Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment
This article is a continuation from the Winter 2020 issue of the Mower History Scribe.

In 1890, two groups united to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. That year, Wyoming became the first state to grant women the right to vote.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the role of women in American society was changing drastically: Women were working more, receiving a better education, bearing fewer children, and three more states (Colorado, Utah, and Idaho) had yielded the demand for female enfranchisement. In 1916, the National Woman’s Party (formed in 1913 at the congressional Union for Woman Suffrage) decided to adopt a more radical approach to women’s suffrage. Instead of Questionnaires and lobbying, its members picketed the White House, marched, and staged acts of civil disobedience.

In 1917, America entered World War I, and women aided the war effort in various capacities, which helped to break down most of the remaining opposition to women’s suffrage. By 1918, women had acquired equal suffrage with men in 15 states, and both the Democratic and Republican parties openly endorsed the female enfranchisement.

In January 1918, the women’s suffrage amendment passed the House of Representatives with the necessary two-thirds majority vote. In June 1919, it was approved by the Senate and sent to the states for ratification. Campaigns were waged by suffragists around the county to secure ratification, and on August 19, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment. On August 26, it was formally adopted into the Constitution by proclamation of Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby.

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Suffragette parade in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota - Date Unknown
Votes for Women - Rally 1920!
By Randal J. Forster, MCHS Executive Director

Happy Spring from YOUR Historical Society!

On March 10, MCHS had the pleasure of partnering with AAUW to sponsor the 15th Annual Women’s History assembly at Austin High School. History Alive Lanesboro presented a play written and directed by Jane Peck entitled Votes for Women-Rally 1920! Students had the opportunity to participate in a women’s suffrage rally and hear from a few Minnesota suffrage leaders, pictured below—Nanny Mattson Jaeger, Emily Bright, Clara Ueland, and Berthe Moller who talked about their experiences in fighting for women’s rights.

As I was sitting in Knowlton Auditorium, I couldn’t stop thinking about different groups of people throughout history who have fought for certain rights. Women fought several decades for the right to vote. Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. Rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory.

Fast forward 100 years and people are still fighting for their rights. Is all this fighting worth it? Do we really need to fight so hard? The answer is YES! Everyone deserves the right to vote. My hope during this year, as we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment is that we stop to think about the struggles that women faced to secure that right. It is important to learn about “the right” that women fought so hard to have. I hope that everyone, especially young people go to the ballot box and make their voice heard. I have always said that all politics is local, so please make sure to get involved in the process.

I am also looking forward to a special traveling exhibit that will be at MCHS this August sponsored by the League of Women Voters entitled - A Century of Civic Engagement. Let’s all stay engaged and never forget the suffrage movement.
Upcoming Events

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, most special events have been cancelled or postponed. Please continue to monitor our Facebook page, website, and local media for more information.

April 12
Easter Sunday

“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.”
~Martin Luther

May 11
6:00pm
History Happy Hour
Hormel Historic Home

May 25
Memorial Day

May 28
12:00 Noon
Lunchbox History Series
Pioneer Building at MCHS

June 25
12:00 Noon
Lunchbox History Series
Pioneer Building at MCHS

June 27
10:00am-2:00pm

June 28
12:00 Noon-3:00pm
Open House at the G.A.R
Grand Meadow, MN
Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the G.A.R. Hall is one of only two remaining in Minnesota. Booth Post 130 was constructed in 1891 and currently houses Civil War Memorabilia.

July 4
8:00pm
NEW Pillars of the City revealed
Bandshell Community Park

Chert Happens!

Last summer, MCHS opened its newest exhibit, Prehistoric Mower County-featuring the Maynard Green Collection. The collection consists of 843 chipped stone points and tools as well as several examples of scrapers, bifaces, knives, drills, and arrowheads. Visitors to the exhibit learn about the first people to ever live in or travel through the area and how tools made from chert were important in their lives.

How would you like to explore the site in Grand Meadow yourself?

Tom Trow, one of the archeologists who explored the quarry in 1980, along with the Mower County Historical Society, is working on a project that focuses on improving public access, education, and preservation of the site. An advisory group has been formed and committee members are developing plans for the site, exploring funding opportunities, and writing grant proposals.

Plans for the site include the following:
1.) Removing buckthorn from the property.
2.) Creating a waking path through the quarry.
3.) Improving the parking situation along the side of the road.
4.) Installing signage to explain the historical significance of the site.

Grand Meadow Chert, a type of cryptocrystalline quartz, was probably discovered along the banks of what was Bear Creek around 7000 years ago. Tools made from Grand Meadow Chert have been found all over Minnesota and the surrounding region. The wide variety of projectile points, knives, scrapers, and flakes made from many other materials discovered near the quarry suggests the site was part of an exchange network among prehistoric people who traveled long distances to obtain Grand Meadow Chert.

Maynard Green, long-time resident of Grand Meadow, recognized something special about the site in the early 1950’s. Finally in 1980, after thirty years of trying, he convinced archaeologists and curators from the state archeology office in St. Paul to visit the site and take a look. Green later said, “they ‘pert near went crazy!” when they saw the quarry for the first time. This visit led to a period of documenting, map-making, and studying the entire site. The Grand Meadow Quarry Archeological District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994 and is currently owned by the Archeological Conservancy in Ohio.

The Grand Meadow site is unique in Minnesota because it was in continuous use throughout virtually the entire known period of human existence on the continent. Grand Meadow Chert was used extensively for stone tools from the middle of the Archaic Period through the time of early contact with European explorers and traders. Archaeologists know this because all of the tools and flakes found around the quarry, combined with the tools made from Grand Meadow Chert found in other sites across the region form a kind of stone tool technology timeline.

Would you like to get involved with the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Project?

To make a pledge of financial support or to get involved with the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Project, please contact MCHS or director@mowercountyhistory.org for more information. Visitors are welcome to view the collection and learn more about Maynard Green year-round during regular Historical Society hours: 10:00am-4:00pm, Tuesday through Friday. Chert Happens!
**A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Barbara K. Lewis, President of the MCHS

It is unfortunate that we had to cancel the Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Event on March 19, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but keeping everyone safe and healthy is so important during these trying times. As “social distancing” becomes the “new normal” we all need to stay calm and learn to stay home. We hope to re-schedule the Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Event for sometime later this spring or summer so that we can THANK all of our wonderful volunteers in person. We couldn’t do what we do without you!

**WATCH FOR A NEW DATE FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING & VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT!**

I would also like to THANK Keith Cich, Judy Laskewitz, and Dwane Hull who will be retiring from the board. I could always count on them to park cars during the fair, help with special events, or put up lights outside for Christmas. I know I will keep all of their numbers in my cell phone and give them a call for the fair. It’s important to say THANK YOU to these members who volunteer so much of themselves to make the Historical Society a special place.

Finally, I would like to welcome three NEW members to the Historical Society Board of Directors. Marijo Alexander, Jeff Anderson, and Theresa Becker-Ersland have all jumped in head-first at the Historical Society, even though we haven’t had the opportunity to officially elect them to the board. I am looking forward to working with all of them.

We will keep you posted on when we can officially hold our Annual Meeting. It always feels satisfying to look at our accomplishments from the past year and to see what new and exciting things are planned. Our staff has worked hard this past year and I am so grateful for everything they do, especially during these difficult and uncertain times. I am confident that we can get through anything together!

~ Barb

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

- author unknown

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**A special THANK YOU to the following Townships for supporting MCHS in 2020**

~Nevada Township
~Udolpho Township
~Lansing Township
~Racine Township
~Windom Township
~Marshall Township
~Bennington Township

AND

Township Officers Association

Your support is greatly appreciated!
Local Students Experience SPAMTOWN, USA
By Dave Brown - Teacher & Behavior Coach at I.J. Holton Intermediate School

Rarely does a community the size of Austin have a play created exclusively about them and an historic event that occurred there. Such was the case when New York playwright Phillip Dawkins and director Will Davis, in partnership with the Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis, wrote, created and premiered the play, Spamtown, USA. The play focused on the events of the labor dispute and subsequent strike between Hormel Foods and P9 workers during the mid-80’s. However, unlike many articles and documentaries that have been produced about this topic, this play focused on some of the most ignored casualties of this time - the children.

When I first read about the play, I thought, “This is something we have to be a part of.” I looked at it through two sets of eyes: a Minnesota History teacher and a resident of Austin for over 25 years. This strike involved our parents, our grandparents, our neighbors, our co-workers. It is why our community looks as it does today. This dispute WAS Austin in the mid-1980’s. Yet 35 years later, very few of our students and likely many of our younger community members know anything about it. To quote Marcus Garvey, “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.” Through any means possible, I wanted to make sure that our students saw this play. After communicating directly with the CTC, they whole heartedly agreed. We had a partnership.

From the moment I sent the first email to the Children’s Theatre Company, it was apparent that not only did they want us to be a part of this production, they needed us to be a part of it. Our involvement was paramount to making sure that they were not only accurate, but fair. What began as a couple random emails, evolved into several emails weekly, an invitation to attend the initial sit down with all cast and crew, our own copy of the initial script, a visit to IJ Holton from numerous members of the creative team, and an invitation to attend the first “all-cast” rehearsal of the play. Our input was sought, used, and appreciated. Additionally, the IJ Holton Art Club was approached about creating artwork to decorate the lobby of the Children’s Theatre. The students were asked to create drawings, sketches, and paintings of landmarks in Austin and to write a short caption as to why that location was important to Austin. The students proudly exceeded expectations!

Over the course of several months, private sponsorships and public donations were collected. Add in assistance from the CTC and a small fee paid by the students, and the massive undertaking of sending 860 students and over 80 adults to Minneapolis became a reality.

On February 26, 2020, our first group of students began the culmination of a very long journey.

For many of our students, this was their first trip to “The Big City.” The reactions and comments as they viewed the expansive skyline and the towering buildings was a delight. Upon pulling into the Children’s Theatre Company, they immediately realized that this was not an “ordinary theater”. Attached to the Minnesota Institute of Art, the building and grounds were immense. Walking into the theatre itself, the students were greeted by artwork created by their very own classmates. The artists themselves proudly pointed out their own work.

Then it was time for the main event - the play itself. While teachers did a magnificent job of explaining the play in advance, many students couldn’t see the connection at first. Though the show was two hours in length, the time flew by. The students were mesmerized throughout. The staging, the lights, the music, and the sounds captivated them. What really brought it home however, was when the actors on stage talked about being Austin Packers, going to the Tendermaid, and of course Hormel itself. Finally, our students saw it - this play is about US. Our students had made the connections and their interests were piqued.

The following week, on March 4th, our second group of students made the trip. With the knowledge gained the first week, the students were even better prepared. When the cast provided a question and answer period at the end of the play, our students didn’t disappoint. They had watched. They had listened. They had learned.

Unfortunately, this is where our adventure ends. The Covid-19 strain arrived; closing schools and causing the CTC to shut down all production. Only about 60% of our students ended up seeing the play. The other 40% were shut out—left in the same disappointment that so many have experienced during this unprecedented time. It is my sincere hope that this play returns and somehow, someway the students from IJ Holton and all students get a chance to watch. After all, we are SPAMTOWN, USA!

Would you like to read the play?

Phillip Dawkins, has generously given MCHS a copy of the play, SPAMTOWN, USA for our archives. If you are interested in checking out a copy to read, please contact the MCHS office by calling 507-437-6082 for more details.
Austin Ladies Floral Club
Motto: “To God, thy country and thy friends be true.”
by Sue Doocy, Research and Archives Manager

The Austin Ladies Floral Club has entrusted the Mower County Historical Society to care for and share the organization’s collection of history, including scrapbooks, photographs, records, membership directories, programs, by-laws, and constitution.

Who knows what treasures will unfold as we turn the pages of time?

Established on March 16, 1869, the Floral Club is the oldest women’s organization in Minnesota and second in the Nation. Esther Mitchell Morse, the wife of a Congregational Church minister, led thirteen women to bring a love of literature and culture to Austin.

The thirteen charter members strove to improve the lives of children and adults with their goals to study floriculture and establish a circulating library.

They charged a 25-cent fee to purchase seeds and planted and tended their flower gardens the first summer. As the flowers grew that first year, membership in the organization grew to 43 members.

What doors did these women open throughout the years by housing the library in their homes and the courthouse? How the young minds must have grown through the wisdom and resourcefulness of these women!

The Floral Club raised funds for the public library with concerts and festivals. Their dream finally came true in 1904 with the help of Andrew Carnegie, who donated $15,000 for the construction of the Carnegie Library. Renovated in 1964, the library housed more books and opened circulation to six Austin schools and thirty-nine rural schools.

In June 1917, The Floral Club enlisted the help of the Art and Travel Club, professional, and business leaders in forming the Mower County Chapter of the American Red Cross at the beginning of World War I. They supported the troops and most likely helped during the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.

The Floral Club not only believed in education through reading, they also believed in collecting their own history. In the collection, there are photographs of members, the Allen home, where they held their first meeting and other activities, along with descriptions throughout the years, as well as newspaper clippings, and meeting minutes.

Prior to 1920, the women heard about the suffrage movement, and were inclined to learn all they could. The Floral Club invited former Senator C. F. Cook to speak about Parliamentary Law at which the Duodecium (a young men’s club) performed practical operations of the law to answer the questions presented by club members. In other meetings, they learned about the Women’s Suffrage movement and voting rights. It was not enough just to earn the right to vote, they wanted to understand what they were voting for and learn about the process. The Austin Ladies Floral Club has entrusted the Mower County Historical Society to care for and share the organization’s collection of history, including scrapbooks, photographs, records, membership directories, programs, by-laws, and constitution.

The home of Mrs. A.E. Allen, where the Ladies Floral Club was organized in 1869

Esther M. Morse, Austin Ladies Floral Club founder and President for 32 years. She was also the FIRST woman honored by the City of Austin, to be a “Pillar of the City” in 2017
Today, Floral Club members continue their dedication to the library and many have personal experiences that add to their love of the Club.

“Libraries have always been an important part of my life,” said Sally Baker. “In fact, my first job as a child was working on Saturday afternoons in the library for 35 cents an hour in my hometown of Waitsburg, WA when I was 12.”

Baker has lived in Austin for more than 25 years and learned of the Ladies Floral Club shortly after moving here. She purchased a fundraiser ticket for a special event held at the Austin Country Club.

Their mission and enthusiasm to support the library impressed her. “It strikes me as both wonderful as well as unusual that this group has had such unwavering support of the Austin Public Library.” She added, “It has been my pleasure to serve as an officer of this club, which has helped promote literacy throughout Mower County since 1869.”

Baker’s favorite event was celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Floral Club last year, when the club and others gathered at the Hormel Historic Home and the public library, where they created a display of items from the Mower County Historical Society collection, including a quilt created by members for a raffle held many years ago.

Peggy Keener noted that, “We are a small group, but we are mighty. Between the Friends of the Library and the Floral Club, we are the main supporters and money raisers for the library. That alone gives you the reason why we’re so important.”

It is the historical society’s privilege to be the caretaker of the Austin Ladies Floral Club history collection. Thank you.

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**Remembering The Bakery**

On the morning of January 28, fire departments in and near Blooming Prairie were called to The Bakery. According to the Blooming Prairie Police Department, a call came in at about 6:10 a.m. after an employee saw smoke coming from building, located at 345 West Main Street. The building was a total loss.

The Bakery has been a friend of the Historical Society over the years. They always said YES when we needed cookies and frosting for the kids during Christmas in the County. Of course, they will be missed for their baked goods. But mostly, they will be remembered for being generous to the community where they lived and worked.

Thanks to The Bakery for supporting MCHS! You will be missed!

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One treasure in the collection is a photo of Mrs. George (Charlotte) Baird, who traveled from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin to Mower County in a blizzard with two canaries to be with her husband, Civil War Captain George Baird. He brought home the Civil War Battle Flag on display in the Historical Society Pioneer Building.

*Photo Austin Daily Herald*
Collections Corner:
Historic Treasures in the Mower County Historical Society Collection
By: Jaimie Timm, MCHS Curator

Many of you know that I am continuing to try to organize the Collections Building and, by default, the artifacts stored there. Even though I’ve been at MCHS for almost eight years now, there are still some boxes and treasures that I have never laid eyes on. So, my days spent working in the Collections Building sometimes lead to some new-to-me treasures! While researching my last “Historic Treasures” presentation at the Hormel Historic Home in early March, I came across a few items that were attributed to the same couple – Parker and Mary Johnson. I recognized Mary’s name from a previous presentation (who was there for the Crazy Quilt Tea Cozy and our discussion about the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876?) and Parker’s name sounded vaguely familiar as well.

After a deep dive into my records, I remembered that we have Parker’s wedding vest and some pieces of mourning veil that are attributed to him in our collection. We also have several other items that belonged to Mary, including a brown velvet cloak, a quilt pieced for their granddaughter, and many baby gowns and robes that feature Mary’s perfect seams and dainty embroidery worn by her granddaughter and great-granddaughter.

It is quite rare for a group of artifacts to span four generations within our collection – and I got more and more excited with each new discovery. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate much information about the family. Most of what I know is on the family tree graphic. However, it is fun to make a few guesses...

Parker Johnson and his wife Mary appear to be very stylish and practical. Parker’s vest (or rather, “waistcoat” as I discovered would be the more period-appropriate term for their 1845 marriage) fits right in with what I discovered about men’s fashion in the early Victorian-era. A matching three-piece suit didn’t come into fashion until the 1860’s and 1870’s when higher-fastening jackets concealed most of the waistcoat. Until then, the waistcoat served as most of the color and pattern in a man’s dress, which typically consisted of a dark pair of trousers and jacket with a white (or solid color shirt) and a complimentary waistcoat. Since Parker’s recorded job in both the 1860 and 1870 census was a farmer, I assume that his wedding waistcoat possibly served as his part of his “best outfit” that might be worn for church and other special gatherings.
Mary Johnson’s velvet cloak is another pretty piece that seems both practical and pleasing to the eye – perhaps it shows Mary’s sensible side as a farmer’s wife, while also showcasing her advanced needlework and sewing skills. The cloak could have originally been black that has faded over the last 120 years or so to a brown hue. If so, it might have been part of Mary’s mourning clothes (that would also explain the lack of ornamentation). It is lined with blue wool and is relatively simple in design. I believe the square cut-out in the back is meant to accommodate a bustle on the back of a skirt.

If the cloak is in fact part of Mary’s mourning clothes, then it would fit with the bits and pieces of a mourning veil or hatband that are said to belong to Parker Johnson. While Victorian women, especially middle-class Victorian couples (as I imagine Parker and Mary to be), fell under a very strict set of social and fashion rules for mourning a loved one, the men had it much easier. Since they already wore a dark suit most days, they simply added a black hatband (of which these pieces are most likely part of), some black gloves, and other dark accessories. These black boutonnieres or corsages may also have been used by Patrick to compliment his mourning attire. Black crape is a kind of leftover silk that is crimped, stiffened, and dyed using a variety of less-than-healthy chemicals. Often referred to as crepe in the fabric industry, it is spelled crape when referring to the fabric used for mourning clothes. The chemicals used to dye and stiffen the fabric for these iconic mourning veils were well known to cause all sorts of respiratory, skin, and eye ailments for the women who were forced to swath themselves in the fabric for the duration of their mourning period (up to 2 years for a husband). This particular item has about 20 or 25 pieces of crape. While the note that came with these mourning pieces said it belonged to Parker, it is possible that some of the fabric came from Mary’s mourning veil.

More items from the family are shown below:

More examples of Mary’s sewing and needlework skills – a plaid coverlet that Mary wove and embroidered, a small baby gown for her granddaughter Ida Jane with tatted lace (all handmade by Mary), and a quilt that Mary pieced for her granddaughter Ida Jane. Other items in the collection (not pictured) are baby clothes for Mary’s great-granddaughter Helen and a jacket made by Mary’s sister, Julia, for Ida.

Join Jaimie for the next Historic Treasures Presentations at 11:30am on Thursday, May 14th, 2020 at the Hormel Historic
Thanks to all our Ag Sponsors!

2019/2020 Ag Building Sponsors

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Mower County Farmers Mutual Insurance Company
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Broskoff Structures
Lee J. Sackett

With the recent Covid-19 Pandemic, our April 23 event has been cancelled.

Please watch our website, www.mowercountyhistory.org and Facebook page for future updates.

May 28, June 25, July 23, August 27, September 24, October 22

All events are FREE and held in the Pioneer Building on the grounds of the Historical Society at 12:00 Noon the Fourth Thursday of the month.

“Bring your lunch & Bring a friend!”

Seeking Artifacts for NEW Exhibit in 2020

“Suffragettes of Mower County”

Do you have any treasures such as banners, clothing, fashion, letters or photos that are related to Suffragettes OR the passing of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote? MCHS needs your help as we research and make plans for a NEW exhibit set to open next August.

Please contact collections@mowercountyhistory.org

Want to get involved with the women’s suffrage movement in Mower County? MCHS is making plans to hold its very own “Suffragette Parade” during the Mower County Fair!

We need your help making banners, hats, costumes, and posters for the parade. We also want to have as many women marching in the parade as possible.

Join the cause and contact director@mowercountyhistory.org
Thanks to the following donors!

Colleen Weimer
Jeff Baldus
Norman Bergman
Marijo Alexander
Colette Chaffee

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Frank & Judy Gerlach
In Memory of Mary Ellen Miller

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Mower County

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Thank You to those who joined the MCHS or renewed their membership!

**Platinum Level**
Clair Allen

**Silver Level**
Sue & Vern Grove

**Bronze Level**
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Ankeny’s Mini Mart #5
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Daniel Mueller
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Thank for being a MCHS Member!

***memberships listed are from 1st Quarter only
January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020

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

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Sign up to TODAY to receive the newsletter digitally.
Just make sure we have your correct email address!
“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.”

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