

# The Blue Earth County **HISTORIAN**

WINTER 2024  
Vol. 30 No. 1



A Publication of the Blue Earth County Historical Society

# The Blue Earth County HISTORIAN

Winter 2024  
Volume 30, Number 1

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## COVER PHOTO:

Emily Farnum (far right) and two unidentified girls in front of the William and Edith Farnum home at 210 State Street, Mankato, 1916.

*The Blue Earth County Historian* is published quarterly for the members of the Blue Earth County Historical Society, a Minnesota nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

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# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By Nik Proehl, BECHS Board Chair

I hope this message finds you all in good spirits and health. As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I'm excited to share with you the recent developments and future plans that are shaping the direction of our beloved Society.

First, I'd like to announce that we have openings on our Board and we are actively seeking applicants who are passionate about our county's history and the Blue Earth County Historical Society. Your expertise and enthusiasm can greatly contribute to our mission. We welcome diverse perspectives and skills, so please consider applying or encouraging someone you know who may be interested.

I am also thrilled to extend a personal invitation for our Annual Meeting on March 2, 2024. It will be a wonderful opportunity to come together, discuss our progress, share ideas, and envision our future. Your participation and input are invaluable to us.

Regarding our BOLD Campaign, we've made significant strides, particularly with the controlled burn and demolition of the "parking lot house." This step was crucial in paving the way for our upcoming parking lot renovation in 2024 (pun intended). This renovation is not just about improving aesthetics; it's about enhancing accessibility and functionality for all our visitors. Therefore, setting the stage for a more inclusive and inviting History Center.

The parking lot renovation is merely the first step in a much larger vision. We are committed to expanding our reach, enriching our exhibits, and providing more engaging educational programs. These efforts aim to deepen our connection with the county and ensure that our history is preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Blue Earth County Historical Society. Together, we are making a meaningful impact on preserving our rich heritage and strengthening our community.

## Join the BECHS Board

The Blue Earth County Historical Society is currently seeking candidates to fill open seats on the Board of Trustees beginning March 2024. The Board of Trustees is the governing body which provides insight and direction for growth of the nonprofit organization.

The Board is currently seeking Blue Earth County individuals with strengths and skills in finance, fundraising, legal, facility management and human resources. The Board is seeking candidates from greater Blue Earth County. **Applications will be accepted until February 2.** Details at [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/About](https://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/About)





# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

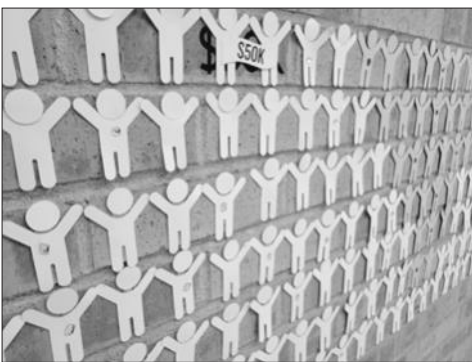
By Jessica Potter, Executive Director

Happy 2024! As you may have already heard and will read throughout this issue, we kicked off the new year with a History Center refresh. The floors were waxed, carpets cleaned and a lot of furniture moved. The Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery now has a boutique feel. New products will be added this year to give you yet another reason to visit.

The Museum has undergone the biggest change. The Front Street exhibit has been disassembled with parts, including the diorama, relocated to the main level near the Gift Shop. The new exhibit is called *Greetings from Blue Earth County's Main Streets*. Shelley will share details on page 9 including the news of what is coming next.

A few more updates for 2024 include new email addresses for staff (see page 15). Also, admission to the History Center and Hubbard House will bump up to \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 5-17. A new admission level of Senior (65+) will be \$8. As always, BECHS members and children under 5 will be free. This change will go in to effect on March 1.

Of course, the biggest update to come in 2024 is the parking lot and exterior enhancements. To say that I'm excited is an understatement. Besides the actual new parking lot surface, we are very excited about exterior lights. On these dark winter days, it will be so nice to have a bright and safe parking lot when leaving and for those attending



"The Power of One" campaign tracker at the History Center. Each person = \$250 and each gem = 1 commemorative brick.

evening programs. The construction company is ready to get started at the end of April. The campaign tracker at the History Center is titled "The Power of One" because every single person is

making a difference in this race to \$200,000 by April 1, 2024. Thank you to those of you who have already supported the parking lot project with your financial gift and/or by purchasing a brick. We are currently at 23% of the goal; only \$145,000 to go. BOLD Vision, BOLD Step, BOLD History Heroes!

# VOLUNTEERS MAKE HISTORY

Volunteers are truly the lifeblood of the Blue Earth County Historical Society. There is no aspect of work done at the History Center or Hubbard House that doesn't involve volunteers. **THANK YOU BECHS Volunteers for all you do!**

## NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### Newspaper Clipper

Seeking individual to clip the area newspapers for articles related to Blue Earth County. Newspapers and training will be provided. Time commitment: About two hours a week. Can be done at home or in the Research Center.

### Rental Host

As needed after-hours History Center Meeting Room Rental Host to greet and assist renters, stay on-site during the rental and lock-up when done. Typically, one after-hours rental per month. Time and day of the week vary.

### Tour Guide

Seeking individuals to lead group tours at the History Center and Hubbard House. Volunteers can specify student and/or adult tours and preferred site, if any. Tour guide training in April.

### Committees

Each BECHS Committee is made up of Staff, Board members and volunteers. Each committee is guided by the 2024 Strategic Work Plan. Here are committees seeking members:

- Facilities—long-term facility planning.
- Finance—financial oversight of organization.
- Development—annual fundraising strategies.
- Marketing—annual communication and marketing plans to raise awareness and visibility.
- Programs & Events—plan and execute programs and special events to promote and benefit BECHS.

Training is provided and schedules are flexible for all opportunities. If you are interested in these opportunities or volunteering in general, please contact Heather or sign-up at

**[BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Volunteer](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Volunteer)**

# NEW & NOTEWORTHY

## BECHS ANNUAL MEMBER'S MEETING

Calling all BECHS Members to join the Board of Trustees on Saturday, March 2, at 1 p.m. for the 2023 Annual Member's Meeting. The business meeting features the 2023 State-of-the-Society report from the Board and Staff, election of new Board members and a look ahead at 2024 projects and activities. The meeting will be held at Blue Earth County History Center. Self-guided tours of the building and new exhibits will follow the business meeting. The Annual Meeting and tour are free and open to BECHS members. Not a member? Join today and attend the meeting. Please RSVP to 507-345-5566 or Heather by February 28.

## KIDS STUFF NEEDS YOU



BECHS Staff is currently on the hunt for toys to feature in the

upcoming exhibit *Kid's Stuff* opening March 1, 2024. Nostalgic childhood treasures that have shaped generations of children's lives will be showcased and you can help. The BECHS collection is lacking recent toys from the 1960s through 2000s, because let's face it, in our minds our stuff cannot possibly be historic. Whether it's Star Wars, GI Joe, Barbie or Strawberry Shortcake, you are invited to lend your cherished toys and memories. This will help to transform the exhibit into a delightful journey through the history of play.

## AUTHOR SERIES

Join us monthly at the History Center for a featured Minnesota author talk. Books will be available for purchase. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 children, free for BECHS members and children under 5.

### JASON LEE WILLIS

#### *Tall Tales of Le Sueur*

Tuesday, February 20, 6 p.m.

Jason Willis, local author and former Maple River High School English teacher, will talk about his



children's book *Tall Tales of LeSueur*. The book brings to life Pierre Charles Le Sueur through some of the tall tales that have been written about him throughout history. According to Willis, he is "a storyteller at heart and not a historian. That said, I do have oodles of fun tidbits."

Willis grew up in South Dakota and currently lives in Southern Minnesota, where he lives the life of a hobbit by gardening, writing, walking around barefoot, wearing vests, fishing, and going on adventures with his wife Julie.

### RACHAEL HANEL

#### *Not the Camilla We Knew*

Saturday, March 30, 1 p.m.

Rachael Hanel, local author and professor will talk about her book *Not the Camilla We Knew* on at the History Center.

The 2022 nonfiction book "delves into the life of Camilla Hall, who was raised in rural

Minnesota by religious parents and died at 29 in a 1974 shoot-out between members of the Symbionese Liberation Army, the radical group that kidnapped Patty Hearst, and the Los Angeles police."

Hanel lives and writes just outside of Mankato. She is a former newspaper reporter and copy editor and teaches Creative Writing at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She is the author of more than 20 nonfiction books for children and two adult nonfiction books.



### JULIE JO LARSON

#### *100 Things to Do in Minnesota Before You Die*

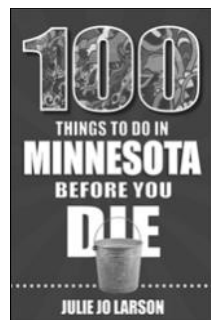
Saturday, April 20, 1 p.m.

Julie Jo Larson, Minnesota author, will share highlights from each section of her newest book *100 Things to Do in Minnesota*

*Before You Die*. Larson encourages readers to use the book "as a bucket list, guidebook, or cure for cabin fever. Grab a

friend or two, a copy of this book, and experience four seasons of great adventures where the journey is as meaningful as the destination."

Larson is an author, storycatcher, MsStorian, speaker and a licensed social worker in Northern Minnesota.



# EARLY MANKATO THEATERS AND MUSICIANS



Henry Udelhofen on trombone (far right) performing at the Grand Theater, c. 1930

By Isaiah Janz

Imagine it is a warm summer weekend evening. The week was filled with hard work, but now it's time for some entertainment at Mankato's premium musical venues. Downtown Mankato is buzzing with people and the sounds of bands performing, wafting out of the different venues as people walk by. Admission into these theaters is only thirty-five cents to be entertained by silent films accompanied by local bands. Or you could pop into a Vaudeville show put on by local musical families.

This was the scene of Mankato's silent and Vaudeville theaters towards the end of the 19th and the start of the 20th centuries. Some theaters were more elegant than others, but they all had the same purpose of entertaining Mankato's citizens. The theaters, the individuals behind such theaters and the people who enhanced their musical careers in these venues are deserving of having their stories told. Therefore, it is most appropriate to start with one of Mankato's earliest theaters, Harmonia Hall.

Harmonia Hall was built in 1872 by the German immigrant Harmonia Society. Harmonia Hall was constructed on a vacant lot between Hickory and Walnut Streets in downtown Mankato. It was built over a period of about two years and dedicated on Christmas Day, 1872. The local Mankato newspaper, *The Review*, reported a large turnout

of patrons for the event with the Harmonia Society, collecting around \$700 dollars in profit. Clearly, Mankato had an appetite for music. Even though Harmonia Hall would later burn down in 1882, this wouldn't stop the rise of musical bands and venues throughout Mankato.

The Mankato Theater opened immediately after the destruction of the old Harmonia Hall, on the same site, in 1883. It was constructed by Clarence Saulpaugh, whose family had recently arrived in town from Rock Island, Illinois. Saulpaugh managed the theater for a few years before eventually turning management over to Charles Griebel. The Saulpaugh family then opened the Saulpaugh Hotel in 1888 and management of the hotel become Clarence's full-time job. The Mankato Theater was later renamed the Orpheum Theater in the late 1920's and closed in 1928 due to mounting financial problems.

The Grand Theater opened in 1913, kicking off a wave of theater-going crowds that were intensely interested in "seeing a show." The Grand Theater was operated by Harry French, who had originally worked at the Wonderland Theater. Later French become the founding manager of the Minnesota Amusement Company. The company eventually purchased the Orpheum Theater and the Town Theater; making the entertainment company quite the area juggernaut with the number of theaters they owned.



Harmonia Hall was the type of music venue for more formal performances, with a proper stage and band that could accompany theatrical acts. However, around the turn of the 20th century Vaudeville shows became increasingly popular. The arrival of silent films in 1913 to Mankato theaters was ushered in by the opening of the Grand Theater. This only added to the live music scene in Mankato. This new entertainment helped other local theaters like the Mankato Theater and the newly opened Sandon Theater (later State Theater), attract large crowds of people on a regular basis.

Musicians could ask to "sit in" during a silent film showing and play a musical soundtrack to the moving pictures on screen. These bands usually consisted of four to seven people, though if a lot of musicians asked to "sit in", it could swell to as many as fifteen. These bands became known as "pit bands," named after the area of the stage where they played known as "the pit."

Some theaters, like the Sandon Theater, had their own in-house bands that played exclusively for them. The namesake of the Sandon Theater, the Sandon Brothers, was a well-known musical family who arrived in town from Jackson, Minnesota in 1912. The four Sandon brothers put on Vaudeville shows and took over operation of the Wonderland Theater (opened in 1908) for a couple of years immediately after their arrival in Mankato. The Wonderland Theater burned down, after which the Sandon brothers built their own namesake theater in 1914.

The Sandon and Grand theaters were particularly influential in introducing silent films to Mankato and began the transition from straight Vaudeville shows to a weekly mix of both silent film showings during the week and Vaudeville performances on weekends. Eventually, the Sandon brothers sold their theater to Harry French and his business associate Troy Himmelman in 1921. The new owners renamed the building the State Theater.

It was this era, from 1913 to the late 1920's, that was the "high point" for small theatrical band performances in Mankato. Some of the theaters like the Sandon didn't have any restrooms and used kitchen chairs for theater seating. One manager of the Sandon recalled that "the patrons regarded the movies as always good. In fact, the only measure of a good show was if the picture moved and the faster it moved the better." The spectacle of just seeing moving pictures,

accompanied by good music, was enough to make Mankato's theaters a roaring success. However, it would be these same moving pictures that would lead to some theaters' downfall, along with the job opportunities for the musicians they employed.

In the late 1920's, movies with sound (known as "talkies") began to appear. This led to a declining popularity for both silent movie theaters and Vaudeville shows (though Vaudeville performances didn't disappear completely at this point). This resulted in a drastic reduction in job opportunities for local musicians, with theaters cutting positions. Some theaters themselves went under, like the previously mentioned Orpheum Theater. Furthermore, the effects of the Great Depression also exacerbated the negative financial situation that both area theaters and musicians found themselves in.

But not all was bleak for area musicians, at least not for those who got creative with their musical talents and put those talents to good use. One of the Sandon brothers, known as R.C. "Cash" Sandon, did exactly that. He used his musical inclination to keep both himself and his family afloat during and after Mankato's "golden era" of theaters. Sandon opened a music store with business partner O.M. Anderson, dubbed the "Sandon-Anderson Music Co." Since its inception in 1922, the Sandon-Anderson music store worked to promote the development of local area bands, particularly by encouraging young people to pick up an instrument. This culminated in its sponsorship of an area band in 1923. Later Sandon used both his experience running two different theaters and his enthusiasm to get young people involved with music to create a successful post-theater career for himself as a high school music



Sandon Family Band, 1935.

instructor. Sandon and his children also traveled on the road in the 1930's playing for county fairs. As Sandon exemplifies, there were still opportunities for musicians to be successful even after the theaters closed and Vaudeville declined.

Even though most of Mankato's theaters would close by the late 1920's, the theaters and the musical components that accompanied such venues had far reaching effects with the lifelong love of music. R.C. "Cash" Sandon was able to create a successful musical career for himself and this love of all things musical extended to his niece, Frances Beneta "Bunny" Just. She got her first taste of music with a piano lesson at the age of three. At the age of twelve she started playing at her uncle's Sandon Theater, where she occasionally filled-in for the regular pianist. Just



Frances Beneta "Bunny" Just, c. 1950s

also began to perform for local concerts and events, eventually playing for a range of fairs, church functions, rodeos, and more. She performed not just in Mankato, but in at least five different states. In the early 1950s, she became involved with the KYSM radio show, "Magic Living," playing the music that was a core feature of the program. Later in her life, Just began working with disabled people in the Mankato area by playing music for the patients and teaching them how to dance. Even though Just had taught hundreds of students to play the piano over her lifetime, she wanted to make sure that hundreds more would have the opportunity to learn long after she was gone. Therefore, one of her final acts of humanitarian kindness, Just began the "Bunny Just Piano Festival" at Minnesota State University, Mankato in 1996. The festival provides a training opportunity for young pianists to learn from expert piano masters from across the country. Just passed away in 2004, after which her estate created an endowment to fund the Bunny Just Piano Festival for the next one hundred years.

Just was an extraordinarily kind person, whose connection to Mankato's silent and Vaudeville theaters early in her life, combined with her passion for piano, served as a launching pad for her widely successful musical career in Mankato. She inspired countless others to pursue their own musical ambitions.

Bunny Just wasn't the only Mankatoan who started their musical career in Mankato's theaters. Henrich (though mostly called Henry, Henri, or Heine) Udelhofen was another individual who had quite the musical career, thanks in part to his participation with several local Vaudeville and silent film theaters. Udelhofen was born in 1891 to a Mankato family that wasn't particularly interested in music. It came as a surprise to his family when he became interested first in the violin and then the trombone in his early childhood. Udelhofen joined Mankato's theater scene in 1908 at the age of 18, when he and a friend auditioned for the pit orchestra at one of Mankato's theaters. He eventually played in the pit band at the State Theater, as well as "strengthening" traveling bands that stopped at the Mankato Opera House. Udelhofen also began to get some experience with conducting some of these pit bands, foreshadowing his eventual musical hallmark.

While Udelhofen was playing in the theater pit bands, George Schwickert founded the Mankato Elks Band around 1920. The Elks Band at that point consisted mostly of



Elk's Band marching in Mankato parade, 1925.

violins and played at Elks Club Lodge meetings. The Elks Band's first director was William Sandon (from the same family who owned the Sandon Theater); however, it would be Udelhofen who would ultimately receive the most credit for turning the relatively small Elks Band into the local juggernaut that it would become. Udelhofen joined the Elks Band in 1922, the year the Elks Band played at the National Elks Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He continued to play for local Mankato theaters and the Elks Band for the next eleven years. In 1933, Udelhofen was elected the new band director for the Elks, kicking off a 40

-year career for him. Under his leadership, the Elks Band expanded to 30 members, eventually reaching a high point of 42 members by the mid-1950's. The Elks Band also began to march in parades and other local events, winning fifteen state marching band championships. Udelhofen directed the Elks Band for some 40 years, excluding a 5-year stint in the mid-1960's when Henry "retired," only to pick up the directors' baton again until 1973, when he finally retired for good.

He operated "Udelhofen and Sons Music Store" with his two children from 1933-1969. In addition, Udelhofen directed the Loyola Band, St. Cecilia's Choir at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church and the Madison Lake, Eagle Lake, St. Clair and Elysian city bands. Though Udelhofen passed away in 1991, the Elks Band lives on as the Mankato Area Community Band. In a similar fashion to Bunny Just, Henry Udelhofen made a huge impact on Mankato's musical scene throughout the decades. He helped to inspire generations of musicians through his hard work and persistence. Udelhofen truly earned the title "Mankato's Music Man."

As showcased, Mankato had a wealth of theaters and musicians. The theaters played an integral role in the social fabric of Mankato by shaping the local musical scene for decades. The local theaters left their mark through the legacy carried on by those they inspired like Bunny Just and Henry Udelhofen. Mankato has every right to be called a "musical city," which is something that was true one hundred years ago and still holds true today.

#### SOURCES

- BECHS Vertical Files and Archives

**About the Author:** Isaiah Janz was a BECHS Spring 2023 Intern studying History at Minnesota State University, Mankato.



### LOCAL HISTORY PODCAST

*Explore the history that surrounds us!*

New episodes air Saturdays at 11:05 a.m. on KTOE AM 1420/102.7 FM. You can find all previous episodes on our website at

**BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Podcast**

## MEMBERS MATTER

Member dues support BECHS programs, facilities, exhibits and preservation of Blue Earth County's past for future generations. In exchange for member support, enjoy a variety of benefits for BECHS members-only. Thank you!

### WELCOME NEW BECHS MEMBERS

November 1, 2023 - January 15, 2024

Becky Anderson  
Paul and Kathryn Durenberger  
Edward Inch and Belen Fernandez  
David and Darby Marsh  
Eric Steinmetz  
Elizabeth Westphal

### BECHS Member Benefits

- Free admission to the History Center, R.D. Hubbard House and Research Center for one year, plus free or reduced admission to most BECHS events.
- *The Historian*, quarterly publication.
- 10% off most items in the Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery, in store and online.
- One 30-minute Research Center search by Staff, a \$15 value.
- Annual Member's State-of-the-Society meeting.

Join or renew online at  
**BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Membership**

## Blue Earth County Historical Society

### ANNUAL MEETING

**Saturday, March 2 at 1:00 p.m.**

Blue Earth County History Center

Annual Member State-of-the-Society Meeting followed by History Center tours

**Registration is required to attend.**

**Please RSVP by February 28  
to 507-345-5566 or**

**Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com**



# COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITS

By Shelley Harrison, Collections Manager

Big changes have been happening to the History Center's exhibit spaces! First, we are pleased to present our newest exhibit on the main level called *Greetings from Blue Earth County's Main Streets*. Every city, town and hamlet in Blue Earth County has a "main" business street. It was a crossroads, marketplace and town center. Especially for small towns, it served as the focal point for commerce, business, social gatherings, and community engagement. But they are not all named "Main". In Mankato, the main business street was named Front Street. It's named Judson Fort Road in Judson and Parkway Avenue in Eagle Lake. *Greetings from Blue Earth County's Main Streets* is a celebration of the places, people, and stories that make main street so special.

A highlight of the exhibit is the diorama "Old Mankato Lives Again". This 12-foot model HO scale of Mankato's main street named Front Street depicts life between 1865 to 1895. It was built and donated by Orville and Mary Ann Jensen, Paul Hadley, and E. Winston Grundmeier. The colorfully painted buildings, Minnesota River and even the riverboat landing represent their original locations in Mankato at one time or another between the 1860s through the 1890s. However, they did not all exist at the same time as the diorama depicts. The



Diorama details

diorama was recently relocated from the Museum to the main level with the help of some great volunteers. It was fun to examine all the details

during the careful cleaning once it was moved.

Second, we've expanded our community art gallery spaces to include the second-floor hallway. The current two featured artists are Josh Guth and Randy Wood, both with a passion for photography.

Third, we are also refreshing the Museum. Some of the displays are being updated with new artifacts. Other displays will be moved to tell new stories, such as the upcoming exhibit *Kid's Stuff*:

*Great Toys from Our Childhood*, opening March 1. More than 100 of the best-loved and most fondly remembered toys of the 19th and 20th centuries will be featured in the exhibit including Mr. Potato Head, Fisher Price Little People, rocking horses and play kitchens. Revisit the great toys of your childhood in this cool new exhibit coming soon.

Until then, check out the Discovery Lab which has moved to the barn. This new space remains a hands-on

history spot, which is sure to delight and engage children of all ages.

The former Discovery Lab space will take



Brendan Hammers enjoying the new Discovery Lab.

on a whole new look in the months to come, but that's a little secret for now (intrigued aren't you).

I personally invite you to visit the History Center to see all the fabulous work that's been done so far to update and refresh our exhibit spaces.

BLUE EARTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# KID'S STUFF

## TOY EXHIBIT AT THE HISTORY CENTER

OPENING MARCH 1, 2024

# GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY

By Heather Harren,  
Communication/Events Manager



Over winter break the Gift Shop and Marian Anderson Art Gallery were refreshed. It could just be me, but the space seems bigger. Stop by and let us know what you think and if you have ideas for new products we should offer.

With this shop refresh, we are also taking an opportunity to refresh our inventory. Many items in store are now on sale for 50% off. These limited quantity items are marked with a green tag and on sale until they're gone. Some of the sale items include *St. John's Bible Folios* (sale price \$20), BECHS tote bag (sale price \$5) and many other items.

Not included in the sale, but great for these cold winter days are the many items available year-round. Enjoy learning more about local history through *The Blue Earth County Historian* volumes 1 - 3 (\$14.95 each). Send notes with a Marian Anderson note card pack (\$7.50/pack) or try a new recipe with a new cookbook! We look forward to seeing you soon.

## Book Your Next Special Event, Meeting or Gathering with BECHS



The Blue Earth County History Center meeting rooms and the Hubbard House Grounds have a number of rental options perfect for your next gathering.

Visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Rentals](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/Rentals)  
for more information and rates.  
Contact the History Center for availability.

# NEW ART EXHIBITS

The History Center will now host two community artists each quarter with exhibition space on each floor. Both exhibits are free and open to the public until March 31, 2024.

## Liz

by Josh Guth  
A Photography Exhibition

"Liz is a photo collaboration by myself and wife, Liz Burnett-Guth. While photographing Liz, I draw inspiration from music and musicians such as Fleetwood Mac, Volbeat, Meat Loaf, Halestorm, and many others. Liz's understanding of emotions depicted in the lyrics and ability to match my vision helps strengthen the narrative in each image. I use dark and evocative imagery to tell stories of my own emotions and mental state; simultaneously, the imagery reminds me of songs used to escape the negative thoughts that consume me. I have been told my music taste is depressing, yet there is so much beauty to be found in the lyrics and instrumentals. I've set out to show that same beauty with this narrative of imagery." The 13 piece exhibit is on display in the History Center meeting rooms.



## A Passing: The Vanishing Family Farm

By Randy Wood  
A Photography Exhibition

*A Passing: The Vanishing Family Farm* captures the loss of small family farms as they disappear from our landscape. Randy's photographs catch a glance at the once vibrant, but now vanishing rural life. The 21 piece exhibit is on displayed in the History Center 2nd floor hallway.



## SPRING FEATURED ARTISTS:

Rochelle Koberoski - Printwork  
Kyle Seys - Photography



# AMERICAN LEGION COMMANDERS ONLINE COLLECTION

By Bri Krumwiede, Archivist

The Research Center houses a collection of portrait photographs of American Legion Lorentz Post 11 Commanders. These images have been scanned and uploaded online along with a brief history of each commander. Explore this online collection and read stories about each commander including the first commander, WWI and WWII veteran Frank E. Morse.



Frank E. Morse, 1919

Morse was born and raised on his family's farm in Mankato Township. He attended school in Tivoli and graduated from Mankato High School before attending Carleton College and the University of Minnesota Law School. He was admitted to the State Bar in 1915.

He returned to Mankato and began working for S.B. Wilson

before establishing his own practice in 1917, shortly before enlisting in the military. He then served in WWI until the end of the war, at which time, he returned to Mankato and continued practicing law.

Morse helped organize American Legion Lorentz Post 11 and was its first commander in 1919. He later served as State Commander from 1938-1939, as well as State Chairman of the Legion Child Welfare Committee.

Morse grew his career in law and served as Blue Earth County Attorney from 1923-1931. During this time, he handled 3,192 cases and obtained 2,823 convictions. He also served as a Judge of Probate and Juvenile Court, and remained a Reserve Officer until he was called to active duty again in 1942.

During WWII, Morse was the Chairman of the Mankato Civilian Defense Council and a Government Appeal Agent for Selective Service Board No. 2. Morse spent time in Germany during the war and remained there for three years after, where he served as a Judge and Defense Attorney with the Nuremberg Trials. He was honorably discharged in 1949.

In addition to his military service and legal career, Morse was also involved in the community as a Boy Scouts Scoutmaster and member of Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Masonic Lodge. He died in 1972.

View the collection online at [mncollections.org](http://mncollections.org) under "Blue Earth County Historical Society — Archival Collections". This project was possible thanks to the hard work of Aidan Ellickson who was one of our Fall 2023 interns from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

## IN MEMORIAM

*In Memory of Dr. William E. Lass*

Penny Banwart  
Katherine Hughes  
Barbara Larson  
Tim Solie

*In Memory of Shirley Fitzloff*

Peter DeMars  
Judith Halberg  
Terri Loeffler  
Katherine Loge  
Tony and Pat Staloch  
Joyce Weibusch

*In Memory of Roger Norland*

John and Leslie Madison  
Barbara McCabe  
Merri Jo Miller  
Gail Norland  
Beverly Norland  
Stephen and Wendy Osman

*In Memory of Elisabeth Reinke*

Diane and Paul Hallgren  
Charles and Gayle McGriff  
Susan and William Powell  
Carole Richter  
Penny and Jeffery Walton

**Thank You for these memorial gifts to the  
Blue Earth County Historical Society**

# THANK YOU BECHS DONORS & SUPPORTERS

November 1, 2023 - January 15, 2024

## DONORS

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*\*Monthly Recurring Donors; Sign-up Today!*



# BOLD VISION, BOLD STEP, BOLD HISTORY HEROES

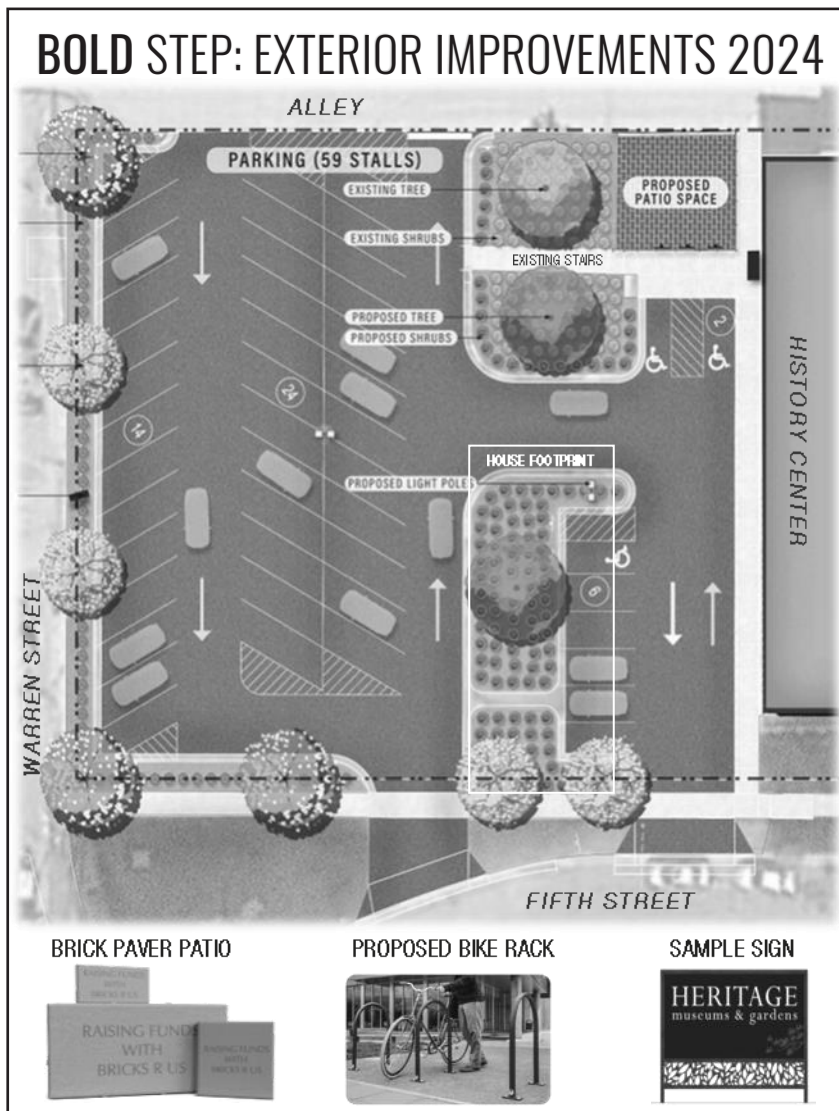
Only three months until construction begins on the new History Center Parking Lot! This project has been in the works for a decade and will impact decades to come. The new parking lot will include:

- Increased parking with eight spots at the same grade as the main entrance making the parking lot more accessible.
- Entrance to the parking lot from South 5th Street; currently the only entrance is off the alley.
- Installation of parking lot lighting for History Center and neighborhood safety.
- Beautification projects like extension of our native pollinator gardens, outside gathering space with new commemorative brick patio, bike racks, public art and monument sign on Warren Street.

The Parking Lot and Exterior Improvements project is budgeted at \$360,000. Thanks to generous History Heroes over the past three years, and careful stewardship of those donor dollars, we need to raise just \$200,000 to be able to start the project in April 2024.

Since November 1, 2023, History Heroes have contributed close to **\$55,000 in the race to \$200,000!** (THANK YOU!) There's still time for your contribution to make a difference today.

We need **BOLD HISTORY HEROES** like **YOU!** Take a **BOLD STEP** today for future generations! For questions about the overall project or how to get a free brick, please contact Jessica Potter.



## COMMEMORATIVE BRICK PROGRAM

You are invited to be part of history in the making. In fact, you can memorialize your family name, organization or business in Blue Earth County history while supporting the

Society's important mission to preserve, protect and share our local history with our new commemorative brick program. The commemorative bricks will be placed in the new patio/outdoor gathering space at the History Center. Funds raised will support the Parking Lot project and future capital improvement projects.

Choose from two brick sizes (4x8" and 8x8"), each includes your personal inscription. Customize and Order your Brick at [www.BricksRUs.com/DonorSite/BECHS](http://www.BricksRUs.com/DonorSite/BECHS) or contact us at the History Center.



### 4 EASY WAYS TO GIVE



**Mail a Check** to BECHS, 424 Warren St., Mankato, MN 56001



**Donate Online** at [www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/DONATE](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com/DONATE)



**By Phone.** Call 507.345.5566 to make a gift via credit card or to pledge a gift.



**Buy a Memorial Brick** at [www.BricksRUs.com/DonorSite/BECHS](http://www.BricksRUs.com/DonorSite/BECHS)

# KIDS CORNER: PICTURING THE PAST

Just like today, people from the past took pictures to remember fun times and special people. Today, we use those photographs to learn about life from long ago. Have you ever seen a photograph of your parents or grandparents when they were kids? Here are some pictures of kids from long ago!



Top: Jones Family children riding a sled, Christmas 1909.

Right: Omar Collis and Windslow Granlund, Garden City, around 1930.

Bottom: Four unidentified girls on a goat-drawn cart, 1913.



## Did You Know?

When cameras were first invented, they were expensive and hard to operate. In the 1880s, cameras were becoming more popular, less expensive and easier to use. In 1900, a camera called the Brownie was made for kids.



These cameras weren't digital like today's cameras. They used film. That meant you couldn't see your pictures right away. After you took all your photos, you then took the film to a special photo shop to have the photos printed. This was the first time you saw the image!

## NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

With your camera, or the help of an adult, take pictures of these 10 things. Then have the pictures printed and make them into your own picture book. Include the date and then next year, you can take new pictures and see how things have changed!

1. My home
2. My family
3. My friends
4. My favorite toy or book
5. My favorite food
6. Something or someone I love
7. Something that is my favorite color
8. My favorite place to visit
9. My school
10. Me

## BECOME A PHOTOGRAPH DETECTIVE

Photographs tell us a lot about the past. Look closely at the photo on the front cover and answer the questions below. Discover how much you can learn from just one photo!

1. Describe what you see in the photo \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What season is it? How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is this family's pet? How can you tell it's a pet? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two of the girls are holding \_\_\_\_\_?

### Answers

1. House, 3 girls, snow, boots, hats, coats, etc. 2. Winter—there's snow 3. Dog, dog collar with a tag 4. Dolls



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February – April 2024

## FEBRUARY

National Black History Month

- 10 **Family Day at the History Center**, Hands-on History fun for the whole family with Free Museum Admission and special hands-on Valentine's Day activities.
- 17 **History Program: Blue Earth County's Main Street - Mankato**, 1 p.m. Discover the history of Mankato's Front Street.
- 20 **Author Series: Jason Lee Willis, *Tall Tales of Le Sueur***, 6 p.m. \$ (see page 4)

## MARCH

National Women's History Month

- 1 **Exhibit Opening: *Kid's Stuff: Great Toys from Our Childhood***  
Take a step back to your own childhood and relive the nostalgia of the past through this new great exhibit.
- 2 **BECHS Annual Member's Meeting**, 1 p.m. Please RSVP to Museum@BlueEarthCountyHistory.com by 2.28.
- 9 **Family Day at the History Center**, Hands-on History fun for the whole family with Free Museum Admission and special hands-on St. Patrick's Day activities.
- 16 **History Program: Blue Earth County's Main Street - Mapleton**, 1 p.m. Discover the history of Mapleton's main street.
- 30 **Author Series: Rachael Hanel, *Not the Camilla We Knew***, 1 p.m. \$ (see page 4)

## APRIL

- 13 **Family Day at the History Center**, Hands-on History fun for the whole family with Free Museum Admission and special hands-on Spring activities.
- 20 **Author Series: Julie Jo Larson, *100 Things to Do in Minnesota Before You Die***, 1 p.m. \$ (see page 4)
- 23 - **National Volunteer Appreciation Week**; watch for fun ways
- 27 BECHS honors our volunteers!

*All programs will be held at the History Center and are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. \$ = fee charged*

**For more information, to register or purchase tickets, visit [BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)**

BLUE EARTH  HISTORICAL  
COUNTY SOCIETY

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## **BECHS STAFF**

### **New Email Addresses**

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Manager  
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**Bri Krumwiede**  
Archivist  
Bri@  
BlueEarthCountyHistory.com

**History Center**  
507.345.5566

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Membership  
Expiration Date

## PLAN YOUR VISIT



**HISTORY CENTER: MUSEUM, RESEARCH  
CENTER, GIFT SHOP & ART GALLERY**  
424 Warren Street, Mankato  
507-345-5566  
Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.



**R.D. HUBBARD HOUSE**  
606 S. Broad Street, Mankato  
507-345-4154  
Closed until May 24, 2024

### ADMISSION

\$10 Adults \$8 Seniors (65+)  
\$5 Children 5-17  
BECHS Members and  
Children under 5 FREE



Proud Participating Museum

### VISIT US ONLINE

[www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com](http://www.BlueEarthCountyHistory.com)



## SPECIAL EXHIBITS



*Greetings from  
Blue Earth  
County's Main  
Streets*



*Liz  
by Josh Guth  
A Photography  
Exhibit*



*A Passing:  
The Vanishing  
Family Farm  
By Randy Wood  
A Photography  
Exhibit*