

**MOWER COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

- November 14 8-10 AM
Applebee's Breakfast
Fundraiser
- November 26
Office Closed
- December 11 4-6 PM
Pre-Sale Bake Sale
- December 12 3-7 PM
Christmas in the County
- December 24-25
Office Closed
- January 1
Office Closed

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Museum Messenger

November/December 2009

Historical Society Launches New Website!

On October 9th, the Mower County Historical Society launched a brand new website with more information and easier navigation than our previous version. The process began in February when Dustin and Barb met with Becky Dibble of Studio Ten Design. A new website had been talked about for some time and the timing was finally right. Becky offered to develop the site for FREE as a contribution to the community. We are forever

thankful to her for developing this project.

The website launch was announced via email to the press, community members, and some members of the organization. The reviews have all been positive. Some have noted the easy navigation of the site while others enjoy the wealth of information provided on the site.

Overall, the site has a few final touches to be made in the next few months but for the most

part it is all set. To view the new website, go to www.mowercountyhistory.org Also, let us know what you think of the new website by dropping us an email at mchkdir@smig.net.



Get Ready for Christmas in the County ~ December 12th

It is that time of year again! Time for the 5th Annual Christmas in the County event. This event has grown to be the largest fundraiser for the historical society and happens to be the last of the year. Festivities will kick off Friday, December 11 in the Administration Building with the Pre-Sale Bake Sale from 4-6 PM. All outdoor activities and continuation of the bake sale will be on Saturday, December 12 from 3-7 PM.

Back again this year are rides across the snowy fairgrounds site in mule & horse drawn wagons and sleighs. Let the kids have some fun with the miniature ponies for a ride or two. While you wait to get a ride, stop down to the 1004 and blow the whistle on our mighty

engine. Kids will also have the opportunity to partake in some activities and crafts like doll making, Christmas cookie decorating, and ornament making.



Wander among the buildings to see a light display that will put you in the spirit of the season.

We will even have lights that dance to music! Any visitor needing a break can stop by the bake sale to get their holiday "cooking" done without much hassle. Or if you need instant gratification, grab some homemade chili and an old fashioned bottle of pop from Spring Grove Bottling.

Once you have had enough to eat, be sure to place your bid on our silent auction items. One of the items is an autographed baseball from Minnesota Twins legend Tony Oliva! Music will also be provided throughout the afternoon and evening. And what Christmas event would be complete without talking with Santa!

More activities are currently being planned so watch for information in the local media and on our website.



Barbara K. Lewis
President

President's Thoughts—

Fall cleaning, spring cleaning or just cleaning out drawers or cupboards can bring unexpected information. My mother was a saver of oodles of stories, newspaper clippings, cards, and pictures. In her collection our family found a newspaper article which was printed in the Austin Daily Herald in the early 1970's. The article announced the opening of the Mower County Historical Museum for the season. The article announced that the historical center at the fairgrounds would be open for three months. Hours would be 10 am to 5 pm and open Sundays. Trained tour guides would take visitors through the 28 historical museums and mementoes. Tours would be approximately two hours in duration.

It also stated that in 1971, 46 states and 17 foreign countries registered. Over 200,000 persons visited the center. According to the historical society officers this was the largest attendance to the center. It also talked about the windmill that our father donated to the Historical Society. The windmill was located between the 107 year old fine arts church and the

Vermont horse drinking fountain that stood in the early days at the north end of Austin's main street.

According to the article the Historical Society started in a tent in 1945 with the first permanent building erected in 1949. Each year since 1949, one or two buildings were added. Society officers said that the historical center will continue to grow in the future because of the keen interest of the local people in Mower County and the surrounding area.

Wow! Have we ever changed! Just think from 1971 to now how hours, days, resources, etc. have changed. We still have the buildings plus a new agriculture building and look at all of the new artifacts that have come to the center. Think about all of the events and activities that happen. It is exciting to look back to what was and to what is now.

Last Tuesday a group of loyal friends of the society threshed the oats that was to be done on our Fall Harvest event. The threshing machine and tractor belonging to Jeff Witt purred

like a kitten and those who came to help had a great day. We all had a good time doing the harvest of the past. Yes it would have been fantastic to have more people there to see and experience the event, but our weather just is not cooperating with us this year. Thank you to Earl Hagstrom, Dick Evenson, Dick Cummings, Kathy Paine, Bill Lewis and Jeff Witt for getting the oats thrashed and the straw baled. Thank you to Don Konken for making it possible to have the oat bundles to thrash. He will return the oats and straw to the Amish family that provided it for us.

The history of the Society continues with loyal friends, staff, and members. Coming soon is our biggest event of the year, **Christmas in the County.** We need bakers, and helpers, so give the office a call. Your time and talents are so greatly appreciated. Call 437-6082 and tell us what you will bake or how you can help.

Put Dec. 11 and 12 on your Calendar. Come have fun, eat, ride with the horses and mules and buy your Christmas goodies.

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, Curator

Memorials

Ralph Schammel from Robert & Colleen Weimer

Deceased Members

Margaret Madson

Donations

Kathleen McConnell	Harold & Kathy Paine
Austin Morning Lions	Terry & Sue Doocy
DAVA Arnold Brandt #27	Barbara Lewis
Studio Ten Design	Dustin Heckman

Director's Dispatch—

What is with this weather? I have grown up in Minnesota my whole life and still wonder if anyone has an answer for the weather. One day it is warm and sunny, the next I am digging out a heavier jacket to wear. Unfortunately the weather kept us from having the Fall Harvest Celebration outdoor activities, but it could not stop the bake sale! Thank you to all the bakers and volunteers that helped with this event. We were able to raise over \$830 for this event! Not bad for staying in the warm Administration Building. I would also like to offer a sincere apology to anyone who wanted to see our threshing bee or take a ride in the wagons. We did eventually get the oats threshed on October 27. To see a video of the event check out the Austin Post Bulletin website and search for the story "Crew shows how to give oats a good threshing".

Thank you to the group that showed off their threshing skills!

As told by the front page article from the newsletter, we are gearing up for Christmas in the County on December 12. A main attraction to this celebration is our Christmas lights display. The historical society is looking for help in two ways with this. The first is for people to help put up the lights. We do not have any set days to do this but if you want to stop by during regular hours (Tuesday through Friday, 10 AM—4PM) and spend some time putting up lights, you are more than welcome to. The second way you can help us is by donating lights for our display or other decorations. Our goal is to begin changing our normal lights over to LED lights to be a little greener and cut down our energy costs. However, we will take any

lights that you would like to donate. We are also looking for a waving Santa in his sleigh to replace our older model, which is starting to show some wear and tear. Please let us know if you would like to help with this large project.

I would also like to take this time to thank two board members who will be leaving the board at the end of the year. Don Chapek has served on the board for two terms now. Don was instrumental in soliciting Ag Building Sponsorships each year and assisting with the Antique Tractor Show. Stan Aldrich will be leaving us after one term following the December meeting. Stan has been our Vice President the past few years and worked on our Accessioning Committee to decide what artifacts are brought into our collection. Both of these guys will be



Dustin B. Heckman
Executive Director
mchkdir@smig.net

missed for all their hard work to make the historical society a better place. Thank you for all that each of you have done during your time on the board. Watch the next newsletter for information on our new board members!

On a parting note, I hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and a joyous new year. See you in 2010!

New & Renewed Members

William Grover Sr.
Elaine Myers-Gilbertson
Virginia Beck
Pioneer Seed Representatives
Verna Magnuson
Thomas & Kathleen Hart
Leroy Van Proosdy
Terry & Jan Fox
Yvonne Jondal
Thomas Laska
Diana Tizard
Anderson Memorials
David Lyon
William McGovern
Dustin Heckman
Patrick Hansel
Adams, Rizzi & Sween, P.A.
ThermoKing
Stephanie Keltner
Mark Wolterman
Jane Thomson Giffin

Help the historical society on November 17th!

On November 17th, go to <http://www.givemn.org> and make a donation to the Mower County Historical Society! On this day, approximately \$500,000 in matching money has been made available until the money is exhausted. For every \$1 a nonprofit can raise through giveMN.org, it will be matched 50 cents by a number of community foundations. Donations are accepted by credit/debit card at the site. The event takes place from 8 AM on November 17th until 8 PM on November 18th.

giveMN.org
Click. Contribute. Change Your World.

Do you like to bake and want to help MCHS?



During our Christmas in the County event, MCHS has a bake sale. We are always looking for more bakers! If you can help, contact members of our Special Events Committee, Barb Lewis at 433-4983 or Kathy Paine at 437-6256.

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



Sharon Lewis helps prepare the table of pumpkins and gourds for the Fall Harvest bake sale. The bake sale brought in over \$830 for the historical society, despite cancelling all of the main outdoor events for the Fall Harvest.



We would like to thank the DAVA Arnold Brandt #27 for the donation of a new flag and pole behind the M-4 Sherman Tank.

Members of Den 4 Pack 113 of Austin Cub Scouts visited the Herald J. Williams Indian Building on October 19.



The historical society would like to congratulate former board member Jack Thill on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Austin Area Chamber of Commerce! Way to go, Jack!

Help the Historical Society during these November community fundraisers!

Austin Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser
Saturday, November 14 8-10 AM

Enjoy a pancake breakfast at Applebee's while supporting MCHS! Be served and greeted by staff and volunteers during the wonderful event. Tickets are \$6 per person and can be purchased at the office or on the day of the event.

Austin Youngers Community Day
Saturday, November 14 All Day

Purchase a coupon book from the historical society for \$5 and receive coupons for 10-30% off non-sale items. Buy your coupon book at the historical society office before the event.

For more info on these events, call us at (507) 437-6082.



Our threshing crew takes a break while contemplating the next bit of work needing to be done. Thanks to everyone who helped out that day to get the work done!

History of the Sterling Shopping Center

A long standing landmark has recently been retired and replaced with a brand new sign. Change and progress are inevitable. Old signs become worn and tired, and a new look is required. But as long as we have our memories and a few simple snapshots, we can share those images with our friends and family.

Sterling Shopping Center began with the purchase of part of Streveling Dairy property in 1948. Opening in April 1949, the first business to begin at the new mall was Enstad Nash, Inc. Enstad Nash was auto service garage.

From this first business, the mall expanded. The following year, Trowbridge Super Market had its grand opening, serving the community for years.

The mall was designed by former Austin resident, James Horne. It was not long before other store owners established businesses at the mall. Sterling Motel, Kenneth Rosenthal Painting and Decorating Store, Sterling Barber Shop, Sterling Pastries, Warn's Shoe Store, Earl's Furniture, and Sterling Ice Cream.

Cleveland Hardware opened its doors in 1951, followed by Sterling Theater, R.L. Hayes Plumbing, Merchant China and Glass Shop, Hatch Jewelry and Sterling Builders. Still more opened in 1952, Sterling Walgreen Drug Store, Hanna T.V., and Radio, Stiver's Florists, Dr. T.S. Thompson, dentist and Dr. James Thompson, MD.

Just before the 5th Anniversary, The Toggery, DeVillier Hair Stylist, Dr.

Glen Boeck, optometrist, and the Gold Bond Premium Store took up residence to serve the public.

Sterling's candidate for Miss Austin, Janice Plager, was present at Sterling's fifth anniversary celebrating with the citizens of Austin at the open house, and Sterling Theater offered free movies. The investment of the mall reached over a million dollars and was the largest retail development in Austin, let alone Mower County's history. The mall boasted 26 stores and service establishments.

Sterling State Bank opened for business in April of 1958, 51 years ago, and has successfully served the community for many years. In 1979, it experienced what every bank dreads, a bank heist, and a search for the suspects took time. Photos of the crime scene were displayed in the Austin Daily Herald, with detectives dusting for fingerprints, gathering evidence and clues.

Sterling Builders originally rented to store owners, but as the shopping center celebrated its 12th year in April 1962, things changed. Store owners began purchasing their buildings, remodeling, and expanding. Other changes came with the expansions, Trowbridge remained, Ben Franklin moved in, and the drug store became Sterling Drug Company. Sterling Bakery sold to P.J. Holand, the State Senator who was a very active member in the Mower County Agricultural Society and one of the key players in organizing the Mower County Historical Society in 1947. Younkers was also at this shopping

mall for years before 1962, later it moved to Oak Park Mall.

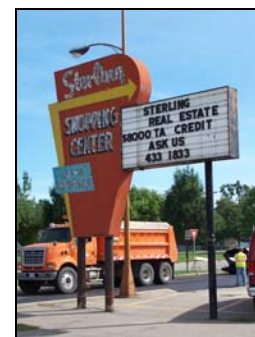
By 1999, the state's second oldest strip mall and businesses in downtown Austin were planning to renovate and refurbish. Sterling Drug and Astrup's Fine Gifts would relocate to the former Elden's SuperFair store after it had renovated the design to look like Clancy's Main Street in Hastings, MN. The new look of Main Street stores inside the main building, right down to the fireplace, indoor playground and cobblestone walkway. This building was constructed in 1950 with support beams 25 feet apart instead of today's 50 feet and the unique shape of the mall was creating architectural challenges to design the new store.

Stores moved from one location to another in the mall for many reasons, more space, better location, and more serviceable display area for merchandise and the expense of renting or owning a building. When J.C. Penney left Oak Park Mall, people wanted it back and the owners of the Little Professor Book Center expanded their business interests into one store adding a counter for J.C. Penney, along with a tanning salon. Sterling Café and SuperStar Video remained in the area, although later, they too relocated.

In September 2009, Precision Signs removed the old Sterling Shopping Center sign with neon lights and marquee, and replaced it with the new Sterling Main Street sign with an electronic marquee.



Sue Doocy
Curator
mchs@smig.net



The Sterling Shopping Center sign before it was replaced.

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

2009—2010 Keep the Doors Open Sponsors

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Twin Towers Craft Room
Ulven's Ace Hardware
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*The Mower County Historical Society
Board of Directors and Staff would like to
wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving,
Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!*



Need an end-of-year tax deduction? MCHS is in need of some supplies!

It seems like every year in November and December, people are looking for some last minute tax deductions. The Mower County Historical Society is a great place to make that donation! Of course, the easiest way of making that donation is simply to write a check to the organization.



However, office supplies, stamps, and other items can make an even greater impact but giving the same benefit to the donor.

The staff of the historical society has put together a list of items that can be purchased and dropped off at our office that will get us through the end of the year and maybe even into the beginning of 2010!

- Stamps (regular stamps, post card stamps, \$1 stamps, 17 cent stamps,

- and smaller stamps for odd postage amounts)
- 8 1/2 x 11 white multi-purpose or copy paper
- Business envelopes
- 8 1/2 x 11 colored paper
- Broom & dust pan
- Post it Notes
- Avery 5160 mailing labels
- Avery 8387 postcards
- Styrofoam coffee cups
- Plates, napkins, & silverware to be used during special events & fundraisers
- 3" three ring binders
- T-frame or L-frame sign holders

- Scotch tape dispenser refills
- Colored card stock paper

Or if you are unsure what would be best, buy a gift card at Staples in Austin or our main office supplier, Office Elements in Mason City, that we can use also! For Office Elements, contact Phil Perry at 1-800-798-1986 to purchase a gift card.

With these donations, it will help us to cover the costs of every day items.

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
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Freeborn-Mower Coop Services	Broskoff Structures Inc.	Freeborn County Cooperative Oil	Gehling Auction & Implement
Central Valley Cooperative	Pioneer Seed Representatives		

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

Where the Present Meets the Past.

**MOWER COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

1303 6th Avenue SW
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Upcoming Events

Sat., November 14	8-10 AM	Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser
	All Day	Younkers Community Day
Fri., December 11	4-6 PM	Pre-sale Bake Sale
Sat., December 12	3-7 PM	Christmas in the County

*Watch the local papers and media for more information!

**Not sure what to get your friend or relative for
Christmas? Get them a membership to the Mower
County Historical Society!**

Individual Membership \$15 Family Membership \$25
Business Membership \$50

Memberships run January 1 to December 31 of each year.