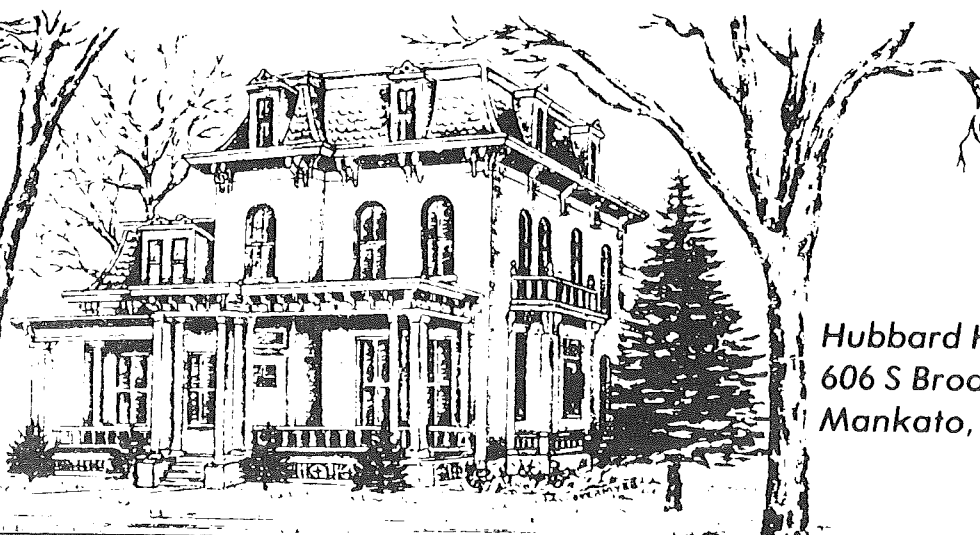


Blue Earth County Historical Society



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.

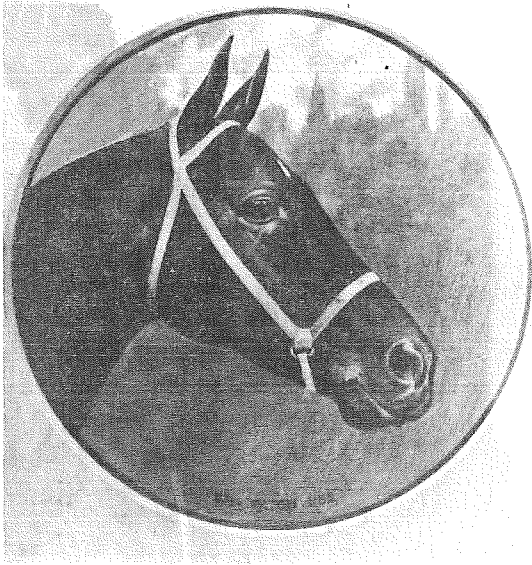
Continued interest in family history accounts for 30% of all inquiries received - an increase of 5% over last year. The subject next in interest is the history of Mankato and Blue Earth County, amounting to about 26%. Of such requests, almost 60% concerned particular houses or buildings. The remaining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

Page 1



PORTRAIT OF DAN PATCH
(Colored Photogravure)

A Recent Accession

Dan Patch used to be described as "the most famous race horse in history". He was a pacer whose record of 1.55 minutes for the mile, set in 1905, was not surpassed until 1938. His owner was "Colonel" M. W. Savage, a legendary business promoter who gave his name to the city of Savage, Minnesota. His fabulous International 1.55 Horse Farm located there was the home of Dan Patch when the horse was not traveling to exhibition time trials around the country in his private railroad car. Colonel Savage was also the builder (in 1907) of an electric railroad which ran between Minneapolis and Northfield, known as the Dan Patch Line. It was primarily a passenger line. Savage obtained railroad rights to additional trackage and extended his service to other southern Minnesota cities, including Mankato. Museum visitors asking about railroads in our area are usually not familiar with the name Dan Patch and are intrigued by the photograph we have, which shows a Dan Patch locomotive and tender at Mankato.

Having a railroad named after a horse suggests various thoughts on the subject of transportation seventy-five to a hundred years ago. By the time of Dan Patch's career (1905-1910), the breeding of fast

horses for driving had already become primarily a hobby, and racing them was a rich man's sport.

In the 1800's it was serious business. Except for long-distance travel by railroad, people were dependent on real horse power to go anywhere, unless they wanted to walk. Everyone who could afford it kept a horse and buggy; others depended on livery stables and hired hacks for travel on wheels. Horse breeding was an important activity in the agribusiness economy of the 19th century. The racing of driving horses might be considered as a form of product testing and quality control.

These thoughts made me consider that horse breeding and probably racing too must have been important in Blue Earth County a hundred years ago. Looking around, I realized that in our Carriage House we have a most valuable kind of information about the use of horses: the artifacts of the Schmidt Saddlery collection and our carriages and sleighs, some of which were made locally. Except for George Lang's Clydesdales - heavy draft horses - we seem to have collected very little about horses and the people who were in the business of producing them.

A search in the archives, which has only just begun, uncovered some interesting "bits and pieces", particularly a few pictures, which are the basis of the comments here.

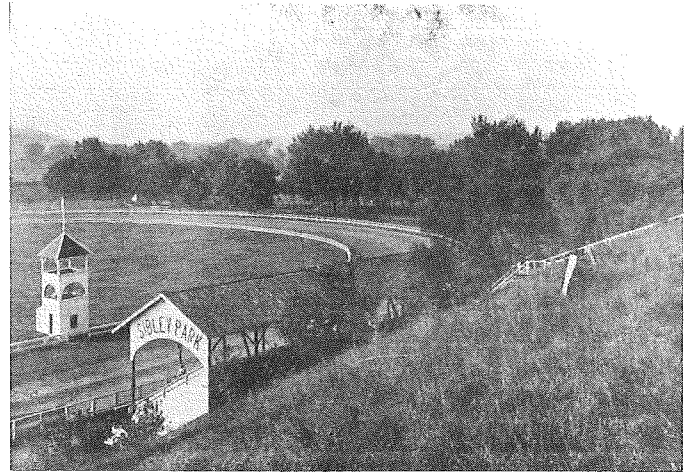
Jeanne D. Kress

There were apparently two organizations to which the "horse men" of Mankato and Blue Earth County might belong, which were loosely associated in the interest of breeding, showing and selling harness horses, and also racing them. These were the Southern Minnesota Livestock and Fair Association and the Mankato Driving Park Association. The Driving Park Association, the horseracing club, was the older of the two, "incorporated 1873". The first Mankato Fair of the Livestock Association was in 1884, it would seem. (Among other things, it sought to rival and possibly eliminate the County Fair at Garden City.)

(Continued on Page 3)

SIBLEY PARK DRIVING TRACK

The two organizations shared the "fair grounds", the level area adjacent to Sibley Mound, which was owned by the Fair Association. It seems to have been the site of the "driving track" used and maintained by the Driving Park club. In 1887 these grounds were sold to the City of Mankato and added to Sibley Park. The driving track continued to be used and improved, and the city was very proud of it.



This photograph of the Sibley Park Driving Track comes from a Park Souvenir book published by the Mankato Park Board in 1899. At the time, Henry Himmelman was a member of the City Council. He no doubt took considerable interest in the proper upkeep of the driving track!

(Continued on Page 4)

THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd.)

ARCHIVES SERVICE (Cont'd.)

Another search put "leaves on the family tree" for a German lady who came from Iowa: An ancestor, one Thomas Rieger, supposedly came to Mankato, acquired considerable property, and died here in 1885. She wanted to find out where he was buried and any other information that could be discovered. We were very pleased to find from a recent transcription made by Board member Dean Pettis that Thomas Rieger's headstone still exists in the "old Catholic cemetery" on North 6th Street. His name appears in a handwritten list of William Bierbauer's volunteer company which went to the defense of New Ulm during the Dakota Uprising of 1862. We also discovered that some property from his estate was sold to the parish of St. Peter and Paul.

ACCESSIONS

The Museum collections were augmented by a total of 43 gifts during the year. Artifacts constitute a larger proportion of all items received, compared to archival materials. As always, some individual donations are of single items; others include a number in one or both categories.

Archival items of particular interest are: a letter of R. D. Hubbard to the father of his first wife, written in 1888, an a formal engraved announcement of his marriage to Frank Griffith, October 7, 1878. Acquisitions relating to the history of the county include some records of the Judson Post Office and a Garden City Township assessment roll of 1908, records of the Mapleton Commercial Club, and materials on the Christian J. Laurisch family (Danville Township) and the Stephen and Katherin Small family (Belgrade Township and later Mankato Township.)

Among artifacts received were additions to our costume collection: a beaded cape dated 1893, Red Cross workers' uniforms of World War I, and several complete military uniforms for different ranks, from World War II. A number of toys of the 1930's represent a valuable addition to our collection.

(Continued on Page 4)

MANKATO RESIDENCES OF TWO FAMOUS SENATORS - A HORSE AND A MAN

Home of Famous Old Time Trotter Is Doomed



Formerly the home of a widely known race horse, Senator Wilkinson, the above pictured building, removed from the Mankato skyline, is now to give way to progress. The name of its famous occupant is still emblazoned on its side. The site will be used for other construction soon.

Senator Wilkinson Was Outstanding Race Horse

This decrepit shed, photographed in 1949 shortly before its destruction, was built at Second and Plum Streets by Henry Himmelman, to house his prize trotter, "Senator Wilkinson". This horse set a record of 2.13½ for the mile trot in competition at the Indiana State Fair September 14, 1897. This record stood for many years, and brought national recognition to "Senator Wilkinson", his owner and to Mankato.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd.)

EXHIBITS

The new display illustrating the history of "common school" education in Blue Earth County, located in the basement adjacent to our 1880's schoolroom, has been supplemented by a rare item: the diploma of Julia Hoerr, a member of the first graduating class of Mankato High School, dated June 2, 1881.

On the second floor, the collection of swords (formerly located in our present workroom) is now on display again, in the front hall. It includes sixteen different weapons, many with scabbards. They date from the mid-1800's to the early 1900's. Of particular interest is a short straight "Roman" sword, a service weapon used by the United States Navy and Artillery in the first half of the 19th century and during the Civil War. Ours is dated 1844.

The other Senator Wilkinson - Morton S. Wilkinson - was also a resident of Mankato for a time. He built the stone house on the corner of Broad and Liberty Streets (709 S. Broad, hidden behind the MVAC building), better known to Mankatoans as the Palmer House.

Wilkinson came to Mankato in 1858. Elected to the U. S. Senate in 1859, he was the first senator from the new state of Minnesota to hold this office. He served through the entire period of the Civil War. Among his autograph letters in our archives is one describing the funeral of President Lincoln, which he attended.

Wilkinson's subsequent political career in Congress and the Minnesota state legislature prevented him from being a permanent resident, but he kept possession of his house in Mankato until 1878. He is buried in Mankato's Glenwood Cemetery.

+ + + + +

(For Continuation on Henry Himmelman and Horse Breeding and Racing, go to Page 5.)

Items of local historic interest are a saber and a hunting sword which belonged to William Bierbauer, the saber said to have been carried at the defense of New Ulm; an officer's dress sword of the type used in the United States Army and also by officers of the State Militia, which belonged to Gustaf Widell when he served on the governor's military staff (early 20th century); and a Masonic ceremonial sword which belonged to Colonel George Mead, a Mankato veteran of the Civil War.

MEMBERSHIP

Eighteen new memberships, nine Annual and nine Life, bring the number of our Annual Members to 133, and Life Members to 209. Five Annual Patron memberships give us a total of 347, a difference of one from last year.

(Continued on Page 8)

Henry Himmelman was not the only breeder of trotting stock in the area. D. J.C. Curryer (Curryer & Sons), a veterinarian, offered "fashionable bred trotting stock" at his establishment at Lake Crystal and held annual auction sales there. His sixth such sale was in 1893. Curryer was also the publisher of a monthly tabloid magazine, the Minnesota Horseman, "devoted to the horse interests of the Northwest," according to its editor and publisher. It seems that its first year was 1889. We have a single issue, Vol. 3, No. 3, of May, 1892, in the Archives.

Advertisers in the Horseman were M. J. Jordan, owner of Bunker Hill Stock Farm, Mankato; N. P. Lee, also Mankato; C. H. Piper at Rapidan; Mitchell's Stock Farm at Madelia, and of course Henry Himmelman. The paper contained numerous advertisements from other places in the state and extensive correspondence on problems of breeding and training. Trainers also advertised in the Horseman. E. P. Rutan of Mankato was one.

The horse breeders associated with the Southern Minnesota Livestock and Fair Association held fairs and sales at Mankato separate from the general "Mankato Fair" in September. These horse fairs took place in June or July, and were well advertised in the Horseman and in the Mankato and county newspapers. The secretary of the Fair Association, George S. Pond, was apparently in charge of organizing them.



HIGH-CLASS HORSE POWER

This photograph, which probably dates from about 1890, shows John Halfhill posing with his matched pair of "Arabians" in front of George E. Keene's photograph studio, located at 803-805 S. Front Street. (The building no longer exists.) Halfhill was in Mankato in the mid-80's, and was an investor in the "new wholesale grocery business" of Patterson, Halfhill and Zimmerman, which opened in 1885. He and Patterson came from Ohio. Patterson remained in Mankato, while Halfhill seems not to have become a permanent resident.

He certainly had a driving rig of which he must have been proud !

DIRECTOR'S ROLLTOP (Cont'd.)

Victorian and appropriate for our Shop. We are most appreciative.

I expect to be gone for a time early in 1982 for hip surgery to take care of arthritic deterioration. It isn't quite my choice for the ideal vacation, but the results will be worth it. Margaret Jahr will be in charge during my absence, with able assistance from Jeanne Kress and Audrey Hicks.

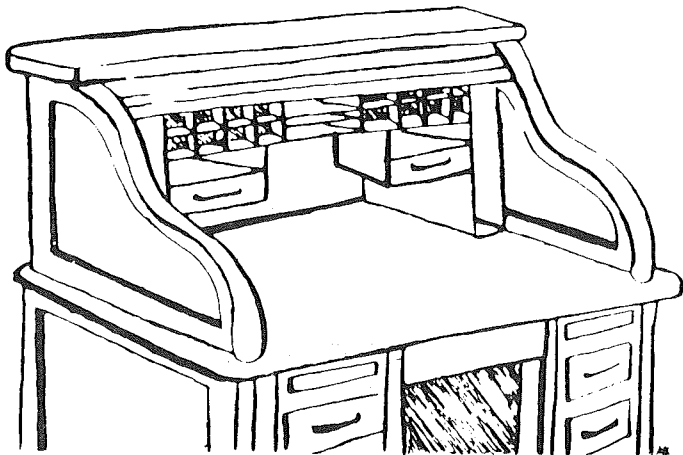
Our Museum Shop Bazaar was a great success again. The highlight of course was the presence of author John Koblas and his Voyageur Press publisher, Bob DuBois. Thank you one and all for your

cooperation. Evelyn Schmanski, Bazaar Tea Chair, has asked me to express her sincere appreciation for the donations of time, refreshments and enthusiasm which helped make the tea such a success. We couldn't do it without all of you.

Word has just come from Russell Fridley, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, that he has accepted our invitation to be the featured speaker at our Annual Meeting April 21.

Please think seriously about our resolutions, and make your own resolve to participate!

Marcia T. Schuster



Here are our New Year's Resolutions for the Historical Society:

1. Provide many more individuals the opportunity to share in preserving Blue Earth County's history, by signing up new members. Each member enroll a new member!
2. Increase contributions to the Society Endowment Fund to provide more interest earnings, designated for museum operations. It now totals just over \$4,000, invested to secure highest available interest rates.
3. Start the New Museum Building Fund to establish an adequate facility (supplementing the Hubbard House and the Carriage House) to provide services to all the citizens of this county. The County Commissioners have pledged to set aside an amount equal to the building funds we raise, whose interest will be used toward operating the new museum.

Each Society member is urged to participate in any or all of these projects, to provide major growth in all these areas.

This coming summer we will be privileged to have an intern from the Historical Administration Graduate Program at Eastern Illinois University. Denise Schmidt, who comes highly recommended, will spend three months here, and then probably three additional months with the Waseca County Historical Society. This is an excellent program and we will benefit much from her assistance. Her primary project here will be our display and services at the Agricultural Heritage Building at the Blue Earth County Fair. We hope to provide her with free housing. Will any of you need

a "house sitter" during the months of June, July and August? Please let me know.

We are pleased to have been approved for the loan of an older model 3M copy machine by the 3M Company. Rather than junking their old equipment, they have reconditioned it and are placing it at no charge in township offices, courthouses, and other non-profit organizations. The only requirement is that we buy their paper. Having our own copy facilities right here at the Museum will be a tremendous help to us.

KMSU Radio, at Mankato State University, has asked us to provide a short talk on some historical topic, the third Thursday of each month between 9:30 and 10:30 am. The first program was an interview with John Koblas, author of Sinclair Lewis: Home at Last. In December Arnold Meyer was interviewed about the history of the Caledonian Curling Club. Mike Scullin is preparing an exhibit at the Minnesota Valley Regional Library on the pottery found at the Price archaeological site in Cambria, and will talk about this on the January 7 program. In February, he will discuss another archaeological topic. Is anyone interested in doing one of these programs? Or do you have suggestions for topics? Please let me know.

A check for \$52 was received from the American Heritage Publishing Company in payment of our portion of the new subscription program. It has been deposited in the Endowment Fund. Thanks to all who subscribed.

Funds allotted to the Society by the County Commissioners from the 1981 Revenue Sharing Funds have enabled us to purchase a Bell and Howell rear-view projector. This will be invaluable for programs at the Museum and at the Fair. The Commissioners have allotted us \$1,500 from the 1982 Revenue Sharing Funds for Capital Improvement Items. We appreciate their confidence in us.

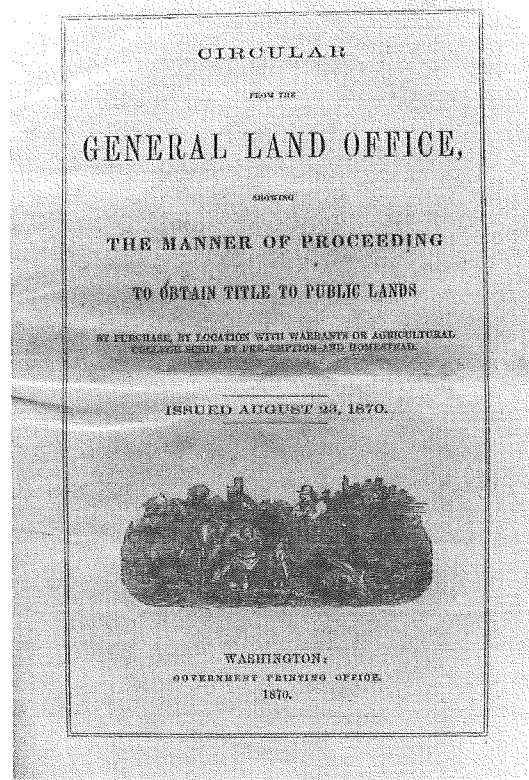
The Twilight Garden Club of Mankato, whose members take such good care of our flower beds in summer, have come up with another contribution for us. For our Bazaar, they made potpourris of many different scent combinations, and pomander balls, which provide us with a lovely spicy aroma. These are both typically

A RARE ITEM IN OUR ARCHIVES!!

This circular of the United States General Land Office, published in 1870, was among the "papers" of John A. Willard, given to the Historical Society many years ago.

Willard was one of Mankato's first businessmen, and was perhaps a more daring entrepreneur than the better-known R. D. Hubbard. His first interest was dealing in real estate, particularly public lands and land in the Winnebago reservation to which he acquired title. His most impressive achievement was the successful promotion of the railroad line between Mankato and Wells, completed in 1874. In the 1880's and 1890's he was a leader in banking and owner or investor in a number of enterprises: The Standard Fiber Ware Company, the Mankato Knitting Mills and the Willard and Polchow Brickyards, among others. Willard went bankrupt in 1897, and these businesses disappeared from the Mankato scene.

Recently, by chance, I noticed in a rare book dealer's catalogue a copy of this circular offered for sale, with the information that the National Union Catalogue lists only three known extant copies. This dealer had a fourth copy,



and the Blue Earth County Historical Society Archives has a fifth!!

Jeanne Kress
Staff Archivist

THE THANKS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TO: Contributors to the Endowment Fund:

American Heritage Subscription Program
Blanche Barnhart
William Carlson
Mary Schultz Gray *
Marion Hoffman *
Mr. & Mrs. Gary Kiffe **
Marcia T. Schuster
E. H. Wiecking **

* Life Membership
** Donor of Memorial

And

FOR: Memorials Received to:

Ed Cashman
Christine Nelson
Martha Wiecking Woodworth

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

ANNUAL: Ida Dodge
Darlene Janovy
LIFE: Mary Schultz Gray
Marion Hoffman

NEWSLETTER
of the
BLUE EARTH COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ATTENTION
SOCIETY MEMBERS!

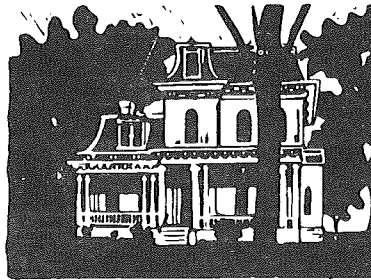
THE NEW YEAR
IS HERE

TIME TO RENEW
ANNUAL
MEMBERSHIPS

+ + + +

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

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



Address Correction
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THE YEAR IN REVIEW (Cont'd.)

ENDOWMENT FUND AND SPECIAL FINANCIAL GIFTS

Twenty-nine donations to the Endowment Fund were received and noted in the April Newsletter and at the Annual Meeting. Gifts since then bring the total to 35 for the year. The fees of nine life memberships and four undesignated memorials bring the total to 48 donations. The proceeds of the Society's subscription program to American Heritage magazine were also put into the Endowment Fund.

Special contributions from governmental bodies of the county numbered eight: from the Townships of Cambria, Judson, Mapleton, Medo and LeRay; the City of Madison Lake; the City of Mankato; and Independent School District # 77.

The total of memorial gifts for the year was forty-six.

SPECIAL EVENTS

In accordance with the policy of alternating between Mankato and other cities in the county, the Annual Dinner and Business Meeting of the Society was held at Norman's Cafe in Amboy on April 8. Ron Hobart's dramatic presentation, "The Spirit of the Voyageur", telling the story of his epic journey by canoe from Montreal to the Gulf of Mexico, was received with enthusiastic appreciation.

June was a busy month: The Annual Benefit Rummage Sale was held June 6. More donations than in previous years and the efforts of staff and Society Board and Member volunteers combined to make this a very successful sale.

June 13 Bert Burns conducted our Bus Tour to Fort Snelling and the historic Sibley and Faribault Houses in Mendota.

Participation in the Blue Earth County Fair at Garden City was considerably expanded this year. Our section in the Agricultural Heritage Building offered an extensive display of photographs, maps and artifacts illustrating the history of the county, as well as a large selection of items from the Museum Shop (for purchase). The film "When We Farmed with Horses" proved so popular that it was shown many times more than originally scheduled.

September 23 was the date of Supper with Samantha, our joint project with the YWCA, featuring Dr. Jane Curry's presentation, "Samantha Rattles the Woman Question".

The Annual Museum Shop Bazaar began November 1 with the traditional Sunday afternoon tea and sale. The special feature of the occasion was the presence of John Koblas, biographer of Sinclair Lewis, and his publisher, Robert DuBois of the Voyageur Press. The Bazaar continued through the following week, November 2 - 8.

The final event of the year was the Appreciation Dinner given by the Board of Trustees for the Museum staff members and their spouses on December 8 at the Hubbard House.

Jeanne Kress
Editor