The Old Mower County Courthouse

The magnificent dome of the old courthouse towers above the tree tops on a quite day on courthouse square in the city of Austin. One can only image what the view was like from the top of that dome and how Main Street looked much different than it does today.

The iconic Mower County Courthouse, built in 1884 was three stories high and made of red brick built over a high limestone basement in the Italianate style. A turreted Roman Renaissance and narrow dome rose above the central pavilion, whose one story columned portico was approached by a grand flight of stairs.

Additions to the building in 1952 and 1966 eventually became the new modern courthouse when the original old building was demolished in the spring of 1967.
The End of a World War
Armistice Day

By Randal J. Forster, Executive Director- MCHS

On the “eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” in 1918 the Allies of World War I and Germany signed an agreement in Compiegne, France to officially end the World War. The armistice initially expired after a period of 36 days, so a formal peace agreement was only reached when the Treaty of Versailles was signed the following year. The first Armistice Day was held at Buckingham Palace commencing with King George V hosting a “Banquet in Honour of the French Republic” during the evening hours of 10 November 1919. The first official Armistice Day events were subsequently held on the grounds of Buckingham Palace on 11 November 1919. This would set the trend for a day of Remembrance around the globe for decades to come.

ar-mi-stice = an agreement made by opposing sides in a war, a truce.

The United Stated Congress adopted a resolution on June 4, 1926, requesting that President Calvin Coolidge issue annual proclamations calling for the observance of November 11 with appropriate ceremonies. A Congressional Act approved May 13, 1938 made November 11 a legal holiday - a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as ‘Armistice Day’. In 1954, at the urging of major U.S. veteran organizations, Armistice Day was officially renamed Veterans Day.

While the holiday is commonly printed as Veteran's Day or Veterans’ Day in calendars and advertisements, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs website states that the attributive (no apostrophe) rather than the possessive case is the official spelling “because it is not a day that ‘belongs’ to veterans, it is a day for honoring all veterans.”

As the world commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the end of WWI this past November, it is fitting to remember the men of Mower County who gave their lives in the World War. This plaque with 64 names memorialized, now sits at the Mower County Historical Society as a reminder of WWI and the freedoms that all veterans fight to protect. On a personal note, I would like to say thank you to all veterans for their service everyday.

Veterans Day should be Every Day, not just one day in November.

The DAR Memorial honors the men of Mower County who died in WWI

The Mower History Scribe is published quarterly by:
Mower County Historical Society
1303 6th Ave. SW
Austin, MN 55912
(507) 437-6082
Randal J. Forster - Editor in Chief

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Regular Board meetings are held six times a year during the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November. The next scheduled meetings will be:
Tuesday- March 5th
Tuesday- May 7th at 7:00pm

Please contact the Executive Director if you have agenda items for the board.
All members of the Society are welcome to attend.

Mower County Historical Society Staff

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The End of a World War

Armistice Day

By Randal J. Forster, Executive Director- MCHS

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The Vintage Sale and our Endowment

The Vintage Sale, held on October 12th & 13th was once again a huge success raising a little over $1000 that will be invested into the MCHS Endowment Fund. Thanks to everyone who donated items to sell OR shopped and made a purchase to support this special fundraising event.

Did you know that MCHS has an endowment fund?

A few years ago, the MCHS established an Endowment Fund with the Austin Area Foundation as a way to ensure a permanent source of revenue. Currently our earnings have been re-invested into the fund to continue its growth for the future. As the fund increases over time, so will its earnings. Interest generated by the fund will be spent in support of our mission to discover, collect, preserve, and share the history of Mower County.

What is an endowment fund?

“A gift to our endowment fund made through your will or trust, may provide your estate with valuable tax savings. Your endowment bequest can be a gift of a specific asset, percentage of your estate or the residue (what is left after specific bequests are made to your family). Your gift will create a permanent legacy to support our work! Consider making a contribution that will live on forever and provide support for MCHS well into the future. Your endowment gift will grow to become a permanent legacy of support for our good work!

Learn more about MCHS Endowment Fund, please contact:

Mower County Historical Society
1303 6th Ave, SW
Austin, MN 55912
(507) 437-6082

Austin Area Foundation
110 1st Ave SE
P.O. Box 6 Austin, MN 55912
(507) 434-7494

SAVE THE DATE
A Message from the President
Barb Lewis, President of the MCHS

It is hard to believe that another Christmas is HISTORY and another new year has started. I hope everyone had a great holiday season with your family and loved ones. Once again, our biggest special event & fundraiser of the year, Christmas in the County, was a huge success!

First of all, I would like to say thank you! This event would not happen without all of you, our wonderful volunteers. Our magnificent bakers continue to amaze me with all the delicious treats they make for the bake sale. Who would have thought that we would ever sell so many cookies. Specifically, I would like to thank Linda Miller for calling most of the bakers on the “list”. She officially has a new title as the “cookie calling lady”.

I would also like to thank all of our business partners and donors who so graciously provided prizes for the raffle drawing and items for the silent auction. I know most of you are thinking “here she comes again...” when I come knocking on your door asking for another donation. But, I know I can always count on you to give to the Historical Society so that we can continue all that we do.

Virginia Bissen made another beautiful quilt for the raffle. Her quilts have truly become a Christmas tradition at the Historical Society. I can’t wait to see what she comes up with for next year. Thank you!

Finally, I want to thank all “the guys” who helped put up the Christmas lights & decorations around the grounds. Don’t worry, I will be calling soon, so we can take them all down and put them away for next year. You know who you are... so thanks!

With the new year only a few days old, I am proud of what we accomplished in 2018 and I am looking forward to many exciting things in 2019. I hope everyone will join us at the Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation Event coming up on March 21st in the Pioneer Building.

Thanks Y’all

Thanks for making “Christmas in the County” a huge success!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2018 CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTY RAFFLE WINNERS

Jon Cochran
Handmade Quilt 81 x 97
Civil War Reproductions

Dwane Hull
Winemaker’s Tour

Arlene Vanek
$100 Old Mill Restaurant

Glenn Medgaarden
$100 Weis Landscaping

Rita Saud
$50 Olde Tyme Antiques

Joyce Jones
$50 ArtWorks Center

Luvern Steinkemp
Massage Reeve Chiropractic

Denny Jax & Norma Brown
Dairy Association Basket

Sharon Hyland & Melissa Armstrong
$25 Kenny’s Oak Grill

T. Saunders & Cheryl Lehman
Bubble’s Pie

Eric Lee
Patriotic Barn Quilt 4’x 4’

Pat Jensen
Hardy Geranium Basket

Mary Kittelson
$10 Perkins Gift Card

Arlene Chapek
Membership to MCHS

Rae Dawn Rao
Camping Gear Basket

Mark Reeve
Bird House
A few of the “cookie ladies” - Virginia Bissen, Sue Grove, Barb Lewis, Linda Miller, and Judy Bruggeman taking a break during the Bake Sale on Friday, December 7, 2018 at Christmas in the County.
American Legion Post 91
1919-2019
By Sue Doocy, Research & Archives Manager

Mower County men had no sooner returned home from World War I, when on March 23, 1919, R.C. Alderson, B.E. Hughes and J.C. Hormel called on them to draft a bill for the legislature, requesting bonuses for veterans.

The legislation requested that each sailor, soldier and Marine would receive a bonus of $25 a month for each month served during the World War, whether he served overseas or in camp.

More than 60 veterans showed up in uniforms, welcoming the opportunity to discuss the bonus and life insurance. They also supported forming a new veterans’ organization, The Veterans of the World War, even though there were still active-duty soldiers stationed overseas.

Mower County had three soldiers, Jose Kulff, Albert Harding and Anton Johnson, who were sworn in as American citizens by Judge Catherwood. Each one had applied for citizenship while serving in the military and by October 1919, took the final step.

In August, 73 veterans actively sought out the Austin organization for information on Vet’s Day during the Mower County Fair. Legion and military records for creating a Mower County World War History would be included from the Civil War, the Spanish-American and the World War. Veterans, soldiers, nurses and others who served after April 6, 1917 were also able to fill out an application for the bonus.

The Austin American Legion Post 91 received its charter on October 7, 1919 and continued assisting veterans with their bonus applications. They also directed veterans and the families of fallen soldiers to the Red Cross for assistance on government insurance policies and to vocational training programs to help gain work skills to find employment.

Post 91 offered to assist with the bonus paperwork with one small request—that each man bring a dollar to join the American Legion. By October 21, the American Legion boasted a membership of 300, and expected another 100 men to join.

Grand Meadow’s Harry T. Anderson Post 140 received their charter on October 6, 1919, followed by Adams Post 146 on November 3 and finally on December 19, LeRoy Meighen-Thompson Post 161 was added to the rolls.

Since its inception, The American Legion’s main goal has been to help veterans and their families. In 1921, the Legion’s membership consisted of veterans in their 20’s and 30’s who were full of enthusiasm to sponsor a July 4th Celebration. They brought in the Human Fly to scale the county courthouse, which added to the parade, and held a carnival fundraiser for all to enjoy. However, they forgot to bring change for the ticket sales, so no tickets were sold, resulting in no profits.

American Legion Post 91 met at the Armory until 1933, located at 604 4th Ave SW.
The Legion persevered. In 1923, Commander Jay Hormel led 207 members in sponsoring the Post 91 Junior Baseball team and organizing the Legion’s Drum and Bugle Corps. They installed a flagpole and flag at the Austin High School athletic field in 1927-1928. They completed a youth park on the corner of 8th Street & 8th Ave NE near the Hormel Plant by 1932, and the Drum & Bugle Corps were traveling around the Midwest. These initiatives resulted in the organization’s finances remaining in the red.

The American Legion saw the need for school patrols and dedicated future funds to send patrol members to training camp. Though membership dropped during the Depression, Legion members continued to help their comrades, giving the support needed to carry 50 veterans and their families through the tough times.

Today, the American Legion Post 91 carries on with its commitment to their comrades and their families, serving the community and supporting those in need while celebrating 100 years of service as a faithful organization.

Thank You to the following Townships for supporting the Mower County Historical Society in 2018!

Adams - Clayton - Dexter - Grand Meadow
Lansing - Lyle - Marshall - Nevada - Pleasant Valley - Racine
Red Rock - Sargeant - Udolpho - Windom
Collections Corner:  
The Mower County Courthouse  
By: Jaimie Timm, MCHS Curator

“Mower County can well be proud of the edifice which adorns her capital city…” (Austin Register, March 20, 1884)

Mower County built its first courthouse in April 1868 for $6,450 on the northwest corner of Main and Maple Streets (1st Ave. NW). After 13 years of use, it was too small and deteriorating so the county commissioners began planning for a new facility. During those years, the county’s population increased from 5,000 to over 17,000 and the amount of records stored in the vaults surpassed the tiny building’s capacity.

In June 1881, the county commissioners purchased the “public square” for $1,925 and the firm of Snow and Alsip (from Chicago) were awarded the building contract the following summer.

The three-story building featured Italianate-style architecture. The upper portion of the building was red brick with a high limestone basement. The design included an elaborate, turreted Roman Renaissance tower and a narrow dome over a central pavilion with a columned portico. Construction was complete by March 1884.

After renovations, modernizations, and additions in the 1940s, the county began making plans for a new, larger courthouse. Fire Chief John Tobar inspected the building in April 1950 and declared the record storage unsafe and inadequate. The number of county offices and the increased number of records had overwhelmed the courthouse’s available capacity. County officials created a multi-step plan to begin replacing the aging building in 1951 and the beautiful courthouse was demolished in 1967.

In early 2019, a new display in the Pioneer Building will feature photographs and artifacts related to the Mower County Courthouse built in 1884.

If you have anything associated with any of the Mower County courthouses that you would be willing to donate to the exhibit, please contact Jaimie Timm, MCHS Curator.
Collections Spotlight:  
**Wedding Dress Fashion**

Selecting a wedding dress is very important for women. Many view it as one of the most important garments they will ever own and the act of trying on dresses to find “the one” is a celebration. Many brides bring their wedding attendants and family members along to help in the selection process.

A wedding dress is a reflection of both the bride’s personal taste and the current fashion trends. Today, it seems that “anything goes” when choosing a gown but it is has always been a very personal decision.

Those fashion trends will be the focus of the History Happy Hour presentation on January 14 at the Hormel Historic Home. MCHS Curator Jaimie Timm will discuss the evolution of bridal style beginning in the late 1800s through the 1900’s and will have examples of dresses from the collection of gowns at MCHS.

The gowns will remain on display at the Hormel Home for the rest of the week and will continue to be on display during the Hormel Home’s 2019 Wedding and Event Showcase on January 20 from 12pm-3pm.

Be sure to attend the presentation on January 14th (social time begins at 5:30 and the presentation will begin at 6pm) to learn more about some of the dresses featured here.

A special THANK YOU to all our 2018 Christmas in the County Business Partners!

Accentra
Ace Hardware
Aunt Bea’s
Austin Builders Supply
B & J Bar and Grill
Bella Victoria
Bubble’s Café
Coffee House on Main
Dairy Queen
Deer Creek Speedway
Dolan’s Landscaping Center
Firestone Tire
First Farmers & Merchants Bank (Grand Meadow)
Four Daughter’s Winery
Godfather’s Pizza
Great Clips
Hardy Geranium
Hy-Vee
J & S Repair
Kenny’s Oak Grill
Kibble Equipment
L.A. Nails
Miner’s Outdoor
Minnesota Ag Group
Mower Co. Dairy Association
Mower County Independent
NAPA Auto Parts
Northland Farm
Olde Tyme Antiques
Padelford Riverboat Cruise
Perkins
Reeve Chiropractic
Riverland Community College & Riverland Theatre
Rose Nails
SEMA
Sterling Main Street
Summerset Theatre
SuperFresh
Sweet’s Hotel
The Cedars of Austin
The Eagles Club
Top Ten Nails
Wal-Mart
Weis Landscaping

Your generosity is greatly appreciated!
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

- John McCrae

As we commemorate the
100th Anniversary of the end of WWI,
let us remember the poppies.

Finding Family Artifacts - WWI
Jack Baribeau and his father, Robert, visited MCHS on November 9, 2018 from New Prague, MN to look at Albert Temanson’s WWI uniform and other related artifacts. Jack is Albert’s great-grandson and is currently researching his life. Jack is also very interested in WWI history. Albert served in the military from September 1918 - March 1919 before returning to Grand Meadow where he owned a store, served as Postmaster, and was active in the American Legion and Masons.—Thanks for visiting!
Thanks to the following donors!

Pat Sorenson  
Glenn Medgaarden  
Beverly Meyer  
John Gray  
Josie Cummings  
Amy F. Layne  
Larry Mohr  
LaVonne Sharp  
Becky Croft  
Bill Schlichting  
Sue Grove  
Jeanne Poppe  
Emily Brown  
William McGovern  
Evelyn Schlichting  
Jon Hillier  
Walter B. Stevens  
First Farmers & Merchant Bank of Grand Meadow  
City of Lyle  
Frank & Judy Gerlach  
In Memory of John O’Rouke  
Jim & Milly Burroughs  
In Memory of Ken Laskewitz  
Austin Area Foundation  

The City of Austin

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

Silver Level
Robert & Colleen Weimer  
Sue & Vern Grove  
Judy Laskewitz-  
Olde Tyme Antiques

Bronze Level
Craig & Nancy Welken  
Charles Wilson  
Jim & Milly Burroughs  
Tradexpos, Inc.  
Kenny’s Oak Grill  
Jerry & Ellen Stark  
Dave Sylte  
Greg & Amy Baskin  
Fox Electric  
Medgaarden’s Southwest Sales  
Hill, Larson & Walth P.A.

Club Level
JJ’s Pick-Up Band

Business Level
Austin Area  
Chamber of Commerce

Family Level
Vicky King  
Myron & Susan Jordan  
Frank & Judy Gerlach  
Glenn & Judy Medgaarden  
Joyce & Jerry Brown  
Richard & Ann Waldman  
Gayle & Lavonne Bergstrom  
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Larry & Cindy Mohr  
Mark & Sandra Ashley  
David & Ardis Jensen  
Dwight & Vickie Smith  
Roger & Erin Pittman  
Ron & Janis Smalley

Individual Level
Rebecca Silus  
Pam Marsolek  
Phyllis Jorgenson  
Don Chapek  
DeWayne Habermann  
Robert Bertilson  
Sue Radloff  
Susan Hoffman  
David Schlichting  
John Gray  
Peggy Keener  
Steve Stoltenberg  
David Hillier  
LaVonne Sharp  
Dwane Hull  
Karim Arsan  
Josie Cummings  
Tim Gabrielson  
Virginia Bissen  
Joyce McGough  
Lana Epley  
Sharon Babcock  
Yvonne Jondal  
Becky Croft  
Patrick Hansel  
Mary Frances Guiney  
William McGovern  
Charlotte Braaten  
Janet Gilbertson  
Jim Braaten  
Don Richardson  
Dorothy Schulz

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!

*** memberships listed are from 4th Quarter only  
October 1 thru December 31, 2018

YOU’RE INVITED!  
Mower County Historical Society  
Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation

Thursday March 21, 2019

Celebrate our accomplishments from 2018 and see what YOUR Historical Society has planned for 2019

Please RSVP by March 8th  
507-437-6082 OR email director@mowercountyhistory.org
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.”

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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