

Museum Messenger

September/October 2009

- October 10
Fall Harvest Celebration
- November 5
Annual Meeting at the
Hormel Historic Home
- November 14
Applebee's Breakfast
Fundraiser

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History of the Grand Meadow GAR Hall—Part 2

In the last newsletter, Sue told the history of the GAR Hall. In the second part of this series, she tells a little bit more about the men of this organization.

Charles F. Greening's presence is the first to attract attention. Why? Maybe it is because of the 1862 Tower musket that rests in the display case in the GAR Hall that he carried into battle. Or the paintings by his daughter, Josie, that grace the walls, the first is of a "Soldier and His Sweetheart" in a farewell or perhaps a "welcome home" embrace, and the other, a tripod of muskets, canteen and a soldier's pouch. These paintings hung in the Exchange Bank until it closed.



When the war broke out, Greening had not been tall enough to join the Union soldiers in battle, so he joined the home guard in Galena, Illinois. Later, after reaching the required

height, he joined with seven other boys and went off to war. He served with Company A, 11th and Company H, 23rd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. War-weary after some of the toughest battles, he returned to a tinner's life in Illinois and was successful until the business closed.

Greening traveled west and was one of the first settlers in Grand Meadow. In 1870, he began his business here and two years later, was elected the town treasurer. Aware that the town did not have a safe, he started the Exchange Bank and in successful days, it conducted an annual business of over a million dollars. The last Exchange Bank calendar that had been distributed before the bank closed

Story continues on page 5

3rd Annual Fall Harvest Celebration to include Oat Threshing

Join the Mower County Historical Society for our 3rd annual Fall Harvest Celebration on Saturday, October 10 from 12-4 PM at the fairgrounds. This year visitors will have the opportunity to witness many new activities and take home some goodies from our bake sale!

The largest new activity this year will be an oat threshing demonstration. The guys will get started at noon and keep going until the job is done! Along with this demonstration, everyone will be able to see a corn sheller in operation as well as other antique machinery.

Looking for something to do for the kids? Let them try out many different craft activities like doll

making, candle making, and pressing homemade apple cider. When they need a break from the fun, take them for a ride on one of our wagons or in a 1921 Model T.



Other activities will include a butter churning demonstration, musical entertainment, many

small engines on display, and the Blacksmith Shop in operation! Don't forget to ring the bell on the 1004 engine!

When you need a break from all the fun, stop by our food stand for some homemade chili, hot dogs, and some pie and ice cream. You can also take some home with you after perusing the baked goods at the bake sale! We will have pies, cookies, breads, lefse, and more!

This is definitely an event that should not be missed by anyone! Bring out the whole family for a Saturday afternoon of fun at the historical society. Bring a friend or neighbor with to see us! New faces are always welcomed. The best part is, admission is free! Join us on October 10 at the Fall Harvest Celebration!

President's Thoughts—



**Barbara K. Lewis
President**

First and foremost I want to say **THANK YOU!!** to all of the MCHS Office Staff and helpers, the many VOLUNTEERS who gave of their time to make it possible for the Historical Society buildings to be open to the fair visitors, and all of the people who spent time at the parking gate selling tickets. This was the best parking revenue that we have ever brought into the Historical Society. It was great receiving comments like, "Oh I did not know that this parking money benefited the Historical Society." "I'm glad to help out. We will park here again." Everyone I talked to about their visit to the Historical area and Antique Tractor show had positive comments about what they saw and did. The kids especially liked the archeological dig; I think the parents did too. Our concession stand people were enjoyable to work with and added to our end of the grounds.

I am often asked, "Why do you spend so much time at that place?" (MCHS). Most people would probably expect me to answer, "Because, I love history", however, that is only part of the reason, "It is the people that I have the opportunity to meet and work with during our special

events and daily working." In my four years of involvement with the Historical Society, I have found that most people are willing to help out. Even, people who are not members of the Society give of their time and talents. I am already begging for help for the upcoming events of our *Fall Harvest on October 10th* and *Christmas in the County on December 11th and 12th.* **Bakers and workers for the day of the events, call the office and let us know what you will do to help. Get to us before we call you!**

November 5th is our Annual Meeting. I remember the first annual meeting that I attended in the Administration Building. It was a November afternoon, and the Board of Director's were in their chairs and there were 5 of us in the audience. It was a real eye opener to me to see so few people there. We have changed that scenario, with the dinner meeting, good food, fun talk, interesting programs, and a business meeting. We have gone from board members and a few members attending to 50 people in attendance. Let's see if we can break that number and get 75 people to our annual meeting this year. This year we have chosen

to have the Historic Hormel Home as our place to get together. We will be able to see the new addition. Our speaker Al Batt will be with us to share a great message and give us some time to laugh. The food will be great, the business meeting will give you an update of what has happened during the past year, plans for the future of your society, and we will elect new members to the Board of Directors. Honors will be given and door prizes will end the evening. So call in and make a reservation today for the *Mower County Historical Society Annual Meeting.* Call 437-6082.

Remember this is YOUR Historical Society. If you have never attended one of these meetings it is time for you to try one. I look forward to seeing and meeting you on November 5th at the Historic Hormel Home.

Bring your friends, families, and neighbors to the Fall Harvest on October 10th. There will be good food to eat, baked goods to buy, fun things to learn, teach your children about the past, reminisce with friends. Come join in the fun!

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

Bill Janssen by Robert & Colleen Weimer

Donations

Mower County	Charles Wilson
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Pro Form Insulation	Austin Morning Lions
Rev. Mary-Frances Jones	Sybil Pickett
Larry Hilgendorf	Glen Davis
Ken Hartwig	Nystrom Signs
Lou's Forever Framing	

Director's Dispatch—

Where did the summer go? I do not remember it even starting much less ending! That is good news because that means the historical society has had another busy summer. But before I tell you about all the great things that have been going on, I want to recognize the folks that do not hear it nearly enough: our volunteers! If it was not for the great group of volunteers that we have at MCHS, we would be lost and not be able to do all the great things that we do. To every volunteer out there, **THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!** Your hard work does not go unnoticed!

In July, MCHS hosted another successful Teddy Bear Picnic. We were able to giveaway close to 70 bears this year! The attendance was better than previous years and continues to grow, as do our other events!

And who can forget about the 125th Mower County Fair just a few weeks ago. Just to give everyone a little background on my experience with organizing for a fair. Where I had been previously, I was in charge of organizing about 10-15 people to sit in a booth at the fair. This year was definitely a crash course in planning and organization. It was great to see so many people come through our buildings and the many great volunteers that helped to point the way for those folks. The final tally for visitors during fair week was over 25,000 people to come through our buildings and parking gate! That number is mind blowing! Next year we will work hard to come up with fun programs that keep people interested and bring them back for more!

Now I want to put forward a challenge to you, our members

and volunteers. MCHS is a growing organization and it is always great to find new supporters and volunteers. Here is my challenge: next time you are out with a group of friends, talk to them about why you support or volunteer at MCHS. Most of the time the best publicity we get is from anyone that brags us up. If you need any ideas on how you can do this, remember this story about what one of our current board members is doing to bring in new faces. This board member meets with a group each week. Every time they see the group, the board member informs them about upcoming events and even designs a personal invitation to hand out to each person to attend. Imagine if others did this! Through volunteering we could offer more activities at fundraising events or make them last longer than a few hours. How about if something



Dustin B. Heckman
Executive Director
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like this brought in three new individual memberships each year and these people passed it along to others and the same ripple effect took place. In five years, that would be 363 new members and \$5,445 in new membership money that we did not have as of today! Do you know what we could do with that extra money? I do and that's why I'm challenging each of you to help in our growth.

New & Renewed Members

Freeborn-Mower Coop Services
Eileen Evans
Patti Neff
Helen Swain
Duane Felt
Travelin' Picnic Tables
Berg's Nursery
Grand Slam Construction
Ruth Leibrand
Pat Sorenson
Roald & Rosalee Storvick
Broskoff Structures Inc.
Freeborn County Cooperative Oil
Gehling Auction & Implement
Stella Yamazaki
Ken Hartwig
Younkers
Charles Stern
Central Valley Cooperative
Robert Gross
Ivan & Mary Witt

Need some winter storage space for your car, boat, or camper?

The historical society will be renting out space in our Ag Building starting October 20. Call for rates today at 437-6082. Limited space is available.



Do you like to bake and want to help MCHS?



During our Fall Harvest Celebration and Christmas in the County, 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.



Don & Carol Ingvaldson visited the Kehret Wayside Chapel, with their family, on August 22 in honor of their 50th Anniversary. They were married in the chapel!



Local Civil War reenactors helped MCHS promote the Civil War Flag Welcome Home Ceremony.



This young lad tested his skills at bowling during the Teddy Bear Picnic. Other activities included face painting and a watermelon seed spitting contest. It was a fun day for all that attended! Thank you to Solid Rock Photography for capturing the images during our fundraising events.

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



Members of the Mower County Fair Board and Chamber Ambassadors attended a ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of our new exhibit, *125 Years of the Fair*.



Board member Don Konken gives rides to people and teddy bears at the Teddy Bear Picnic in July.



Look what I found! A young girl takes part in our archaeology dig during the fair. The archaeology dig was a new attraction to MCHS during the fair and was well received. It will definitely be back next year!

Grand Meadow GAR Hall—Continued from page 1

during the Great Depression, is displayed in the GAR Hall as a reminder of Greenings contributions to the community. He had also served two terms in the legislature and various community offices in Grand Meadow. The Greenings raised two daughters and three sons. One of his sons, Elgar, followed Greening's footsteps into the banking business.

In 1854, **Engelbert O. Hovda** had arrived with the second group of settlers to Bear Creek and two years later, saw the organization of the Bear Creek Church. Hovda also served in the Civil War from 1863 to 1864, with Company K, 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery. He returned home to Grand Meadow to raise his family. A framed charcoal sketch of Hovda in military uniform is on display on the north wall of the hall.

W.W. Ranney enlisted in 1861, and served as Lieutenant with Company A, 26th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry, and fought for the Union. He was promoted quickly and after the battle at Shiloh was promoted to the rank of first Lieutenant, for "gallant services" (1884 MC History). Arriving in Mower County in 1878, W.W. Ranney graduated from Iowa Law School in 1876 and practiced law for two years there before practicing in Grand Meadow in 1878. He was elected probate judge in 1886 and served as justice of the peace after 1891. Ranney platted two additions in Grand Meadow, West Park and Woodlawn Park.

Andrew J. Scribner preempted land with his father in Frankford Township. He enlisted in the Union Army in 1864 and served in Company I, 6th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. He

returned to Grand Meadow and purchased the newspaper and made a life time career in the business while in Minnesota, South Dakota and Montana.

Benjamin Wright enlisted in Company C, 22nd Wisconsin Infantry, where he went south and was taken to Libby as a prisoner. He was paroled and sent back to the Union line, exchanged in 1863 and sent home to a hospital at Camp Randall, Madison, Wisconsin and discharged in 1865. He was a member of the GAR and the Masons. In 1866, he came to Frankford and began to work out and two years later, bought a farm that grew to be 800 acres. It was a successful farm with horse and cattle stock. He is described as a man of "inflexible integrity" in the 1911 Mower County History.

John Espenscheid was an early GAR recruit who was the first member to answer the "last roll call". Mower County land records show Espenscheid claimed land on May 1, 1861 in Racine Township, section 9. He had settled in the Racine area in 1857.

A portrait of the **Schroeder** brothers in military uniforms hangs on the south wall of the hall. John Schroeder enlisted with Company C, 9th Wisconsin Volunteers and served for three years. He traveled with his brothers and settled in Racine Township, where he bought 240 acres over time.

Others who fought in the Civil War:

Charles N. Bostwick enlisted into MN Co. C, 9th MN Volunteer Infantry in 1862 and served until 1865.

A.J. Stewart served with Co. A, 4th MN Volunteer Infantry.

R.A. Donaldson served with Co. K, 1st MN Heavy Artillery.

James Carson served with a Co. of the 4th MA Cavalry.

Oliver Lewis enlisted with Co. K, 49th WI Volunteer Infantry.

Nels Seaverson joined Co. K, 1st MN Heavy Artillery.

N.S. Green enlisted with Co. A, 23rd WI Volunteer Infantry.

H.H. Hartley served with Co. E, 4th MN Volunteer Infantry.

C.P. Gladden enlisted with Co., 106th NY Volunteer Infantry.

H.B. Sheldon enlisted in Co. I, 6th MN Volunteer Infantry.

J.W. Farquar served as a Sergeant with Co. C, 12th U.S. Infantry and Co. D, Brackett's Battalion, MN Cavalry.

The last four remaining GAR members were Lieut. W.W. Ranney, A.J. Scribner, C.F. Greening and Benjamin Wright.

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.



Sue Doocy
Curator
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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

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Check out the insert for information on our Annual Meeting on November 5 at 6 PM.

Business meeting will include proposed changes to the MCHS By-Laws.



History of the 1860 Lyle School

In 1860 a building was bought in Otrano and moved to Lyle for use as a school. Students were taught in the building until about 1874. The first official schoolhouse was constructed in 1873 when the school district was organized. It was a 16x 26 foot building with decks extended around three sides attached to the walls with benches for seats. The first teacher to teach at the school was S. Anna



McCune from Austin. In 1877 a large two-room school was built. This building was used as the Lyle Public School until 1906 when a new \$15,000 school was constructed. The 1877 building was converted to the Culvert

Factory. In 1957 the school was completely remodeled and enlarged in a \$530,000 building program. This was the same time schools were reorganizing and redistricting because country schools were closing. In 2002 The Lyle School District presented an idea to tear down the 1906 building and construct a new and improved school. On May 24th 2005 the voters of the district

approved the new school. That is the school that you now see as you drive past Lyle on Highway 218.

This article was written by Jace Anderson, a WDI Program summer employee. Jace has been helping with filing information and researching in our library.

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 1004 Locomotive DVD
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 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**

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Upcoming Events

Sat., October 10	12-4 PM	Fall Harvest Celebration
Thurs., November 5	6 PM	Annual Meeting at the Hormel Historic Home
Sat., November 14	8-10 AM	Applebee's Breakfast Fundraiser

*Watch the local papers and media for more information!

**Encourage friends & family to join today!
Special deal for NEW MEMBERS ONLY!!!**

Individual Membership \$8 Family Membership \$15
Business Membership \$25

**This offer is good until November 1st for new members only!
The membership will carry through December 31, 2009.**