

Museum Messenger

- July 12
Teddy Bear Picnic
- August 11-16
Mower County Fair

Inside this issue:

President's Thoughts	2
Membership News & Donations	2-3
Director's Dispatch	3
MCHS Event Photos	4
History of the Grand Meadow GAR Hall—Part I	5
History of the 1884 Courthouse	7
2009 Membership Information	8



July/August 2009

Spring Bonnet Tea Brings Out the Best in Wedding Fashion

This year's Spring Bonnet Tea had a slightly different look and feel to it. The theme for the event was "Going to the Chapel: A History of Wedding Dress." Thanks to Belles & Beaus of Austin and some willing volunteers, MCHS was able to put on a style show of wedding dresses of past and present. The show featured eight models and



was well attended by over 70 guests! Some of the models included 2008 Miss Austin Mandie Mickelson, 2008 Miss

Minnesota Angie McDermott, and 2009 Miss Minnesota runner-up Sara Larson. Guests enjoyed a light meal and were able to show off their spring hats! Guests were also able to get their photos taken by Solid Rock Photography as well as walk away with a few door prizes.

We would like to thank all who attended and all of the volunteers that put in many hours planning and working the event!

Fair Week to be Jam-Packed with Action for All Ages

The 125th Mower County Fair will be held August 11-16 with lots of activities to keep everyone busy! At the historical society, plan to see lots of artifacts, tractors, and people having fun. The buildings will be open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 1-8 PM, and Sunday from 1-5 PM. The historical society will have parking available for a fee, which helps raise money for our organization.

Returning this year by popular demand are three groups/events that are beginning to be tradition at the historical society. The Ag Committee will be putting on the Antique Tractor Show in the Ag Building. Also returning this year are the Ham Radio operators and Twilight Treadlers. The Ham Radio operators will be

stationed in the Fire Museum the whole week. The Treadlers can be seen on the front veranda of the Administration Building on Saturday. After a one year absence from the historical area, come get some



homemade ice cream from Earl's Homemade Ice Cream stand, which will be between the Administration and Pioneer Buildings.

Looking for something fun for the kids? Bring them down to test their skills in our archaeology dig sites! Who knows what they might find!

We will also have other games that the kids will love. The games will be stationed by the ice cream stand and tickets can be bought by the games.

Check out the flyer insert for a list of daily activities and times that will be going on during Fair Week! If you'd like to volunteer your time and sit in some of our buildings, please contact Dustin or Sue at the office to select your time and building. Slots will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you'd like to help with parking, contact Barb Lewis at the numbers provided in her President's article!



President's Thoughts—



Barbara K. Lewis
President

Since May, I have been mowing the Historical Society grounds. It has become a very interesting time. I usually do the mowing during the early evening or on Saturday. I have been amazed at how many people are wandering around our grounds with their dogs, riding their bikes, or doing their daily walks. I find myself stopping some of them and talking about what they see. These people find using the grounds as a relaxing place. They enjoy being able to see the artifacts that are outside of the buildings and enjoy the flower beds. I always invite them to come and take part in our Society as a member or volunteer, but I wonder how many of them really take me up on my offer.

Mowing the grounds has given me the opportunity to find and feel every bump, rut, hole, tree branch that has fallen, and the visual of the weeds and grass that keep

returning to our flower beds. We have some great volunteers that have worked very hard to get flowers planted in the bed in front of the Communications Building and around the fountain and the trees. But now these beds need some extra TLC. It would be a special gift to your Historical Society if some of you could just pop out at your convenience, bring your favorite weed digger and spend a half hour on some of the weeds.

Maybe you have a weed trimmer and you would be willing to weed whack around poles, trees, buildings etc. We do have electrical hook ups on every building or if you have a gas trimmer that would be great. Do you have a small lawn mower that you could take inside the fence of our soon to be refurbished caboose and cut the grass around the caboose?

I want to thank Don Konken, Dick and Josie Cummings,

Lloyd and Ramona Swenson, Terry Donovan, and Helen from Super Fresh for giving of their time and talents to the beautification of the Society grounds.

Fair time is fast approaching. Volunteers are needed daily to man the buildings so visitors can enjoy your Historical Society collections. The parking area behind the Indian and Communications building is a fund raiser and parking gate attendants are needed. Please call me and tell me when you can help out with the parking. You can call the office 437-6082 or call my home number 433-4983 and I will get you signed up. The parking gate is fun so find a friend to work with you and give me a call. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!!** This is a fun time of the year and a great time to see friends and meet new friends.

2009 MCHS Board of Directors

Executive Board

Barbara Lewis	President
Stan Aldrich	Vice President
Cathy Roser	Secretary
Diana Stone	Treasurer

Directors

Don Chapek	DeWayne Habermann
Bill Lewis	Kathy Paine
Dave Spinler	Jeff Austin
Garry Ellingson	Miguel Garate
Josie Cummings	Don Konken
	Paul Sween

MCHS Staff

Dustin Heckman, Executive Director
Sue Doocy, Museum Assistant

Memorials

Carol Hunter from John Thill Jr.
Dick Warfield from Richard & Rosalie Seltz
Ella Marie Lausen from Charles & Maureen Steenblock
Lola Umhoefer from Robert & Colleen Weimer
Robert E. Thoen from Ben & Gladys Christians

Donations

Neveln School 2nd grade	Barbara Lewis
Richard & Josie Cummings	Donn Sandell
Harold & Kathy Paine	Beverly Smith
Stacy Bennett	Bev Nelson
Estate of Dean Pacholl	Sue Doocy
Grand Meadow 3rd grade	Ann Bundy
Sterling State Bank	Myrna Ustanko
Dean & Ingrid Johnson	Sherwin-Williams Co.
Scott & Erin Felten	Clark Hatch
Solid Rock Photography	Wallace Malchow
Chris & Cathy Roser	Barbara Follstad
Glen Davis	David Raffelson

Director's Dispatch—

Is it summer already? The hot weather has begun and the mosquitoes are looking for their next victims! As many of you are reading this, you would have just enjoyed your 4th of July weekend and I hope it was a safe holiday for everyone.

We just wrapped up our Keep the Doors Open and Ag Building Sponsorship campaigns for this year. Thank you to all of the businesses, individuals, and townships that supported these campaigns! Combined for the two campaigns we raised over \$23,000 in cash and in-kind donations. Check out pages 6 and 7 for the names of our supporters and please patronize those businesses as a thank you for their support of our organization!

As many of you may have seen in the local news, the caboose project is well underway! Soon

we will be putting a fresh coat of paint on it to give it a nice shine before the Fair. We are still looking for donations to help offset the cost of this project and every little bit helps.

This summer we have been very fortunate to get some great help from interns and WDI summer workers. On page 7, you can read an article written and researched by one of our interns, Afton. Afton has been helping around the office with some administrative duties as well as performing research. We also have another intern from Riverland Community College named Viktoriia. Viktoriia is from the Ukraine and will have her own article in the next newsletter. She is working on marketing strategies and will be working towards some administrative duties as well. From WDI we received 7 summer helpers that

help with research, maintenance, and our collections inventory. It is amazing to see how much we have been able to do with their help! I appreciate everything that they have been able to do to accomplish so much.

Prior to the next newsletter we should have a new website up and running! Studio Ten Design has been working on an improved website for us that will contain more information and be easier to navigate. Keep watching for updates in the local paper as this moves ahead.

As always, our board and staff are looking at ways to decrease expenses. One item that is now available is for members to receive their newsletter via email! When the newsletter goes to print, we will send a PDF file to your email with the newsletter. All you need is an



Dustin B. Heckman
Executive Director
mchkdir@smig.net

email address and Adobe Reader (which is a free download from Adobe) to begin receiving your newsletter this way. If you'd like to start receiving your newsletter this way, send me an email at mchkdir@smig.net with the subject title "Newsletter by Email" and I will add you to the list. If you prefer to keep receiving your newsletter via regular mail, that's ok too!

See you at the Fair!

New & Renewed Members

Ann Bundy
Johnson Floral
Lansing Township
Brian Freidrich & Kristine Jensen
Belles & Beaus
Sybil Pickett
Richard & Josie Cummings
Dave's JDs
Shady Lane Farms
Suzanne Dickinson
Bev Nelson
Miner's Outdoor & Rec
Arleen Schnorenberg
Mower County Dairy Association
Myrna Ustanko
Dean & Ingrid Johnson
Del Staples
Dianna Rudolph
Hanson Tire Service of LeRoy
Sherwin-Williams Co.
Brian Voogd
Austin Post Bulletin
Roger & Ila Johnson

Solid Rock Photography
Medgaarden's Southwest Sales
Mildred Moeller
Paul Chase
Hoversten Johnson Beckmann &
Hovey
Mower County Shopper

M&H Tent Rentals
Absolute Energy
Hy Vee
Lou's Forever Framing
Nystrom Signs
Studio Ten Design

TEDDY BEAR PICNIC **SUNDAY, JULY 12** **1-3 PM**

Come join us for the Teddy Bear Picnic on Sunday, July 12 from 1-3 PM. Tickets are \$5 which is good for participating in games, wagon rides, picnic meal, and so much more! Buy your tickets ahead of time or at the door. For more information contact the staff during regular business hours.

Bring your friends, family, and teddy bears for this fun event!





Neveln 2nd grade visited on April 30 & May 1

What's happening at the museum?
Check out our event photos!



Banfield 3rd grade visited May 12-15. The classes divided their time between tours and classes in the one-room school.



Grand Meadow 3rd grade visited on May 22. Like Banfield, they spent most of their day in the one-room school.



Workforce staff, Jace & Jess, help with office work, research, and inventory.



Thanks to a program funded through the Workforce Center, we were able to get some much needed summer help! Matt & Erik have helped with building cleaning and some painting around the site.



Spring has brought a lot of cleaning around the historical society! One object that got a new look is the Bell of St. Augustine Church. Thanks to Jeff Witt & Bill Lewis for working to make a new stand for the bell and repainting the frame! With the new look, it was also moved into a new location by the windmill where it is more visible! Good work guys! And thank you to all of our clean-up helpers this spring! The historical

History of the Grand Meadow GAR Hall—Part 1

If the walls could talk in the Grand Army of the Republic Hall that stands at the end of the business district in Grand Meadow, what stories would we hear? The GAR Hall is one



of the last two halls in Minnesota.

Booth Post #130, GAR, was formed by sixteen Civil War Veterans on January 23, 1885, forming a fraternal organization, and naming it after a Hamilton Civil War soldier who had been killed in

the war. (Hamilton is on the border of Mower-Fillmore Counties.)

In 1889, the Woman's Relief Corps, Booth Corps # 62 was organized by the mothers, wives and daughters of the soldiers, helping those in need and suffering.

Men and women from the GAR Post #130 and the Woman's Relief Corps gathered in this hall over the years, meeting regularly after it was built in 1891. I wondered who these men and women were who kept this building alive.

The last four remaining GAR members were Lt. W.W. Ranney, A.J. Scribner, C.F. Greening and Benjamin Wright. In 1906, only three GAR members were left, and in

1914, the deed to the hall was placed in the hands of the WRC until March 18, 1960.

The last four members of the WRC, Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Lamp, Mrs. Pearl Travis and Emma Harvey, deeded over the GAR Hall to Mower County, with the Mower County Historical Society as its caretaker.

Palmer, Lamp, Travis and Harvey worked hard to keep the building's taxes paid and cared for the building, cleaning, and maintaining it until they deeded the hall to the county and MCHS. Through all the years, they honored the members of the GAR and WRC and what they stood for.

In July 1986, the GAR Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Sue Doocy
Museum Assistant
mchs@smig.net

The GAR Hall is truly a national treasure to honor those who have fought in the past and continue to fight for our nation's freedom.

Check out the next newsletter to learn about the members of Booth Post #130.

Memorial or Gift Donation

I'm happy to enclose a gift to be used by MCHS to carry forward the objectives of the society, namely to discover, collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the history of Mower County and to relate it to the history of the State of Minnesota.

I've enclosed a \$ _____ memorial in abiding memory of _____.

My name _____ Family Address _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ City/State/Zip _____

Check here if you do not wish to have your name printed in the Museum Messenger with this gift.

Mail Donation to: Mower County Historical Society, 1303 6th Avenue SW, Austin, MN 55912

Shopping at MCHS

Austin 150th Anniversary Pictorial

1004 Locomotive DVD

City of Austin & Mower County Afghans

Variety of Books

Panoramic photos of Downtown Austin

Variety of photos, post cards and maps

City Directories

2009—2010 Keep the Doors Open Sponsors

Platinum Level Sponsors

Clayton Township
Robert & Colleen Weimer
Solid Rock Photography
Udolpho Township

Gold Level Sponsors

Austin Township
Barbara K. Lewis
Lansing Township
Mildred Moeller
Mower County Shopper
Nevada Township
Stacy Bennett
Studio Ten Design
Tradexpos

Silver Level Sponsors

Adams Township
Akkerman Inc.
Bill & Sharon Lewis
Dexter Township
Harold & Kathy Paine
Helen Hocker
Home Federal Savings Bank
Hormel Foods Corporation
Johnson Floral
Miner's Outdoor & Rec
Pleasant Valley Township
Racine Township
Red Rock Township
Spinler Construction Inc.
Viking Glass & Lock
Wagner Construction
Windom Township
Witt Fabrication

Bronze Sponsors

American Family Insurance-Jeff Austin
Ankeny's Mini Mart #5
Austin Main Street Project
Austin Post Bulletin
Baudler, Baudler, Maus & Blahnik LLP
Belles & Beaus
Charles Wilson
Clair Allen
David & Milda Weness
Don & Leah Konken
Farmers State Bank of Elkton
Fox Electric
Frank & Carol Bridges
Harvey & Alice Sathre
Hill, Larson, Walth, & Benda, P.A.
Holiday Cars
Hoversten Johnson Beckmann & Hovey
HyVee
Kenny's Oak Grill
Lloyd & Ramona Swenson
Lou's Forever Framing
Mary-Frances Jones
Medgaarden's Southwest Sales
Mower County Farm Bureau
Mower County Farmers Mutual Insurance
Mower County Vehicle Registration
Nystrom Signs
Russell & Cheryl Potter
Sargeant Township
Scott & Erin Felten
Super Fresh Produce
Twin Towers Craft Room
Ulven's Ace Hardware
U.S. Bank

**This year's KTDO campaign raised over \$19,300 in cash and in-kind gifts!
Our Ag Building sponsor campaign raised \$3,750!**

Thank you to our 2009-2010 sponsors for your support of our organization!

History of the 1884 Mower County Courthouse

In 1881 the public square in Austin was purchased for \$1,925 and the plan was to build a new county courthouse on this lot. The Board of County Commissioners decided that the old two-story brick courthouse was no longer large enough for the rapidly progressing county. D.J. Tubbs was awarded the contract for the construction of the basement of the new courthouse. H.J. Anderson was appointed as the superintendent of the basement construction and was paid \$30 a week. The building committee made plans to become thoroughly familiar with the many different kinds of architecture. They made several trips to Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Minneapolis to study the plans of such a building. The architect and designer chosen for the project, was W.H. Dennis of Minneapolis. The contract for the building of the courthouse was awarded to Snow and Allsop of Chicago. Mr. Snow was one of the early residents of Mower County. The building contract called for \$52,291 to construct the new courthouse.

The new courthouse was completed and first occupied in the month of March 1884. The courthouse was definitely one

of the most beautiful courthouses in Minnesota during this time. When it was completed it was an imposing structure and said to be the most commodious structure west of Milwaukee, WI. The building was three stories of red brick supported by a high



limestone basement and the top was a Roman renaissance tower and a narrow dome. The dome towered 170ft from the base of the building. The total cost for the building, lots, and heating was about \$67,900. The city of Austin paid \$6,000 for it while the rest of the residents in Mower County paid the remaining \$61,900. The new courthouse was dedicated during its first session of court by Judge J.Q. Farmer.

The building was doing a wonderful job serving as the county courthouse up until the 1950s when talk began to surface about the construction of a new courthouse. In April of 1950 Fire Chief John Tobar found the courthouse to be unsafe in case of fire. Also during the 1950s it was found that the storage facilities and vaults could no longer hold all the records for the county. Many more rooms were needed for such things as conferences and offices. The county decided to add an annex to the courthouse in May 1952. This new building was to be the third building built for a courthouse purpose during the 95 years Austin has been the Mower county seat. On May 27, 1952 cornerstone was laid for the new annex building. The building was to cost \$323,820. On July 21, 1965, digging for another annex building began. The first person to shovel ground for this new building was Robert Shaw, the chairman for the Mower County Board. This groundbreaking really seemed to be the beginning of the end for the beautiful 1884 courthouse. In 1967 a decision was made that the old Victorian

Courthouse was no longer needed by the County and it



Afton Esson
2009 Summer Intern
Winona State 2011
History Major

was leveled. The brick and stone were hauled to the Mower County Fairgrounds for fill. The dome was given to the Mower County

Historical Society at the Mower County fairgrounds. The Historical Society

decided to erect the dome on concrete pillars. The dome monument was to serve as a "symbol of democracy of that era." The dome was a unique feature at the 1967 Mower County Fair. At that time it was the only dome of its kind displayed in such a manner. The dome was moved to the Root River Antique Power Associations heritage center in 2002, which is located south of Racine on Highway 63.

2009—2010 Ag Building Sponsors

Klouse Concrete Construction	Mower County Corn & Soybean Producers	Mower County Dairy Association	Northern Country Coop
Patterson Seed LTD	Shady Lane Farms	Dave's JDs	Tucker Tiling & Construction
Witt Fabrication	M&H Tent Rentals	Hanson Tire Service of LeRoy	Absolute Energy

Where the Present Meets the Past.

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Austin, Minnesota
Permit No. 150

MOWER COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

1303 6th Avenue SW
Austin, MN 55912

Phone: 507-437-6082

Fax: 507-437-6082

E-mail: mchs@smig.net

www.mowercountyhistory.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Upcoming Events

July 12 Teddy Bear Picnic 1-3 PM

August 11-16 Mower County Fair

*Open Tuesday through Saturday, 1-8 PM, & Sunday
from 1-5 PM.

*Check out the flyer for a list of activities!

*Consider volunteering for a few hours during the
week! Call Dustin or Sue for scheduling!

Encourage friends & family to join today!

Membership Levels Available

Individual \$15

Family \$25

Business \$50

All memberships run January 1 to December 31.