  
NOVEMBER 1, 15, 22  
SUNDAYS

#### THE HUMANITIES IN SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

Five Sessions: Opening Symposium October 11, followed by  
Carol Bly, Oct. 18; Robin Wright, Nov. 1; Yi-fu Tuan,  
Nov. 15; Karen Laub-Novak & Michael Novak, Nov. 22.

TIME: 2:00 pm.

PLACE: Performing Arts Center, Mankato State University

OCTOBER 23 - 24  
Friday & Saturday

#### MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING & HISTORY CONFERENCE

PLACE: Sheraton-Ritz Hotel, Minneapolis, MN  
(For information, call the Museum, 345-4154)

OCTOBER 24 - 25  
Saturday & Sunday

#### GENEALOGICAL FALL WEEKEND of the SOUTHERN MINNESOTA GENEALOGICAL CONFERENCE

TIME: Saturday Registration, 8 am - Open House, 7 pm.

Sunday Sessions, 10 am - Adjournment, 4:30 pm.

PLACE: Mankato Arts Council Building (Carnegie Library)  
120 South Broad Street, Mankato, MN

(For information, call Dean Pettis, 507-625-4120 or  
507-388-7043, evenings; or the Museum, 345-4154)

NOVEMBER 1  
Sunday

#### ANNUAL MUSEUM SHOP BAZAAR ++++ OPENING TEA AND SALE

TIME: 1 - 5 pm. Tea Served 1 - 4 pm. Bazaar open 1 - 5 pm.

PLACE: The Hubbard House - 606 S. Broad Street, Mankato, MN

NOVEMBER 2 - 8  
Monday - Sunday

#### MUSEUM SHOP BAZAAR CONTINUES:

HOURS: Monday through Saturday (Nov. 2-7), 10 am to 5 pm.  
Sunday (Nov. 8), 1 to 5 pm.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

ANNUAL: Leon Dodge

Marie Weimern

LIFE: Lyle LaFavor

Paul Kunkel



The Reedfield Costume Company became nationally known for the Indian costumes which Nora Reedfield herself produced, with the help of a few assistants. The dress at the right, a recent gift to the Museum, is a typical theater costume. It was made for Elvira Bierbauer, who wore it for "between acts" singing appearances and concerts in Mankato in the 1920's.

Mrs. Reedfield produced other Indian costumes, much more elaborate and of very high workmanship, based on her study of garments made by Indians in earlier times, of which she was an avid collector. She also made regular visits to the White Earth reservation in Minnesota and the Dells area in Wisconsin, where she consulted Indian beadworkers on designs and also farmed out to them the production of pieces for some of her costumes.

Eagle feather headdresses, such as she wears in the photograph above, were her most famous costume item. They won prizes for many organizations which wore them, among others the Drum and Bugle Corps of American Legion Lorentz Post No. Eleven of Mankato. Indians themselves acquired her headdresses to wear.

A recent visitor to the Museum (a lady) commented with evident disapproval on the absence of women from the line-up of photographs displayed on our stairway. That set us to thinking! Were we neglecting such an important subject as the place of women in the history of Blue Earth County? Not entirely; but our display of wedding dresses and pictures of brides and grooms might seem to show women primarily in a subordinate relation to men - a most un-contemporary emphasis!

The artifacts in the Museum suggested a person whose life story furnishes a striking counterbalance to this seeming one-sidedness. Our collection of American Indian clothing and accessories came to us from Nora Reedfield, surely one of the most independent and unusual women in Mankato's history.

Born in 1870 in a small Iowa town, Nora Simpson moved to Kasota as a young girl. There, at the age of 18, she started in business as a milliner. In 1890 she married George Henry Reedfield, a native of Kasota. Here also she began her career as a costumer. Her independent spirit showed in her response to the minister of her church, who rebuked her for making costumes for a local theatrical performance. She told him to take her name off the membership list, as she intended to continue making costumes. Her determination was rewarded at least in principle when the clergyman asked her to make costumes for a church pageant!



Nora and George Reedfield and their four-year-old son Otto moved to Mankato in 1896 and took up residence on North Front Street, where they lived for the rest of their lives. George went to work for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad as a car inspector and eventually foreman. By 1902 Nora had started out on an independent business career, listing herself in the city directory as "Mrs. Nora Reedfield, milliner and costumer". Two years later she set up a shop separate from her home, at 624 North Front. In a few years this address became the family residence, but George and Otto are listed as "boarding" there. For some years hat-making seems to have overshadowed costume-making; but after 1914, Nora used only the term "costumer" to define her occupation and her business.

It was not until 1924 that she moved to 313 North Front Street, where she remained to the end of her career. This building, constructed in 1888, is part of the Mankato Old Town North Front Street Commercial District recently placed on the National Register of Historic Sites. The facade is well-preserved; the interior is distinguished by having a pressed metal ceiling still intact.

Continuing the pattern characteristic of small business owners of these times, Nora and her family used part of the upstairs as living quarters; but judging



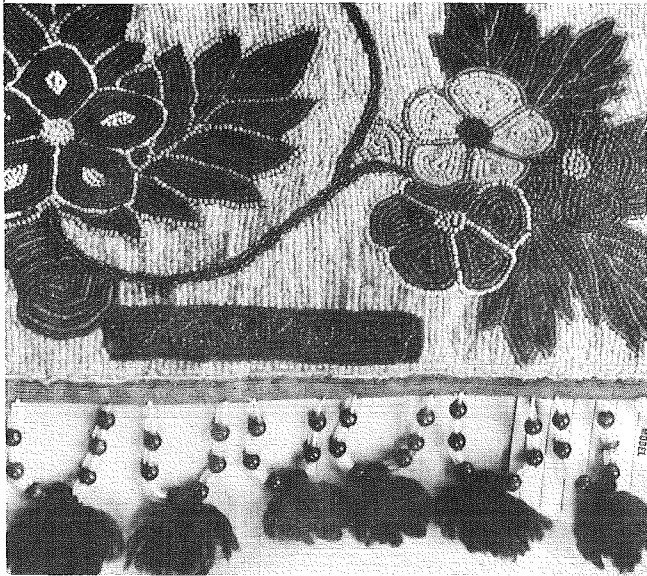
313 NORTH FRONT STREET

by accounts and photographs of her workshop and its production, most of the available space must have been occupied by the costume business.

The retail shop looks like a souvenir store. Otto served as clerk, and at one time he seems to have had a confectionery department and also an auxiliary postal station in the store. He worked and (except for a few years) lived with his mother until his death in 1942. George Reedfield also lived there, but his relationship with his wife seems to have been quite distant. In his obituary (he died in 1946), she is not mentioned among the survivors! Nora herself lived at the same place until her death in 1953.

(Continued on Page 4)





DETAIL OF A BANDOLIER  
IN THE REEDFIELD COLLECTION

Nora Reedfield's knowledge of Indian costume, based on extensive study, her activity as a collector and her painstaking reproductions of authentic Indian designs brought her national recognition. She had a genuine appreciation of the fine points of workmanship and the natural materials used by Indian craftsmen. A reporter at a meeting of the Blue Earth County Historical Society in 1935, at which she displayed some 200 pieces from her collection, was greatly impressed by her discriminating comments and her care to point out

#### ARCHIVAL MATERIALS (Cont'd.)

- 13). Books, Posters and Newspapers relating to the history of Mankato and Blue Earth County churches, schools, hospital and businesses.  
Gift of Howard L. Deegan, San Carlos, CA
- 14). Manuscript Abstract of Real Estate Assessment Roll, Garden City Township, 1908.  
Gift of Lyle G. FaFavor, Garden City.
- 15). Minutes and Records of the Mapleton Commercial Club, 1909 - 1928.  
Gift of Larry Birr, Mapleton, MN.
- 16). Rand-McNally World Atlas, 1888.  
Gift of Ernest Hansen, Garden City.

(See Page 5 for List of Artifacts)

the differences between original Indian work and her reproductions.

She particularly admired the beadwork of the Chippewa (Ojibway) Indians, of which the photograph on this page is an example. It is actually a signed piece: the small dark oblong in the center has the name of the maker worked out in beads.

Nora Reedfield also took a great interest in Indians as people, and apparently was regarded by them as a friend. On her visits to the White Earth reservation she stayed with the Indians in their huts, shared their meals and always brought food and presents. Her sympathy and concern for the feelings of Indians is evident in her action when a group of Sioux Indians were to march through Mankato on their way to a gathering in Winona. On this occasion she persuaded the city fathers to veil the historic marker bearing the inscription "Here were hanged 38 Sioux Indians".

Altogether a most unusual woman, who built up her business without financial help from anyone, even her husband; and made a career for herself in our community and beyond by "doing her own thing."

Jeanne Kress

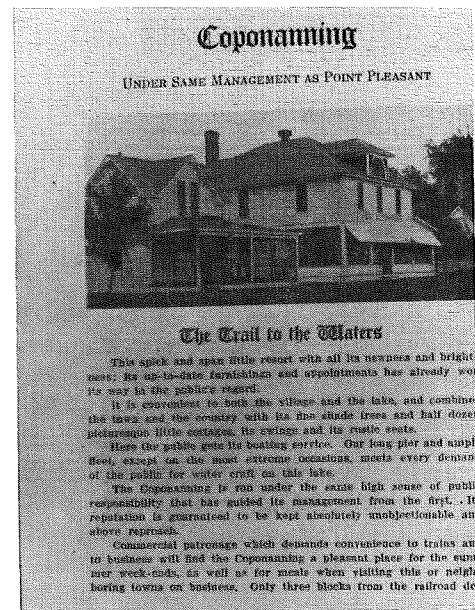
#### CORRECTION

In the article A Tale of Two Families (Newsletter July, 1981, p. 5), Alma and Mattie Bierbauer were identified as the nieces of Oscar Bierbauer. They were Oscar's sisters. All were the children of Jacob Bierbauer, the first of the family to arrive in Mankato.

Jeanne Kress

## A DIFFERENT BUSINESS VENTURE

About 1910 Nora Reedfield became the proprietor of a small summer resort in Madison Lake. The "Coponanning" included a hotel with dining room, a few cottages, and land along the lakeshore, with picnic grounds and boating facilities which were open to the public. Nora's son Otto was clerk, and presumably ran the establishment for her. She also operated the large and well-known Point Pleasant resort for a brief period, as is evidenced by a 20-page advertising brochure, "Point Pleasant ... Season of 1916-17 ... N. Reedfield, Proprietor", found in our archives. Both resorts are pictured and described in great detail in this brochure. Nora continued to own and operate the Coponanning until 1934-35; and kept a summer cottage in Madison Lake throughout the rest of her life.



PAGE FROM THE ADVERTISING BROCHURE  
"Point Pleasant - A Place to Rest"

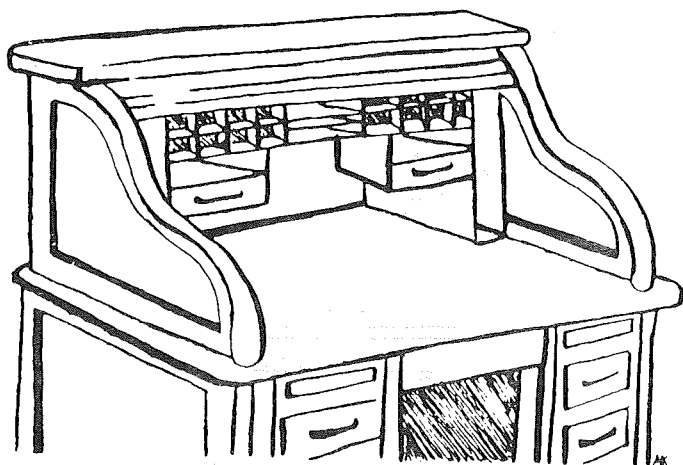
## RECENT ACCESSIONS: JANUARY - SEPTEMBER, 1981

### ARTIFACTS

- 1). Red Cross Workers' Uniforms, World War One: Two Pinafores, Apron & Kerchief.  
Gift of Mrs. J.D.R. Laurisch, Mankato
- 2). Beaded Cape, purchased at Chicago World's Fair of 1893 by Patrick D. Kelly for his wife; and black silk mitts.  
Gift of Mrs. A. J. Gruenfelder, Mankato.
- 3). Electric Slide Projector: "Victor Portable Stereopticon, Model 2", with case and collection of glass slides.  
Gift of Bruce Bell, Mankato.
- 4). Lady's Evening Purse.  
Metal mesh, German silver.  
Gift of Mrs. J.D.R. Laurisch, Mankato.
- 5). Set of Sewing Machine Attachments for New Home Sewing Machine, with instruction book in English and Swedish.  
Gift of Marcia T. Schuster, Mankato.
- 6). Package Tape Dispenser: "Counterboy" Tapesooter Junior. Used in office of Hubbard & Palmer, Mankato, in 1942 (and earlier) and subsequently in Mankato office of Archer-Daniels-Midland.
- 7). Stone Curbing, Corner Section, and Two Manhole Covers.  
Gift of City of Mankato Street Dep't.
- 8). U. S. Army Equipment, World War II: Personal items, First Aid kit, etc.; and "Chatauqua Industrial Art Desk", a teaching and reference device produced by Lewis E. Meyers, Valparaiso, Ind., Patented 1885, 1895 & 1913.  
Gift of George W. Sugden, Mankato.
- 9). Woman's Winter Suit (Two Pieces). Worn by Mary Holtze (Belgrade Township) about 1900.  
Gift of Mrs. Herman Holtze, Mankato.
- 10). U. S. Army Officer's and Enlisted Men's Uniforms and Accessory Garments, World War II.  
Gift of George W. Sugden, Mankato.
- 11). Desk used in Danville Township Post-office, located on the farm of Christian J. Laurisch, first postmaster, probably made by him; and Indian grinding stone.  
Gift of George Laurisch, Minnesota Lake.
- 12). Wooden Chest and Carpenter's and Plumber's Tools, 19th century. Belonged to William Page and John Page, who came to Blue Earth County in 1861.  
Gift of Kenneth Hoechst, Mankato.

( ARTIFACTS Continued on Page 7 )





Supper with Samantha, our joint project with the YWCA, was a great success. Some fifty persons had a sandwich supper with us, and twenty-five to thirty more joined us for the program. For those of you who missed it, Dr. Jane Curry's presentation of "Samantha Rastles the Woman Question" was both thought-provoking and humorous. Debbie Schreyer played the banjo, and Donna Winter prepared a display of Museum artifacts of the period. Dr. Curry's parents were visiting from Indiana, and they heard Samantha for the first time.

The City of Mankato has appropriated money in its 1982 budget for repairing window frames and sashes in the Hubbard House and providing storm windows where there are none. This will make our building more habitable and will reduce fuel costs a great deal.

The Society's exhibit in the Agricultural Heritage Building at the County Fair in Garden City was highly successful. The film "When We Farmed with Horses" was shown many times and was acclaimed by all who saw it. Thanks to the kind volunteers who served in so many ways: Ernest and Dollis Hansen, Mike Scullin, Kathryn Hanson, Mary Dooley, Dean Pettis, Howard Williams, Bert Burns, Audrey Hicks, Larry Schnoor, Anita Stone, Beth Norman, Paul G. Schuster, Carol Hannick, Jeanne Kress, Scott Parker and Irwin Williams.

The new Sandon Historical Plate has just arrived and is now available in the Museum Shop. The subject this year is the Rapidan Dam. New also in the Shop are postcards of Seppman Mill and Minneopa Falls.

The October 3 bus tour to the Charles Lindbergh House and Museum in Little Falls had to be cancelled for lack of sufficient reservations. We would be pleased if our bus tour "regulars" would let us know why they didn't want to go with us. Was it the date? the cost? the destination? or some other reason? Unfortunately there was a Mankato Hiking Club bus trip that same day. Was this a problem for anyone?

Total income from our June rummage sale was \$418.19. Our thanks to all who contributed and participated.

I have been honored by being asked to serve as one of fifty area participants in a conference to recommend specific ways through which the humanities may achieve greater emphasis and/or increased effectiveness in south-central Minnesota. Participants will attend five programs and discussions sponsored by Mankato State University and the Minnesota Humanities Commission, along with a final workshop. This conference is in response to the Rockefeller Commission's report, Humanities in American Life, in which thirty-one recommendations are made to strengthen the humanities.

We will open our Bazaar on Sunday, November 1, at 1 pm, with tea being served from 1 to 4 pm. (The Bazaar will be open from 1 to 5 pm.) This will allow visitors to have tea and then go to the Performing Arts Center at Mankato State University for the 2 pm presentation by Robin Wright, who will discuss Our Heritage of Art and Artifacts. This is the third in the series of programs on the humanities mentioned above.

Special guest at our opening day tea will be John Koblas, author of the new biography of Sinclair Lewis (just off the press!), who will be on hand to autograph your copy and to visit with you. The biography contains a "Mankato Chapter" dealing with the summer of 1919, when Lewis was here and wrote most of Main Street. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Society. Evelyn Schmanski is in charge of arrangements for the tea.

Don't forget to bring your contributions for the bazaar to the Museum by Saturday, October 31.

See you at the Bazaar!

Marcia T. Schuster

RECENT ACCESSIONS: ARTIFACTS (cont'd.)

- 13). Indian Costume made by Nora Reedfield, Mankato costumer, and worn by Elvira Bierbauer, 1920's.  
Gift of Elvira Bierbauer, Bloomington, Minn.
- 14). Ladies' Accessories: Fans and Decorative Comb, 1890's. Belonged to Alice Williams.  
Gift of Howard Williams, Mankato.
- 15). Tin Cookie-press Cutters (five).  
Gift of Emma Wiecking, Mankato.
- 16). Pipestone (catlinite) and Clay Pipes.  
Gift of Mervin Nelson, Mankato.
- 17). Shell-shaped Plate. Opalescent Glass, about 1900.  
Gift of Mrs. Violet Olberg, Mankato.
- 18). Woman's Dress Jacket, Dress Ornaments (beading) and Parasol.  
Gift of Mary Atwood, Mankato.
- 19). "Recliner" Armchair. Walnut, late Victorian.  
Gift of William E. Vogel, N. Mankato.
- 20). Pair of Dolls made by Myrtle Kachelmyer.  
Gift of Andrew C. Kachelmyer, Mankato.
- 21). Coin Silver Teaspoon which belonged to Mary Cooke Hubbard (first wife of Rensselaer D. Hubbard), and Top Hat worn by her brother at the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.  
Gift of Muriel Hubbard (Mrs. Jay Hubbard, Jr.), Port Lavaca, Texas.
- 22). Artifacts used by the family of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lewis Deegan (Vera Kitch) of North Mankato and Garden City, including women's and children's shoes; personal items; toys of the 1930's (train set, radio, film viewer, cars); early cameras and items from Mankato Commercial College.  
Gift of Gordon L. Deegan, San Carlos, CA
- 23). Horsehide Mitts (pair). Belonged to Eugene Eklund, farmer in Nicollet County, grandfather of donor.  
Gift of Kay Lund, Mankato.
- 24). Sandon Historical Series Plate for 1981: Rapidan Dam. No. 13 of limited edition of 150.  
Gift of the artist, Donna Sandon.
- 25). Derby Hat. Manufactured in London, and sold by A. M. Stein and Co., Mankato clothing merchant, 203 South Front Street.  
Gift of Larry Schnoor, Mankato.
- 26). Women's Hats (three) and Tin Strainer (kitchen utensil).  
Gift of Emma Wiecking, Mankato.

THE THANKS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
for

CONTRIBUTIONS RECENTLY RECEIVED

MEMORIALS TO:

Roy B. Frentz (4)

Hattie Rieff

O. C. Wood

Martha Wiecking Woodworth (25)

(All placed in the Endowment Fund)

DONATIONS TO THE ENDOWMENT FUND:

Jim and Norma Curry

Women's Studies Department,  
Mankato State University

John Burton

NEWSLETTER  
of the  
BLUE EARTH COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Editor Jeanne D. Kress  
Free to members of the Historical Society  
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ATTENTION!

SOCIETY MEMBERS  
OPENING DAY TEA  
and  
MUSEUM SHOP BAZAAR  
  
SUNDAY - NOVEMBER 1.  
  
COME and MEET  
  
JOHN KOBLAS,  
  
BIOGRAPHER  
of  
SINCLAIR LEWIS

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



Address Correction  
Requested

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RECENT ACCESSIONS: JANUARY - SEPTEMBER, 1981

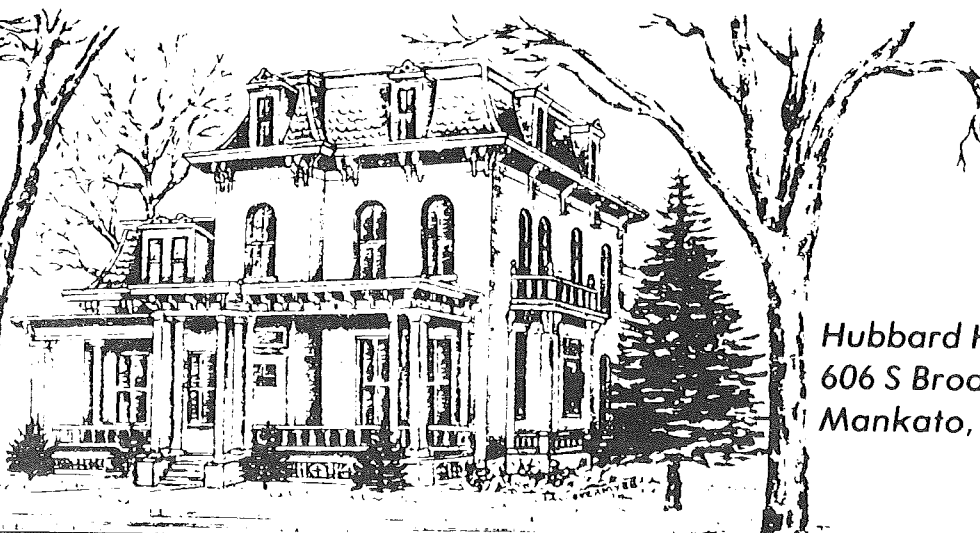
ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

- 1). Papers of the Mankato Area Zoological Society, 1966 - 1969.  
Gift of Mrs. Donald Meredith, Mankato.
- 2). History of the Welsh in Minnesota, Foreston and Lime Springs, Iowa, English and Welsh-English edition, 1899; clip-pings, tintypes and photographs relating to the Humphrey J. Roberts family.  
Gift of Mrs. John H. Roberts, Mankato.
- 3). Registers, Receipts, etc., of the Judson, MN Postoffice, 1903 - 1937.  
Gift of Joe Rudberg, Lake Crystal.
- 4). Atlas (map) of Mankato, by A. M. Haynes, 1893; and decorative advertising calendar of the Mankato Bank of Commerce, 1904.  
Gift of the Minnesota Valley Regional Library, Mankato.
- 5). Photographs (copies) of portraits and memorabilia of the Christian J. Laurisch family, Danville Township.  
Gift of John Laurisch, Minnesota Lake.
- 6). Yearbook of Immanuel Hospital Nurses Training School, 1925; Mankato High School Album, 1910; and photographs.  
Gift of Mrs. Katheryn Moede, Mankato.
- 7). Books and Papers relating to the lithography business of J. S. Tiedemann (Rostock) and the woodworking factory of F. W. Müller (Berlin) and sketches by Nikolaus Funke, who came to Blue Earth County in 1858.  
Gift of Mrs. Robert K. Miller, Mankato.
- 8). Books, including School Progress, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Catalogue of Mankato State Teachers College, 1948) and Hanes Cymry Minnesota, Foreston a Lime Springs, Iowa, 1895.  
Gift of Katheryn Moede, Mankato.
- 9). Photographs (3) of the removal of the cupola, etc., of the old Mankato High School building, 1941.  
Gift of Mrs. William Blethen, Mankato.
- 10). Souvenir Album of Photogravures of Mankato, 1904. A. Blissenbach, Photographer.  
Gift of Nancy C. Stewart, Portland, OR
- 11). Books: 1). Report of Explorations and Surveys ... for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, 1853-1854. U. S. War Department, 1855.  
2). Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota ... by David Dale Owen, U. S. Geologist. Philadelphia, 1852.  
Gift of H. Roger Smith, Department of Urban & Regional Studies, Mankato State University.
- 12). Memorabilia of R. D. Hubbard: Letter of R. D. Hubbard to H. W. Cooke, Feb. 21, 1888; and Wedding Announcement of Rensselaer D. Hubbard and Frank H. Griffith, October 7, 1878.  
Gift of Muriel Hubbard (Mrs. Jay Hubbard, Jr.), Port Lavaca, Texas.

(Continued on Page 4)



# Blue Earth County Historical Society



Hubbard House  
606 S Broad St.  
Mankato, Minn.

Volume 10, No. 4

## NEWS LETTER

January, 1982

LIFE AT THE HUBBARD HOUSE +++++ A REVIEW OF THE YEAR 1981

### MUSEUM ATTENDANCE

Visitors who registered at the Hubbard House numbered 5,922 (January - December). The Carriage House register was signed by 3,614 persons (January - November). These figures show a slight decrease (2%) from 1980. As in previous years, 30% of the visitors to the Hubbard House do not go to the Carriage House. We know that some people do not sign the books. We always miss a few!

Mankato and Blue Earth County people comprise 58% of our visiting public this year. Other Minnesotans account for 28.5% - a slight increase over 1980. Visitors from other states amount to about 9%; and the remaining small percentage represents visitors from foreign countries. The general pattern of attendance continues the same as that seen in 1979 and 1980.

### ARCHIVES SERVICE

Information and research service continues to be our second principal function, both in terms of the number of persons served and hours spent by the staff to meet their requests. The total of inquiries this year was 333, which represents more than one every working day, and closer to two per day when the archives are open to the public. As in previous years, the majority of requests come from Mankato and Blue Earth County - approximately 70%. The remaining 30% is about evenly divided - 15% from other Minnesotans and 15% from people in other states. We had requests from 23 Minnesota cities outside of Blue Earth

County and from 24 states other than Minnesota, as well as from Washington, D.C., Canada and Germany.

Continued interest in family history accounts for 30% of all inquiries received - an increase of 5% over last year. The subject next in interest is the history of Mankato and Blue Earth County, amounting to about 26%. Of such requests, almost 60% concerned particular houses or buildings. The remaining inquiries were more general in character.

The Dakotah Uprising of 1862 still held its place as the single subject most frequently asked about, but it was almost eclipsed by streetcars in Mankato, apparently because of an assignment in an Urban Studies course at Mankato State University. Next in number of inquiries were old cemeteries, the Carnegie Library and railroads in the area.

Among many requests, a particularly challenging one came from the district office of Northern States Power Company, about the earliest gas plant of the Mankato Gas and Electric Light Company, its predecessor - this to complete a report to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The combined resources of our newspaper, photograph and map collections provided the desired information, down to the exact location of the plant from its earliest date and its equipment throughout the history of its operation.

(Continued on Page 3 )

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