Kinsman Greenhouses

A.N. Kinsman started his floral business in 1890 after purchasing a number of greenhouses from S.H. Harrison. Within a few years, the business had grown to be one of the largest operations in the state. In 1893, his crops included cut roses, carnations, English double violets, cyclamens, heliotrope, marguerites, palms and primroses. The business issued catalogs and sold products all over the entire mid-west, shipping plants and flowers by mail and express.

According to his biography from the History of Mower County, 1911 “A.N. Kinsman, the able and successful horticulturist and floriculturist of Austin, has achieved his progress in life by his thrift and energy, and now has one of the finest greenhouse plants in the west, his covers of glass amounting to more than 50,000 feet. Thus equipped he is engaged in raising many varieties of flowers, making a specialty of roses, of which he has good reason to be proud.”

In 1966, Kinsman’s Greenhouse and Flower Shop was purchased by John R. Johnson Supply Inc., a greenhouse supply business out of Roseville and operated as Johnson Floral in Austin for nearly 50 years.
Flowers Remembered
By Randal J. Forster, Executive Director- MCHS

I LOVE FLOWERS!

Hopefully, spring is just around the corner and after all of our March snow and April showers, May flowers will soon be sprouting. Since I have a background working in the floral industry as a floral designer, I was fascinated to learn about the many different floral shops that used to be in Austin. Kinsman greenhouses and Johnson Floral were two such florists that helped people in Southern Minnesota celebrate special occasions with flowers.

I can only image the long hours A.N. Kinsman put into cultivating his roses and developing new varieties. One such variety was rich yellow in color, and named after the famous opera singer Madame Galli-Curci. According to the Mower County News March 15, 1923, Mr. Kinsman named his new rose after the charming diva “at the request of some of the Minneapolis friends of the singer.” Kinsman greenhouses continued to cultivate roses for many years until the high cost of coal prohibited him from doing so to remain profitable.

As you can see from the following advertisement published in the Mower County Transcript dated May 10, 1893, A.N. Kinsman & Co. was a big operation and most definitely your full service florist at the turn of the century.

Years later, Johnson Floral took over that title and continued the tradition of selling fresh cut flowers for all occasions in Austin for nearly 50 years.

Flowers have been a part of my life for years. As a very young child, I remember picking violets on the hill near my grandma’s house. I also have fond memories of making arrangements for every holiday at my first job at Julien’s Flowers in Durand, Wisconsin. I know that floral trends have changed over the years, but what hasn’t changed is how flowers make you feel. I hope you take the time to smell them all and enjoy their beauty.

How do you remember flowers?
Lyle History

By Mitch Helle

In the 1880s, Lyle was an up-and-coming town served by three railroads and boasting a population of over 300 residents. Some Lyle news could be found in nearby newspapers but it was often incomplete or included a tone of derision. For example, in 1886, the St. Ansgar Enterprise offered Lyle this back-handed compliment:

“Lyle and Riceville are about the only towns in this part of the State that are enjoying booms at present… Lyle is a sort of unknown quantity. It is hard matter to form an estimate on how many new saloons will be opened in the old slough during the coming summer.”

Over 30 years after the first settlers came to the area, Lyle got its first newspaper. In May, 1886 the Lyle Herald hit the shelves but its publisher packed up and left town the next week—after printing only a single issue! Three years later, J. D. Converse started the Lyle Mirror but only managed to keep it afloat for a little more than a year.

In August of 1892, W. A. Hutton came to Lyle and started the Lyle Tribune, the newspaper that would remain in Lyle for nearly 60 years. Nine people had ownership and management roles over the next decade, most notably John Gould from Otranto, Iowa who ran the paper for 6 years before his sudden death from tuberculosis at age 31.

After Gould’s death, William Nordland and his wife Jennie purchased the Lyle Tribune and on December 5, 1902 published their first issue as owners. For over 50 years, the Nordlands made Lyle their home, publishing over 2,500 weekly issues of the Lyle Tribune while becoming active in the Lyle community.

On March 6, 1951, citing his wife’s poor health, Nordland sold the Lyle Tribune and it ceased publication. Jennie died in 1959 and William in 1963. In March of 1973, the City of Lyle platted the Hansen Addition on the north end of town and named Nordland Avenue as a tribute to the long-time publishers of the Lyle Tribune.

Although Lyle never again had its own newspaper, it did manage some extra coverage. The Lyle Leader was published as a supplement to the St. Ansgar Enterprise from 1959 to 1974 and Lyle Highlights, an insert to the Austin Daily Herald, from the mid-1980s to early 1990s.

No copies are known to exist of the single issue of the Lyle Herald, nor the short run of the Lyle Mirror. The Lyle Tribune was preserved by MCHS and all known issues were microfilmed and digitized in 2018. Over 20,000 pages of the Lyle Tribune are online and searchable at http://lyletribune.org. We are forever indebted to all the newspapers and reporters that preserve history from our small towns.
SPAM Post 570 - A Legion of their Own

By Sue Doocy, Research & Archives Manager

Prior to the end of World War II, Jay C. Hormel, American Legion’s National Employment Committee Vice Chair and President of Geo. A. Hormel & Company, had three goals: securing employment for over 2,000 returning Mower County veterans, creating jobs for returning service women, and forming an all-woman American Legion Post that could eventually compete in the National American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps competition.

Before long, American Legion Post 91 past Commander James Prevatil helped the new post apply for its charter. The veterans chose to name their post “SPAM” after the canned meat GIs ate during the war.

The women who joined the All-Woman American Legion SPAM Post 570 played different roles in the community depending on their reason for joining the Post in Austin. The Post was the third all women post in Minnesota in 1946 and by June 1948, it was one of six in the state. Post members had served in WWII with the WACS, WAVES, SPARS, Marines and Army nurses. They opened their membership to WWI veterans too.

Recruited from across the United States, single WWII veterans with musical talent who had been hired as Hormel Girls were required to join the SPAM Post. They were trained in sales demonstration teams along with performing in an orchestra and in the Drum and Bugle Corps for Legion competitions. They performed on TV and in radio commercials promoting Hormel products and traveled across the country from 1947-1953. When their other duties were completed, the Hormel Girls visited veterans’ hospitals. In the 1950s, the veteran’s status and Post membership were dropped as employment requirements.

Of the original SPAM Post members, eight worked for the Hormel Company. Four of those members joined the Hormel Girls and performed with the Post Drum and Bugle Corps, which ranked higher than expected their first year (13th out of 50 bands in 1947) and 9th the following year.

On the home front, SPAM Post members in Austin assisted the Air Force Civil Defense program called the Ground Observer Corps working as air raid spotters, monitoring the skies for severe weather, fires, aircraft in distress and aircraft traffic, accidents along the highway and unidentified flying objects.

SPAM Post members lead by example. By 1958, Mrs. Alfred Norton had logged in over 2000 hours observing the skies during a six-year span. All while living in a shack above the police station, accompanied at times by her daughter.

At its peak in 1949, SPAM Post 570 boasted a total membership of 120, with average membership over time ranging from 18 to 25 members. By 2014, the membership was down to seven members, and in mid-2017, the last remaining WWII veteran, Fern Norgaard Granle, passed away. American Legion Post 91 member Rolland Hanson continued to pay one member’s dues to keep the Post active in hopes that someday women veterans would take an active role in the organization once again.
The Post’s mission in child welfare included sending Christmas gifts to a child in Red Wing, donating $25 for clothing to a deserving Mower County boy, and donating gifts to Tide of Toys. County Nurse & Post member, Susanne Radermacher, supervised pre-natal classes for expectant parents, financed by the Post.

SPAM Post sponsored teas, introducing teenagers to military careers and recruiters. They sponsored girls from the school patrol to attend Legionville camps. Marie Casey, manager of the Ground Observer Corps Girls’ 1955 softball team, encouraged teamwork and exercise.

SPARS veteran, Ruth Rasmussen, served on the Austin City Council and Austin Utilities Board of Directors, where men predominately served, adding a new perspective. She was not afraid to tackle the issues needed to achieve the goals of the community.

Greta Kraushaar, another member, served in the US Navy as an air traffic controller in Florida, and was employed by the Mower County Veterans Service Office.

Staff Sergeant Marie Casey served with Austin’s Citizens Flood Mitigation group to find a solution for continual flooding issues in Austin, and served as president of the St. Olaf Hospital cardiac rehabilitation group.

In 1972, the Post actively sought new members to help support their activities: helping make Christmas more cheerful for needy families and supporting the state hospital’s rehabilitation projects in conjunction with the American Legion Auxiliary, adding to the Post’s efforts to help veterans and their families.

SPAM Post members joined the American Legion Post 91, VFW, Am Vets and DAVA, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in honoring fallen soldiers on Memorial and Veterans Day at the Mower County Veterans Memorial.
A Message from the President
Barbara K. Lewis, President of the MCHS

Spring has sprung and the snow continues melting. We are thankful that there was no annual basketball
tournament snow storm last week. The weather was perfect for our Annual meeting of the Historical Society
which was a great success due to the fantastic turnout of volunteers and members. Thank you to everyone
who attended.

A special thank you goes out to the townships that have
already sent in donations to support the Society. Randy
and I recently attended the Annual Township meeting in
Elkton. Randy shared activities of the Historical Society
and encouraged townships to contribute to our mission
and goals.

April 27th is our annual spring clean-up day of the
grounds and buildings. We have lots of grounds cleaning
to be done this year because of all the snow and gravel
that has been pushed up onto the grounds. It is so
helpful when many people come to help. The work goes
fast and we even have fun. Please bring yard tools that
you like to use to rake, dig, prune, haul, etc. We will
have leaf bags and trailers or pickups to haul away the
debris. Treats and lunch will be available for those who
come to work.

It seems early to talk about the fair, however this is one
event that requires many people to volunteer their time.
We need people to sit in the buildings and help with the
parking gate. Fair time brings many visitors to our buildings
and the parking brings funds to keep your Historical Society
moving forward. So mark you calendars now and plan to be
here to help!

I have been fortunate to be able to work with the Mower
County Historical Society since my retirement from teaching
in 2002. Frank W. Bridges was president of the Society
and John Wagner was the treasurer at the time. With the
guidance of Jackie Pierskalla, our part time director, and
Edna Hill, part time employee, we started a few events like
Christmas in the County, Teddy Bear Picnic, and Spring
Bonnet Tea. Times have changed with now have three em-
ployees. We are fortunate to have Randy, Jaimie, and Sue
in our office to keep the Mower County Historical Society
growing and prospering. Their dedication to making visitors
feel welcome and helping them with research is outstand-
ing. This is my little part of history with MCHS that I can
share with you! Thank you for being a part of our history!

Vickie & Dwight Smith were honored as Outstanding
Volunteers of the year by MCHS President Barbara K.
Lewis at the Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation
Event on March 21, 2019.

A special THANK YOU goes out
to Thivent Financial for helping to
sponsor our Annual Meeting &
Volunteer Appreciation Event!

THIVENT
FINANCIAL®

THANK YOU for supporting MCHS!
The Maynard Green Collection

On January 29, 2019, a very exciting NEW collection arrived at the Mower County Historical Society - The Maynard Green Collection.

Maynard Green was a life-long resident of Grand Meadow who collected rocks, gems, minerals, Native American tools and arrowheads. He found the majority of his collection (over 800 tools & points) in the vicinity of Grand Meadow. Mr. Green is also credited with discovering the “Chert Mine” near Grand Meadow which was used by many different Indian tribes for thousands of years. The Chert Mine represents a time before modern man, dating as far back as 9,000 years B.C. to 300 A.D. Prehistoric people used their hands and primitive tools, gaining new techniques through the years to make arrowheads, points, spears and scrapers.

The Grand Meadow Quarry Archeological District (its official name) was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994 and is owned by the Archaeological Conservancy. MCHS is fortunate to have access to this site.

Thanks to the generosity of several donors, MCHS is thrilled to have the privilege of caring for, preserving, and sharing Mr. Green's collection with all of our future visitors. Stay tuned for more information about a new exhibit in the Administration Building and new additions to our site tours this year. If you are interested in making a donation towards this display OR helping us clean, process, and catalog these artifacts, please contact the MCHS office for more details on how you can get involved and help.

A special Thank You to the following donors for contributing towards the acquisition of

THE MAYNARD GREEN COLLECTION

~ The Sween Family ~
Clair F. Allen - Ila & Roger Johnson - MCHS Memorial Fund
Sue & Vern Grove - Belita Schindler - Dean & Harriet Ulland - Barbara K. Lewis
Maurice & Bernice Thorsen - Grand Meadow Lions Club Foundation
Phillip & Gail Minerich - Jim & Milly Burroughs - Judy & David Laskewitz
Jeff & Cindy Ollman - Steve & Dorothy Krob - Fred & Carolyn Bogott

Your generosity is greatly appreciated for keeping this priceless collection in Mower County for future generations.
Collections Spotlight:
Two Pottery Vases and a Victorian Lady Planter
By: Jaimie Timm, MCHS Curator

With the flower theme that is woven throughout this newsletter, it only seemed right that our Collections Spotlight should also be about flowers. Or, in this case, flower holders. Although I chose these items at random, I discovered they are actually related! Without further ado, here is the tale of two pottery vases and the Victorian Lady planter.

Our first vase is from the Brush-McCoy Pottery Co. In 1886, J.W. McCoy established the Williams & McCoy Pottery Company in Roseville, Ohio. Roseville was a pottery town with its first pottery opening in 1838. Around the turn of the century, the local economy was based on pottery with several major manufacturers headquartered in the area. By 1898, the Williams & McCoy Pottery Company added new partners and underwent several name changes until it was known as Midland Pottery Company. The Roseville Pottery Company bought Midland later that year.

J.W. did not stay out of the pottery business for long and founded his own company in 1899—the J.W. McCoy Pottery Company. He focused on creating simple, utilitarian stoneware pieces until 1902 when he started making pottery. In 1909, George Brush joined the company. He later became the general manager and obtained controlling interest in it. He changed the name to the Brush-McCoy Pottery Co. in 1911. George Brush and the Board of Directors continued to use the McCoy name until 1925 when it simply became the Brush Pottery Company. The Brush Pottery Company operated until 1982.

This green vase is marked “741” on the bottom and, although I cannot say for sure, is most likely part of Brush-McCoy’s “Art Vellum” line, which began production in 1925. The pieces in this line are quite plain and have a soft, colored glaze finish in blue, green or brown. The finish often resembles the texture of ancient parchment. This vase has a decoration in the shape of roses with a drip glaze. The design is modeled after “molded mat” or “carved mat” pottery decoration methods used by other art pottery manufacturers like Rookwood or Weller (both also based in Roseville, Ohio). The handles are acanthus leaves (a popular leaf shape used by Greek and Roman artists and sculptors). The “Art Vellum” line included 11 different vases, 4 different candlesticks and flower holders, jardinières (an ornamental ceramic pot that could be used for plants) in 6 sizes, and a flower bowl in 5 sizes.

Our second vase is from the Roseville Pottery Company. J.F. Weaver founded the company in Roseville, Ohio in 1890 and incorporated two years later with the help of business partner George Young. Like McCoy, he also focused on practical stoneware items for the first few years. In 1895, Roseville Pottery Company purchased Midland Pottery Company (J.W. McCoy’s first pottery company) and the next year, George Young acquired a controlling interest. Roseville Pottery moved to Zanesville (about 10 miles away) in 1898. He continued to grow and expand the company and hired Russ C. Purdy in 1900 to create Roseville’s first art pottery line, Rozane (a combination of “Roseville” and “Zanesville”). By 1901, Roseville Pottery Company operated four plants and employed 325 people as the art pottery market exploded. Roseville was very well-made and quite popular. Frank Ferrel introduced some of the company’s most popular designs after he became the art director in 1917. Roseville produced its final pieces in 1953-1954 and the company was sold. Many art pottery companies, including Roseville, could not compete with the less expensive Japanese pottery that flooded the U.S. market after World War II.
Our Roseville Pottery vase features the “Moss” design, produced in 1936 with a blue background and is marked “777-7”. This design came in the standard colors of pink, blue, and a peach or tan. The Moss line included 30 different shapes. The “777” on the bottom indicates the style number (in this case, a vase) and the last “7” indicates the size.

The third and final vessel of our discussion was imported to the United States by Lefton China most likely in the late 1950’s or early 1960’s. George Zoltan Lefton left Hungary in 1939 and settled in Chicago. He was an avid collector of china and porcelain and decided to try to make his hobby his new career. He founded Lefton China in 1940. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941, many Japanese-owned businesses were attacked and looted. George helped his friend, Nunome, protect and board up his business. After World War II, Nunome helped George develop relationships with china producers in Japan. The Allied forces occupied Japan after the war with the goal of helping Japan grow and develop, but not to rearm itself. The Allied forces considered porcelain production an acceptable manufacturing practice and Lefton was one of the first U.S. based businessmen to work with Occupied Japanese manufacturers. Lefton China imported a wide variety of items, including fine china, planters, tea sets, cookie jars, pitchers, shakers, wall pockets, and head vases, and George became known as the “china king.” His company helped push some of the art pottery manufacturers out of business (like Roseville) because Japanese china was more affordable for the average American than some of the European and American created pottery. Lefton imported his first pieces of Japanese-produced china in 1946 and continued into the 1970’s. At that time, production moved to Taiwan and Malaysia. George Lefton passed away in 1996 and his family sold the company in 2001. However, the Lefton China Company continues to operate today.

This planter features a Victorian lady holding a parasol. It is marked “Lefton 3075” and has a small sticker with “Japan” on the bottom. Because it is not marked from Occupied Japan, we know it was manufactured after 1952. I suspect “3075” is a style number as I found similar planters with Victorian men and women with the marking available online.

**Cookbooks are $10.00**

*all proceeds benefit the Mower County Historical Society*
Thanks to all our Ag Sponsors!

Announcing 2019 Series

April 25th
Sue Grove
“Austin’s own Pulitzer Prize Winner - Richard Eberhart”

May 23rd
Tim Ruzek
“Our Water Story – History of the Cedar River Watershed”

June 27th
Peggy Keener
“The Square Deal - Austin’s FIRST Supermarket!”

July 25th
Gary Schindler
“Lincoln’s Funeral Procession - Washington D.C. to Springfield”

August 22nd
Ames Sheldon
“Women at the Very Heart of the Great War”

September 27th
Still Pending

October 24th
Jeff Anderson
“History of Anderson Memorials”

All events are 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!”

THANKS to our official Sponsor
Mayo Clinic Health System Austin - Albert Lea

2018 Ag Building Sponsors

Austin Power & Sport
Miner’s Outdoor & Recreation
Northern Country Co-Op
Lewis Family Farm
Mower County Dairy Association
Witt Fabrication
Absolute Energy
Pioneer Seed
Boe Brothers Tiling
Diamond Tent & Table
Freeborn County Co-Op Oil
Klouse Construction
Darrell Ingvaldson Insurance

Albert Lea Seed House
Mower County Corn & Soybean Growers
Freeborn/Mower Co-Op Services
Tucker Tiling Company
Shady Lane Farms
Lee J. Sackett
Wagner Construction
Broskoff Structures

THANKS to all our Ag Sponsors!
Thank You to those who joined the MCHS or renewed their membership!

Platinum Level
Barbara K. Lewis
Glenn & Judy Medgaarden
Mower County Township Officers Association

Silver Level
Austin Daily Herald
BJ’s Rentals

Bronze Level
Randy & Wendy Kramer
Lou’s Forever Framing
Ankeny’s Mini-Mart #5
Mower Co. Mutual Insurance
Baudler, Maus, Forman & King
Rosalie Seltz
Jackie & Galen Holst
Godfather’s Pizza
Terry & Jan Fox
Hoversten, Johnson, Beckman & Hovey LLP
Allan & Audrey Oehlke
Jerry Wright
Anderson Memorials

Family Level
Terry & Sue Doocy
Ryan & Jaimie Timm
Richard & Bernice Alger
Mary Kenyon
Richard Riles
Randy & Shirley Sammons
Bill & Helen Holder
Norman & Shirley Bergman
Raymond & Carol Opsahl
Michael & Judith Nelson
Larry & Cindy Bellrichard
Roger & Ila Johnson
Ken & Gloria Trom
Larry & Kay Ehret
Michael & Kim Volna
Garry & Sharon Ellingson
Bruce & Chris Henricks
Larry & Patricia Naatz
Dennis & Bev Nelson
James & Catherine Wegner
Gregory & Nadeen Olson
Charles & Sharon Mills
Royce & Karen Helmbrecht

Individual Level
Doris Rice
John Locher
James Urlick
Larry Larson
Nelly Croes
Lavonne Griffin
Mary Henry
Kenny Dalager
Sandra Cleary
Pat Kitchings
Rosemary Shutt
Virginia Wright-Peterson
Tim Ruzek
Colette Chaffee
David Lyon
Cynthia Heimer
Mary Jo McAlister
Jack Berthiaume
Elaine Bicking
Brian Beckstrand
Mitch Helle
Louise Martell
DiEtte Marx
Clair F. Allen
Margaret Blue
Mike Ferguson
Wendy Larson
Jill Cordes
Janine Marks
Debra Danks
Kevin Buck
Jim Churchill
Trish Harren
Linda Maschka

Club Level
Lyle Alumni

Business Level
Sweet Reads
Reeve Chiropractic
Nystrom Signs
Acme Bail Bonds

Reminder!
The MCHS Office will be CLOSED April 24 & 25 while our staff attends the MALHM Conference in Red Wing, MN.

*** memberships listed are from 1st Quarter only
January 1 thru March 31, 2019

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!

Want to help us save postage and paper?
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.”

Follow us @mowercohistory

Mower County Historical Society
1303 6th Ave. SW
Austin, MN 55912

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

Mower County Historical Society
1303 6th Ave. SW
Austin, MN 55912
(507) 437-6082
info@mowercountyhistory.org
Visit us on the web at www.mowercountyhistory.org