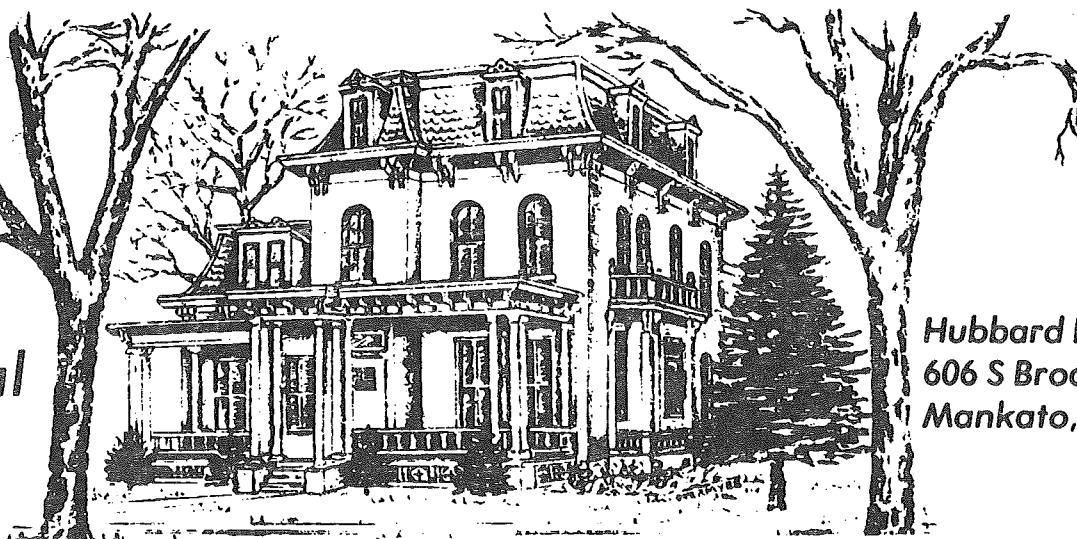


Blue Earth County Historical Society



Hubbard House
606 S Broad St.
Mankato, Minn.

Volume 10, Number 2

NEWS LETTER

July, 1981

COMING EVENTS

AUGUST 13-16

BLUE EARTH COUNTY FAIR +++++ GARDEN CITY, MINNESOTA
Historical Society Exhibit in the Agricultural Heritage Building
(See Director's Rolltop, Page 6.)

LATE SEPTEMBER
EARLY OCTOBER or

FALL BUS TOUR to the LINDBERGH HOUSE & WEYERHAUSER MUSEUM,
LITTLE FALLS, MINNESOTA. (Date to be set, information by mail.)

OCTOBER 24 (Sat.)
OCTOBER 25 (Sun.)

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA GENEALOGICAL CONFERENCE
CARNEGIE LIBRARY BUILDING - 120 SOUTH BROAD ST., MANKATO, MN.
(See Page 7 for Further Information.)

NOVEMBER

ANNUAL MUSEUM SHOP BAZAAR

THE THANKS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY for

CONTRIBUTIONS RECENTLY RECEIVED

MEMORIALS TO:

Alice Adamson
Mary J. Argetsinger
Cornelia Andrews DuBois
Celia Koberoski
Clarence Larson
Elsa Natvig (2)
Marilyn Snider (2)

DONATIONS FROM:

LE RAY TOWNSHIP
MAPLETON TOWNSHIP

SPECIAL DONATION from

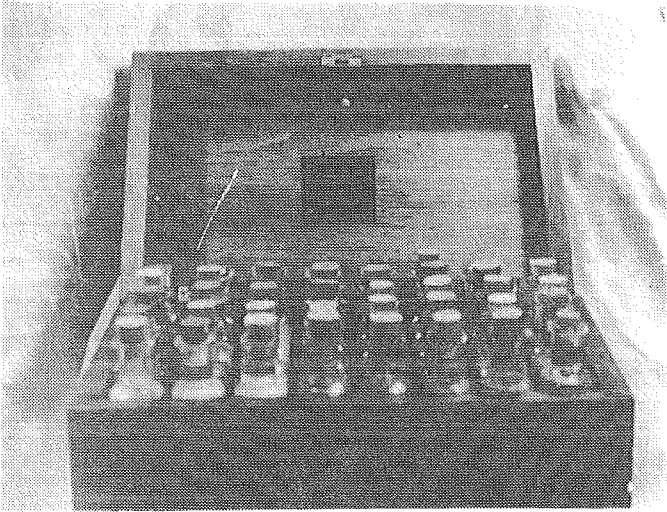
MR. & MRS. C. R. BUTLER
(To cover cost of framing diploma)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS !

ANNUAL: Mrs. L. J. Kennedy, Jr.
Ione H. Louk
Mrs. John Norman
Mrs. Violet Olberg

LIFE: Mr. & Mrs. David Taylor
(Two Memberships)
Mrs. Irwin Williams

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES



HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICINE CHEST
Belonged to Dr. A. G. Dornberg

Gift of Elvira & Norma Bierbauer

New accessions are always interesting in themselves, but some have an additional attraction because they draw our attention to people and past events and so give us a broader and more integrated picture of our history. One such item is a doctor's medicine chest that dates from the 1870's. It comes to us from descendants of two families whose place in local history reaches from the earliest days of Mankato to the departure from the area of most members of the third generation.

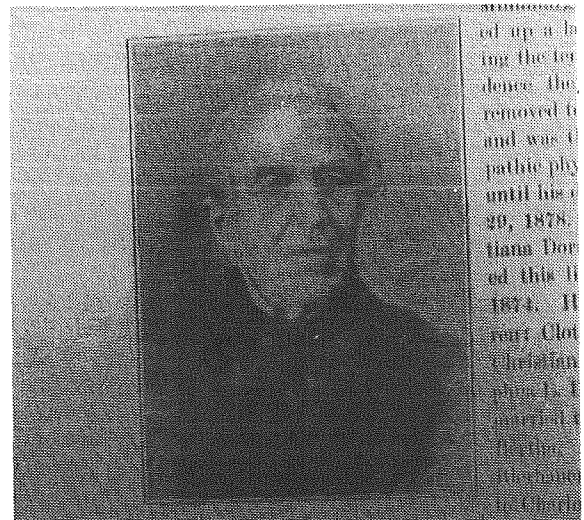
One name - Bierbauer - is well-known to people interested in Blue Earth County history. The other - Dornberg - may be less familiar. However, it is likely that the Dornbergs were responsible to a large extent for the scope of influence of the two families on the local scene.

Both Dornbergs and Bierbauers left Germany to escape from the disturbed political and economic conditions there which culminated in the Revolutions of 1848. Dr. Alvin Gustave Dornberg no doubt had good reason to leave his native Saxony, which had been a main theatre of military operations in the wars between Napoleon and the powers of Europe, and was consequently a depressed area. Dornberg, in his late 40's and with a family of two

sons and seven daughters, may have made his move to the United States in anticipation of the coming upheaval. He came in 1847, looked around for a good place to settle, and chose Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania. The next year his wife and daughters joined him there, while the elder son, Adolphus Louis, followed in his father's footsteps by entering a college of homeopathic medicine in Cleveland. (Dr. Dornberg belonged to this school of medicine, which originated in Germany.) The two oldest daughters soon married, the second, Augusta, becoming the wife of a "Yankee", William H. Rockey, whose family had a flour-milling business in Mifflinburg..

The two Bierbauer brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm (he soon changed to William) arrived in New York in October of 1849, as political refugees who had taken an active part in the struggle of liberals in Rhenish Bavaria to gain political freedom. Jacob had been a captain in the rebel forces, and when the uprising was suppressed in 1849, he and William, seven years his junior, sought safety in Switzerland. We have in our archives William's passport from the Swiss government, granted with the stipulation that he emigrate via France directly to the United States.

Being of middle-class background, they had had a vocational-technical education and were also acquainted with their family's business, wine-making. (The family owned a vineyard.) Jacob was also a cabinet maker, at which trade he seems to have earned his living from the age of 18.

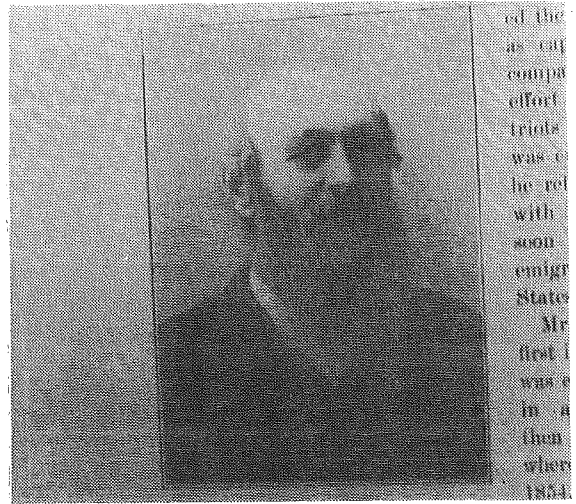


DR. ALVIN G. DORNBERG

In this country they made good use of their skills. After a stint as a cabinet maker for a piano company, Jacob worked in a brewery in Utica, N.Y., before moving to Erie, Pa. It was probably through her brother Adolph Louis (who had finished his medical studies and was practicing in Erie) that Jacob met and married the third Dornberg daughter, Bertha, in 1854. By that time William had gone from a job in a Seneca, N.Y. brewery to Milwaukee, where he worked for the Philip Best Brewing Company.

The brothers seem to have planned jointly their move to the new boom town of Mankato. Jacob arrived in October, 1856, and William shortly thereafter. By 1857 they had started their joint venture as brewers, in "a small frame building on North Front Street." (Some sources indicate that it was in the cellar of Jacob's house. He is credited with building the first two-story stone house in Mankato, the address of which in later years was 713 North Front.)

It was in that year or the next (1858) that Jacob's father-in-law moved to Mankato with his wife and four unmarried daughters. One was not destined to remain single for long. Before the end of 1858, Louisa Dornberg became the wife of William Bierbauer. An already-married Dornberg, Augusta Rockey, and her husband joined the family forces soon after that. In 1862 Rockey and Jacob Bierbauer together bought a saw mill located in South Bend and a grist mill in what is now West Mankato,

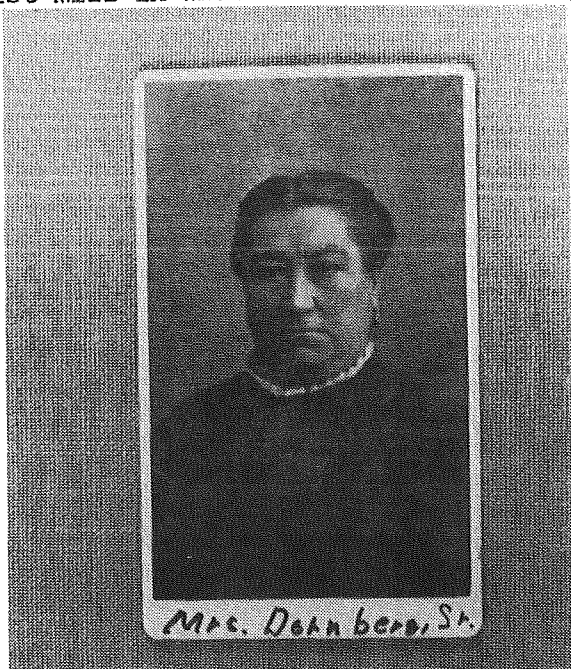


JACOB BIERBAUER

moved the machinery and set up a double operation, a flour mill fronting on Rock Street (subsequently known as the Rockey or City mill), back to back with the saw mill, which faced on Vine Street. The Rockey mill survives to this day. It is the many-times recycled building on West Rock Street which became the foundry of the Mayer Brothers in 1902, and is still part of the Dotson Company's complex.

From these beginnings the Bierbauer brothers made a prominent place for themselves. William's role in the "defense of New Ulm" at the time of the Dakota Uprising (1862) has been recounted many times; and with the building of the brewery against the bluff "at the head of Rock Street" and North Sixth, he became the sole owner of a Mankato enterprise which dominated the far north end of the city skyline until its abandonment and final demolition in 1970. It was continued as a family business by William's three sons until 1919, and during that time managed to absorb or outlive a number of competitors, including the last and most formidable, the Standard Brewing Company.

Jacob Bierbauer's career as an entrepreneur was more varied. He repeatedly would start a new enterprise, sometimes in partnership with a relative, to whom he would sell his interest and then invest in something different. The Rockey mills



(Continued on Page 4)

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES (Cont'd.)

were the first of these enterprises. He sold his interest in both to his brother-in-law in 1867. One surmises that a six-month trip the year before to his ancestral home in Bavaria was perhaps to settle his share in the family estate. In any case, upon his return to Mankato he seems to have operated as a financier.

His next venture was a woolen mill, housed in a new building on Vine Street (east of Front), which cost \$20,000, and produced "cloths, blankets, yarns and rolls." Apparently it was quite successful "until Mr. Bierbauer's health failed." In 1874 he sold out to Christian Roos, another German who had come to Mankato in 1873, and left to spend two and a half years in Oregon. At this time he was 55 years old, and probably could leave affairs in Mankato at least partly in the hands of his eldest son, Oscar, then nearly twenty years old.

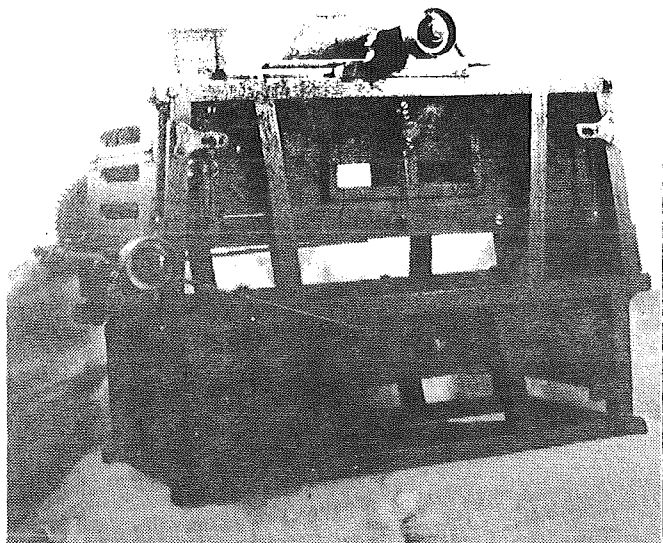
It must have been during his stay in Oregon that he turned to a new interest. We have in our Historical Society collection an object which came "from the Bierbauer family", described in our old records only as "first patent issued in Blue Earth County." (See Photograph Below.) This "unknown" must be the model

of a middlings purifier (a screening device used in flour-milling) which Jacob Bierbauer invented. On his return to Mankato from the West he went into the manufacture of this machine.

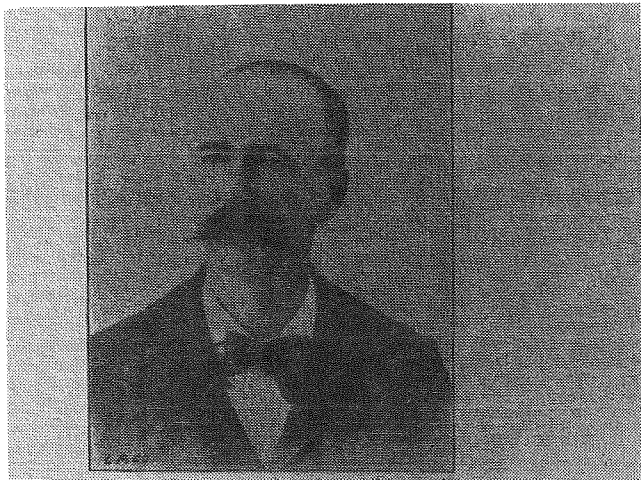
A few years later he apparently assumed again the role of family financier. This brings the Dornbergs back into the picture. About 1860, two enterprising Germans, already friends from New York days, came to Mankato. They were Fritz Prael and Herman Du Buisson. Both married Dornberg sisters (Theresa and Laura), and in partnership with William Rockey they established a general merchandising business. Their location appears in one of the earliest identifiable photographs of downtown Mankato - "corner of Front and Walnut, opposite City Hall."

In 1880 this co-partnership of Prael and Du Buisson and William Rockey went bankrupt to the tune of \$46,000, a very large sum for the time. Thomas Hughes calls it "the first big business failure in the county." Jacob Bierbauer might have had some financial interest in this business. In any case, he seems to have intervened to salvage the Rockey flour milling business. He became the proprietor and apparently was active manager until his retirement in 1892. He died in 1896.

Jacob's son Oscar (1855-1936) continued his father's activity as a developer and investor in Mankato business. His major enterprise was the Mankato Malting Company, established in 1892 in partnership with his brother Herman. (Herman was apparently the actual chief of operations.) Business expanded so much that in 1904 a new plant was built, described as the largest in the state, at a cost of \$150,000. Oscar apparently remained head of the company until he retired and left Mankato to live in Minneapolis, in 1924.



MIDDLINGS PURIFIER
Invented by Jacob Bierbauer



OSCAR BIERBAUER

Another investment was in real estate. In 1895, when the original builder, E. C. Burdick, went bankrupt, Bierbauer and Charles Macbeth together bought the brand-new Security Flats. (302 South Broad Street.) This apartment building is one of the few structures in Mankato which survive from the past century, still serving its original purpose.

Oscar Bierbauer also took an active part in public affairs. His father and uncle had supported the cultural projects of the German community (particularly the beginning of the Opera House.) He continued this interest and financial support, even becoming at one point the proprietor and manager of the Opera House when it seems to have been in financial difficulty.

He also went into politics, to the extent of being elected Register of Deeds in 1887, an office he held for ten years. During his tenure, his nieces Alma and Mattie became clerks in the Register's office, where they continued for many years.

Oscar's participation in community affairs included service on the Mankato Board of Education, of which he was president at one time.

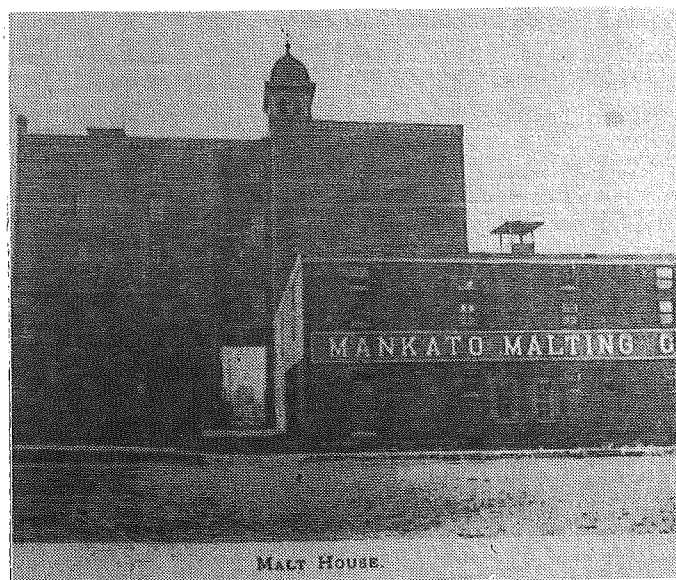
He was also a member of the library board which succeeded in building the "new" Public Library and Reading Room - the Carnegie Library - on Broad Street, in 1902.

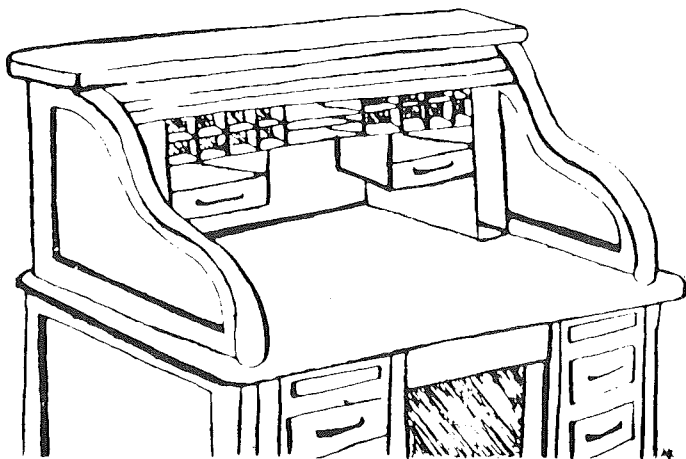
With the retirement of the men of the second generation, particularly Oscar and Albert G., William's eldest son, the Bierbauer name gradually faded from the Mankato scene. Much the same happened in the case of the Dornbergs.

The last Dornberg daughter, Alma, married Charles Heilborn, a Mankato furniture-maker whose partner in business in 1878 was Fritz Prael. Both Heilborn and Prael moved to Oregon, presumably after the financial collapse of Prael and Du Buisson in 1880. What happened to Du Buisson is a mystery. Ironically, he had been elected a director of the Mankato Board of Trade in January, 1880; but after December 4, the date of the catastrophe, he is not mentioned in any of the historical accounts, and seems to vanish completely.

Dr. Alvin, the "old doctor", kept his practice in the north end of Mankato until his death in 1879. His son, the "young doctor", who was known by his initials as A. L. Dornberg, came to Mankato in 1864 (or perhaps 1866), and settled on the south side of Main Street. His office and residence from the 1870's

(Continued on Page 7)





As we start our 66th year (May 24 marked the 65th anniversary of the incorporation of the Society), it seems most fitting to have the Hubbard Carriage House grace the cover of the new Mankato telephone directory. We can well be proud of the progress we have achieved through all the years - sometimes slowly, sometimes more rapidly.

Tourist season is upon us. Visitors in the last two days have come from California, Washington, Iowa, Texas, Tennessee, Maryland and Montana, as well as from New Richland, St. Paul, Jackson, Prinsburg, Minneapolis, Madison Lake and Mankato in Minnesota.

We have had the pleasure (and pain!) of seeing some of our weekend workers, college students, finish their scholastic careers and go out into the world: Ruth Jensen and Jane Votca, graduate students in Recreation, have left for jobs in their field; John Burton, who started at the Museum as a volunteer when he was in the eighth grade, was graduated with honors from St. Olaf's and will be Fine Arts Coordinator and Residence Hall Supervisor at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, Texas, before going on to graduate study in History. It is a privilege to have these young people with us. They are full of ideas and enthusiasm.

You will be interested to know that Donna Sandon's Blue Earth County Courthouse plate was chosen as representative of Mankato, to be given to the exchange group from Maracaibo, Venezuela. This has been one of her most popular plates. If you are collecting the entire set and do not yet have the Seppman Mill plate, you will want to get it right away. The supply is running low and the plates will not be re-issued.

Now at the Museum Shop are Carriage House notepaper, designed by Georgeanne Welty and published by Harpies' Bazaar; the Maud Hart Lovelace mural postcard, a reprint of the Marion Anderson Schaefer mural in the Regional Library; and another in our Minnesota Originals line by Lucille Sunderman - a notepaper strip of Laura Ingalls Wilder homes, plus Plum Creek. We also have enlarged our stock of Roots magazine, published by the Minnesota Historical Society. New issues include: A Woman's Place in Minnesota, Minnesota's Rivers, The Riddle of the Land (geology of Minnesota), Exploration, and Minnesota's Boundaries. These are written for young people, but are interesting to older readers as well. The double issue, The Dakota and Ojibwe in Minnesota, has been a popular book, especially for teachers. Teachers' outlines are available for most of these.

Also new is a postcard showing both winter and spring views of the Hubbard House and Carriage House - a wide angle shot with no street signs - by Peter Hornby. He is the very talented young man who is responsible for the photographs of the Lincoln Elm and several area postcards. His very fine view of the Hubbard Milling Company is on the cover of the spring issue of Hubbardland, the company's house publication.

Plans are shaping up for our display at the Agricultural Heritage Building at the County Fair August 13-16. We have had an 1881 Fair booklet reprinted to be sold there, as well as at the Museum Shop. Many volunteers will be needed to "man" (or "woman") the exhibit, plus some to help with cleaning and exhibit setup. Don't be bashful! Call me at the Museum, if you can spend some time helping us.

Here at the Museum archives we have made a good start on a project that has needed doing for years. Our obituary notices have been filed in various locations and there was a separate index to each source. We are now checking all obituaries and indexing them in one straight alphabetical card file. When the job is finished, it will really be a timesaver, with only one index to check, instead of five or six.

(Continued on Page 8)

A SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
GENEALOGICAL CONFERENCE

will be held in Mankato Saturday and Sunday, October 24th and 25th, at the Carnegie Library Building, 120 South Broad Street.

Sponsoring and participating organizations are the Traverse des Sioux society, (in charge of local arrangements), the Prairieland Genealogical Society (Marshall, MN), the Mower County and Freeborn County Genealogical Societies, and the Waseca Area Genealogy Society.

The two-day program will focus on resources for genealogical research available in southern Minnesota. Two tracks of study sessions dealing with records of ethnic groups (Scandinavian, German, Welsh, British and possibly Irish), will be conducted by specialists in those subjects. Another subject will be the records of patriotic societies.

The Saturday evening program will be an Open House. A professional photographer will be on hand to copy photographs and documents at cost (no charge for making negative). The Blue Earth County Historical Society and other historical societies in the area will have materials on hand for purchase; and printed aids for genealogical research (books, etc.) will also be available.

Cost of the two-day event is \$20.00. The program schedule and registration forms will be available August 1st. To receive them, and for further information, write to Traverse des Sioux Genealogical Society, Box 315, Mankato, MN 56001; or phone Dean Pettis, 507-625-4120 or 507-388-7043 (evenings).

RECENT ACCESSIONS

Accessions received thus far in 1981 (January through July) number seventeen of artifacts and nine of archival materials. A complete listing will be published in our next issue.

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES (Cont'd.)

to 1900 was at 520 South Broad Street, a house which no longer exists, but which until the late 1920's occupied the space north of our Hubbard Carriage House, part of which is now the "Outdoor Room" of Palmer Centennial Place.

Jeanne D. Kress

Note: This account is pieced together from the following sources:
Thomas Hughes, History of Blue Earth County.
Warner & Foote, History of the Minnesota Valley.

Mankato - Its First 50 Years. (Free Press, Printer, 1902).

Shoemaker's Directories of Mankato and Blue Earth County, 1872 - 1888.

Polk's Directories of Mankato and Blue Earth County, 1892 - .

Rudolph F. Prael, History of the Dornberg Family in America. (5 pp. typescript, no date); and genealogical charts for Louisa and Theresa Dornberg. Mr. Prael, a grandson of Fritz and Theresa Dornberg Prael, was a resident of Portland, Oregon, when he wrote this account.

Newspapers: Mankato Review and Mankato Free Press.

The writer is entirely responsible for all speculation!

NEWSLETTER
of the
BLUE EARTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Published four times a year by the Blue Earth County Historical Society, at 606 South Broad Street, Mankato, MN 56001
Editor Jeanne D. Kress
Free to members of the Historical Society
Annual subscription (4 issues) - \$ 3.00

ATTENTION !

SOCIETY MEMBERS!

HI - HO !!!
COME TO THE FAIR !

See COMING EVENTS
and
DIRECTOR'S ROLLTOP

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



NON-PROFIT ORG
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Mankato, MN. 56001
PERMIT NO. 343

Address Correction
Requested

Director's Rolltop (Cont'd.)

We are grateful to George Domas, who donated his time and expertise to rebuild and repaint our back porch and steps. Our exterior restoration grant had a small amount of money left, so Hobco, Inc. (the contractor) replaced rotten underpinnings and braced the porch, making it firm under foot, while George rebuilt the steps and added the finishing touches. A decided improvement.

Our rummage sale was very successful. There were many more donations of rummage than we have had in previous years. The final total is not in, until we hear from C. & C. Auctions, who are selling off the left-overs for us. We are most grateful to our volunteers, who helped in so many ways: Audrey Hicks, Margaret Williams, Evelyn Schmanski, Arnie and "B" Meyer, Audrey Annis and John Burton.

+++++

A WEATHER NOTE FROM 100 YEARS AGO !

Thomas Hughes in his History of Blue Earth County describes at length tornadic storms which occurred on June 5, 1880, which must have been similar in extent and intensity to the storm of June 23 of this year. In Mankato it unroofed all the principal public buildings, a number of churches and "a great many business blocks and private residences. The same day a tornado swept through Pleasant Mound, Ceresco and Shelby townships, destroying eight schoolhouses and "a vast number of houses and barns." One man found some humor in his experience of the storm. He "saw the storm coming and ran for shelter to the Kenny schoolhouse ... but found it locked. He sought shelter in one of the outhouses, but that soon was blown over. He then took refuge on the leeward side of the schoolhouse, but this building began to topple. There was nothing for our friend to do but gird up his loins and run. ... He glanced back over his shoulder and saw the schoolhouse coming after him, tumbling before the wind. Afterwards he used to tell with great glee of the time he ran across the prairie chased by a schoolhouse and two outhouses."

Our special thanks to Harold Natvig, who has given us two silver compotes and a silver bowl for our tea table use, and to Violet Olberg for a handsome opalescent glass plate for the same purpose.

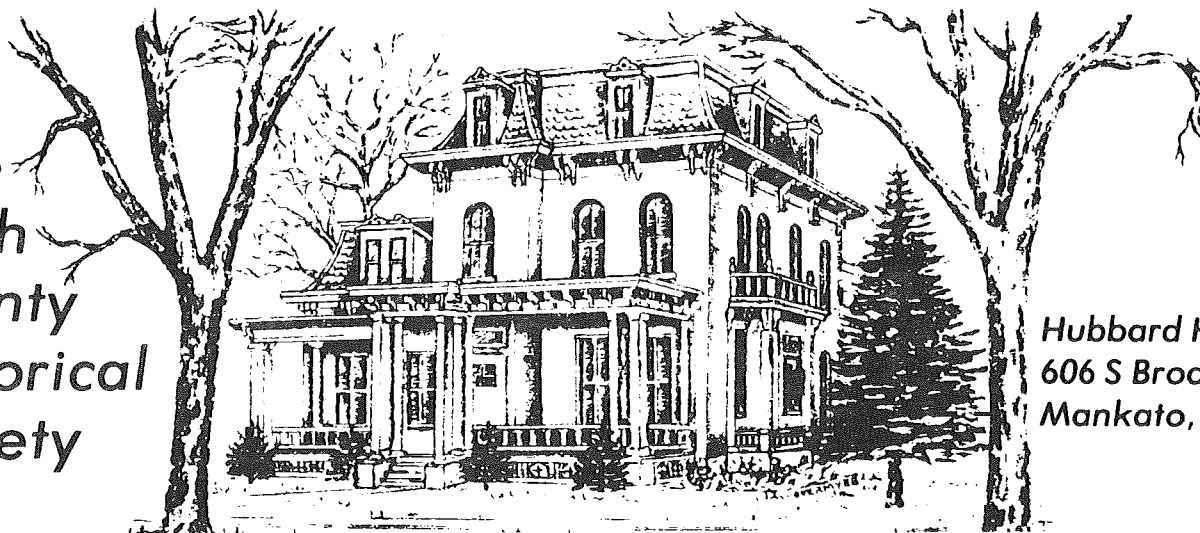
Have you all sent in your American Heritage subscription forms yet? If you don't already know the magazine, you should. It is a very worthwhile publication.

Coming on October 24 and 25 is the Southern Minnesota Genealogical Conference. Our local group, the Traverse des Sioux Genealogical Association, is hosting the event.

See you at the Fair in Garden City!

Marcia T. Schuster

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