Cemeteries of Mower County

Are you fascinated by old cemeteries OR scared to death?

The Mower County Historical Society & The Hormel Historic Home and planning another cemetery tour. This time, we will be exploring Red Oak Grove, Lansing, and Greenwood cemeteries in rural Mower County.

The bus will leave from the MCHS parking lot promptly at 1:00pm on Sunday, October 21, 2018. The tour is expected to take around two hours. Ticket prices are $10 each for HHH or MCHS members or $15 for non-members. Space is limited for this tour, so please reserve your spot today by calling the Hormel Historic Home at 507-433-4243 or visit www.hormelhistorichome.org. Advance ticket purchase is required.

Don’t miss this opportunity to explore rural Mower County on a guided tour. You never know what will be discovered OR who we might dig up!
A Note from the Director:
Reflections of the Department Store
By Randal J. Forster, Executive Director

On August 30, 2018, Younkers department store closed its doors. Bon-Ton, its parent company was forced to liquidate all stores (Bergner's, Bon-Ton, Boston Store, Elder-Beerman, Bon-Ton, Herbergers, and Younkers) after filing for bankruptcy earlier this year.

It seemed like only yesterday when the department store first opened in Austin, however that was nearly 60 years ago! The photo below shows the Iowa based department store chain celebrating its “Grand Opening” at the Sterling Shopping Center with a luncheon in 1958. Younkers later moved to Oak Park Mall in 1975 when the NEW Mall was built. In the winter of 2018 the store became free-standing when Hy-Vee bought the mall and constructed their new grocery store.

On a personal note, I dedicated 23 years working for Younkers. I started my career at the London Square Mall in Eau Claire, WI. I also worked in Appleton, WI and Duluth, MN before I became the Store Manager in Austin in 2003. As I reflect on the good old days of retail, before shopping online became the norm, I still remember decorating Christmas trees in September, unpacking boxes & boxes of sweaters, opening the day After Thanksgiving at 7am and wrapping gifts. Yes, gift wrapping services use to be a real thing and the bows were so very pretty!

Shopping at a traditional department store has obviously evolved over the years. One thing that remains the same, shoppers will always hunt for the best bargain AND people will always want to use a coupon!

“All good things must come to an end”

I will always the remember the people I worked with and especially the great food we shared during numerous pot-lucks for special occasions over the years. No one ever went hungry when you worked at Younkers!

What does the future hold for retail in Mower County? Who knows… Guess we will wait and see what’s in store.
Upcoming Events

October 8 6:00pm
History Happy Hour
Hormel Historic Home
“Dialogue with Walt Whitman”
by Terry Mesch

October 12 9:00am-4:00pm
October 13 9:00am-2:00pm
Holiday Vintage & Antique Sale
Pioneer Building - MCHS

October 21 1:00-3:00pm
Rural Cemetery Tour
“Cemeteries of Mower County”
Tour starts at the Historical Society
$10 for Members &
$15 for Non-Member
www.hormelhistorichome.org

October 25 12:00 Noon
Lunchbox History Series
Pioneer Building - MCHS
“The Vietnam Experience”
by Al Smith

November 7 7:00pm
Regular Board Meeting of MCHS
Administration Building

November 12 6:00pm
History Happy Hour
Hormel Historic Home
“National Register of Historic Places”
- History in your backyard”
by Denis Gardner

November 22 & 23 CLOSED
MCHS office closed for Thanksgiving

December 7 3:00-6:00pm
Christmas in the County
Pre-Sale Bake Sale

December 8 11:00am-4:00pm
Christmas in the County
The Main Event
Raffle Drawing at 3:00pm

December 10 6:00pm
History Happy Hour
Hormel Historic Home
“Christmas Past”
by Local Historians

December 25 Christmas Day

SAVE THE DATE

Special THANKS to everyone who helped make our Annual Fall Harvest Celebration a success!

Many folks enjoyed the horse drawn wagon rides at MCHS during the Fall Harvest Celebration on Saturday September 22, 2018.

Judy Laskevitiz doing a little face painting at the Fall Harvest

Jodi Wambeck & Avery Medgaarden straining the fresh apple cider.

Glenn Medgaarden estimated that they crushed 22 bushels of apples during Fall Harvest, producing 70 gallons of cider!

Goodies at the Fall Harvest Bake Sale

Thank you

Fall 2018 page - 3
A Message from the President
Barb Lewis, President of the MCHS

Christmas in the County is just around the corner!

I know I am rushing the season, but this newsletter is my chance to share some history and hopefully get you excited AND ready to bake! It is hard to believe the time has come to start planning for one of the biggest events of the year for the Mower County Historical Society.

Christmas in the County started in 2005 and it is now 2018! I was involved at the beginning when the event included the Cookie Sale in the Administration Building, activities for children in the Fire Hall, the Silent Auction in the Collections Building, a movie and hot chocolate in the Depot. Attendees also blew the whistle on the 1004 and ate Diana Witt’s famous chili. Don Konken was there with his horses; the Smith mules were there as well as Witts’ horses and Gordy Hjelmen’s miniature horses. The Silent Auction consisted only of decorated Christmas wreaths. “Those were the days!” That is your history lesson for today.

The Historical Society continues with Christmas in the County 2018!
The Cookie Sale has gotten bigger and better every year because of all the great bakers who share their talent for our sale.

We are always looking for more bakers, so if you can help with baking Christmas cookies, candy, krumkake, lefsa, or other traditional foods for the Holidays, please call the office at 437-6082 or me at 433-4983 (leave a message) and let us know what you are willing to bring! We are always looking for gift certificates and other items for silent auction baskets or baskets ready for the silent auction. We can always use more volunteers to help at the event.

We have a fantastic list of items on the Raffle Drawing this year, so be sure to buy your tickets. They are available from any board member OR by stopping by the office.

Hope to see you at Christmas in the County & Merry Christmas!

2018 Christmas in the County Raffle Prizes
1. Handmade Quilt 81 x 97 by Virginia Bissen
   Civil War Reproductions
2. Winemaker’s Tour at Four Daughters Winery
3. $100 Old Mill Restaurant
4. $100 Weis Landscaping
5. $50 Olde Tyme Antiques
6. $50 ArtWorks Center
7. Massage Reeve Chiropractic
8. Dairy Association Basket
9. $25 Kenny’s Oak Grill
10. Bubble’s Pies (2 prizes)
11. Patriotic Barn Quilt 4’ x 4’
12. Hardy Geranium Gift Basket
13. Perkins Gift Card
14. Spa Day for your Car
15. Camping Gear Basket
16. Membership to MCHS
AND MUCH MORE!!!

Do you have your Raffle Ticket?
Tickets are $1.00 each - See any Board Member for details.
Drawing will take place on Saturday December 8th at 3pm

*All proceeds benefit the Mower County Historical Society, a 501 © (3) non-profit organization*
The Davis brothers always have a fun time working in the Blacksmith Shop during the fair.

Mike Van Pelt drives a 1936 John Deere Model B and gives Gene Anderson a ride in the parade at the Mower County Fair.

Barb Lewis, president of MCHS and Randy Forster, Executive Director, unveil the Collections Building during the dedication ceremony on Friday, August 10, 2018.

THANKS to all our Fair Volunteers!!!

Celebrating 63 years together!
On the left, LaVerne and Norma Hoffman & on the right, Vernon and Margaret Hoffman visit during the Fair to celebrate their 63rd Wedding Anniversary.

The Hoffman twins and the Calkins sisters were married in a double ceremony on August 7, 1955 in the little Kehret Chapel that stood west of Austin on the Carl Kehret farm. The brothers were farmers when they met the sisters, who were teachers. After their wedding, they raised their children within a few miles of each other, working together throughout the years.
Edna Hill Remembered
By Sue Doocy, Research & Archives Manager

On August 18, the Mower County Historical Society held a *Celebration of Life* for Edna Hill in the Pioneer Building. Edna passed away Saturday, June 30, 2018, and we wanted to honor our friend.

Edna was born in England in 1927, “across the pond,” she occasionally said, she had survived the trials of World War II in England. One time, she recalled that when the air raid sirens sounded and while she and her family sought cover, she had severely injured her leg.

In 1985, she immigrated with her husband and younger son to America following their oldest son. Edna and Lionel owned and operated the Railway Café in Hayward until Lionel passed away. At the age of 62, she learned how to drive a car and obtained her driver’s license. She moved to Austin and began working for the Mower County Historical Society as Museum Assistant around 1993 as a temporary employee, and in June 1994, she was hired on by the historical society. In addition, she became a US citizen in 1999.

The historical society is where Edna led tours to show children and adults alike what a chamber pot and a nightcap were, and where children attended a one-room schoolhouse to learn to write on a blackboard slate with chalk and recite their lessons. She showed how the Austin Daily Herald published newspapers with the linotype machine, and then, allowed children to try on hats that were once worn every day by men and women, not just on Easter Sunday. Many of her student tours ended in a group hug.

Edna loved her work, gathering vital statistics and announcements from the newspapers and assisting researchers who wanted to know about their ancestors. She cleaned and set up exhibits in the spring and before the fair. Edna was curator, tour guide, research manager and archivist, and she knew every corner and every object in the collection. She taught friends and volunteers to care for objects while setting up displays, gathering information and helping with events. She made many friends as more people learned about the work at the historical society.

In brainstorming for fundraising ideas, Edna came up with the Teddy Bear Picnic, Spring Bonnet Tea and assisted with Fall Harvest and Christmas in the County activities. She loved working with children showing them how to churn butter or make pinecone bird feeders, donning a hat and apron.

I worked with Edna as a volunteer and researcher for several years, before I hired on, and her knowledge of the county was amazing. She not only enjoyed working with her volunteer friends, she led by example, and enjoyed volunteering at Pickett Place, too. Her devotion to friends and family was genuine. If you needed a hand with anything or a place to stay, she was there, lending her support and skills. She had wit and a great sense of humor. She joked with friends and played a prank or two.

One very long, cold winter, Edna wished for spring nearly every day. She came in one Tuesday morning and said she had found spring over the weekend! She set a pen spring down on my desk and said, “It was buried in the snowbank in my driveway.” She dug it out! Spring had finally arrived, in jest, anyway.

In England, cookies are biscuits, and biscuits are cookies, she explained to me once, and she used a knife to eat with rather than the fork. She used the fork to push food onto the knife. Another time, she explained how her friends from England nearly came unglued when she turned right on a red stoplight. In England, drivers did not turn on a red light, ever!

Edna was the “cookie lady” who invited bakers to lend their talents to raise money for MCHS fundraising events. She took her grandchildren on special trips to England to show them where she had grown up. She invited her friends and family to the historical society to see the treasures of days gone by, and the joy of volunteering to help a worthy cause.

Every year, Granddaughter Jenny Hill and Edna demonstrated butter churning for visitors at Fall Harvest, sharing a sample with crackers.
Thank You

To everyone that donated to our Annual Donation Appeal

Judy Laskewitz, Jim & Milly Burroughs, Sue & Vern Grove, Kimberly Volna,
Pat Kitchings, Tim & Diane Gabrielson, Norman & Shirley Bergman, Robert & Marry Kuhlman,
Romona Swenson, Robert & Marlene Hanson, Austin Builders Supply Inc., Tradexpos Inc.,
Lillian Fetterly, United Farmers State Bank, Valerina Maloney, Frank & Judy Gerlach,
Sheldon & Ruth Lukes, Joyce Brown, Mary Keyon, LeeAnn & Jeff Ettinger, Kenny’s Oak Grill,
Gary & Pat Ray, Larry Pfeil, Medgaardens’s Southwest Sales, Inc., Judith Brown, Pat & Marvin Miner,
Richard Flisrand, Craig & Nancy Welken, Robert & Colleen Weimer, James Stanley, Charlie Luthe,
Jim Weber, LaVerne Felten, Dan Hoffman, Farmers & Merchants State Bank, Peggy & Dick Benkofer,
Anonymous, Larry Larson, Anonymous, Anonymous, Ulven’s Hardware, Anonymous, Nelly Croes,
Greg & Lynne Larson, Pat Sorenson, Woody & Marilyn Vereide, LaVonne Griffin, Arlene Bednar,
Chris & Cathy Roser, Theresa Wolff, Cooperative Response Center, Inc. Janis C. Frid,
Thomas & Barbara Laska, InnoVision Eyecare, Peggy Keener, Vicky King, Bremer Bank,
Steven Venenga, Mike & Ruth Biedermann, Bob Brinkman, Tim & Bonnie Rietz, Brain Beckstrand,
Laura Helle & Matt Stobaugh, Chad & Laura Sayles, Belita Schindler, Anonymous, James Hunting,
Paul Persons, Duwayne & LaVonne Skov, Randy & Wendy Kramer, Fox Electric, DiEtte M. Marx,
Shirley Watt, Clair Allen, Charlotte Winslow, Donn Sandell, Home Federal Savings Bank, Mary Crandall,
Lavonna Johnson, Steve Binder, Florence Hagstrom, Mary Wolcott, Bev Meyer, Mary Lou Hainer,
Max & Marlys Minnich, Yvonne B. Lee, Dorothea Guiney, Greg & Amy Baskin, Dean & Harriet Ulland,
Ardis Jensen, Kathleen Hart, Jerry & Mary Keenan, Tim Ruzek, Wayne & Gerry Rustad,
Joe & Cindy Fuhrman, Heartman Insurance, Ken & Gloria Trom, Betty O'Brien, Akkermann Inc.
Susan Logas, Linda Felten, Gayle & Lavonne Bergstrom, Joyce Peterson, Colette Chaffee,
Loren Christgau, Grand Meadow American Legion Post #140, Bill & Linda Boe,
Garry & Sharon Ellingson, Elizabeth Gallanis, Lois Hesla, Mitch Helle-Morrissey, Jeanne Poppe,
Gregory & Nadeen Olson, Don & Darlene Austin, Bill Schlicting, Sue & Robert Bailey,
Paul Anderson, Alice Holst, Linda Johnson, Gene & Marilyn Muchow, Robert Finneseth,
Jeff & Kathy Helle, Lawrence & Suzanne Fuller, Richard & Sue Quam

We reached our $10,000 Goal. What an accomplishment!
Your contributions will help with general operating expenses and
historic preservation, which will ensure that YOUR Historical Society can
continue to focus on its mission.

To discover, collect, preserve and share… Mower County...

Thank you for your support!
Collections Corner:
The Circus is Coming to Town!
By: Jaimie Timm, MCHS Curator

It has been many years – decades even – since the traveling circus came to Austin. However, the circus was an exciting and constant source of entertainment for early Austin residents beginning in the mid-1800’s. From the 1870’s through the 1930’s and 1940’s, one or more traveling circus shows visited Austin and the surrounding area each summer. Sometimes, several shows visited in one summer. The arrival of a circus (usually by train) was the cause of great excitement and happiness. The circus usually set-up on the county fairgrounds and thousands flocked to see the afternoon or evening show before the circus flew out of town as quickly as they arrived. According to newspaper articles, most of the circus shows only stayed in town a day or a day and a half.

Thanks to the circus diorama created by William Tyrer and donated by his family in the early 1990’s, the circus is ALWAYS here at MCHS! For a long time, visitors could find the circus in the Board Room in our Administration Building. However, the time has come for the circus to find a new home.

The William Tyrer Wild Animal Circus can now be found in the Fire Museum! Vern Grove and Jim Burroughs built a wonderful new platform for the diorama. MCHS also purchased new shelves to help organize and create a new display that includes photographs of when the circus came to Austin over the years. We hope you enjoy the new display!
Collections Spotlight: Jadeite Glass

A popular item with collectors is jadeite glassware, originally manufactured from the 1930’s-1970’s. Although it is most often associated with kitchen items like bowls, measuring cups, plates, coffee cups, canisters, etc. it was also used to make all kinds of housewares, including lamps, furniture pulls, and jewelry.

McKee Glass Company is actually considered to have “discovered” jadeite in 1932 by adding green glass scraps to their milk glass formula. There was no formal quality control, so many different shades of green were created. McKee called it “Skokie” green or “jade” green which then became known as “jadeite.” Jeanette Glass Company was another glass company that manufactured a green milk glass which they called “jadite.” Later on, Anchor Hocking made a “Jade-ite” green version of their Fire-King glassware. No matter the manufacturer, jadeite/jadite was originally intended to be a durable and pretty everyday glassware. Because of this, many original pieces still survive today.

Companies used creative marketing techniques to encourage women to buy and collect jadeite. Often, pieces of jadeite would be slipped into packages of different products to encourage people to buy more of a certain item. For example, a measuring cup would be put in a bag of flour so that housewives would buy more flour to try to collect a complete set.

MCHS has two small jadeite mixing bowls in its collection. No information is included in their donation records, but they are a lovely pop of color among the kitchen artifacts.
The 20th Annual Antique Tractor Show was dedicated to the memory of **Harold Lechner**

Harold was a long time supporter of the tractor show at MCHS and he always enjoyed talking about John Deere tractors of any size or model.

Thank you for the memories!

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**Thanks to all our Ag Sponsors!**

These generous donors help to support the Agriculture Building at the Mower County Historical Society.

**THANK YOU** to everyone who supported the 20th Annual Antique Tractor Show at the Fair!

AND a special **shout out** to Don Chapek who has been involved since the beginning. Your dedication to the Tractor Show is greatly appreciated!

We couldn’t do it without YOU!
Thank You to those who joined the MCHS or renewed their membership!

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Please contact the office if you are unsure about when to pay your membership dues. All memberships are for 1 year and include your quarterly subscription to the Mower History Scribe!

*** memberships listed are from 3rd Quarter only
July 1 thru September 30, 2018

Our Town at the Historical Society-
A special THANKS to everyone involved with the recent production of Our Town by Thornton Wilder, performed Sept 28-30 in the Pioneer Building as a special fundraiser for MCHS and Matchbox Children’s Theatre. We hope to bring more theatrical programing to YOUR Historical Society soon! What is next you may ask? Do you have any old letters you would like to share? Our next project, Love Letters of Mower County is set for this winter. So dig out those old love letters, we would like to hear from you and use your letters in our upcoming presentation. Stay tuned and contact the office for more details.

Our Town cast members from left to right: Linda Miller, Barry Reburn, Angela Donovan, Paul Burger, Clara McIntyre, Chris Williams, Janet Anderson, Tyler Amick, Ed Dryer, Eric Sippel, Chloe Guttormson, Carrie Braaten, Elliott Cich, Dave Hovland, Randy Forster, Emily Miller, Keith Cich, Tommy Marreel, and Dean Ulland
“The mission of the Mower County Historical Society is to discover, collect, preserve, and share the history of Mower County and relate it to the history of Minnesota.”

Follow us @mowercohistory

Contact Us
To learn more about programs and events at the Mower County Historical Society, please feel free to contact us at anytime.

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info@mowercountyhistory.org

Visit us on the web at www.mowercountyhistory.org

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