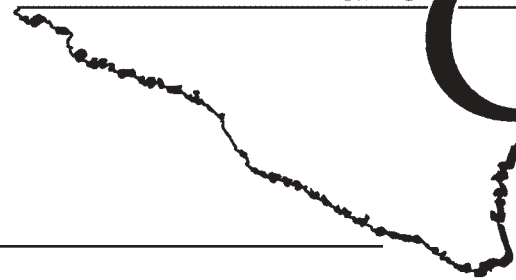


the **Crossing**
a publication of the Nicollet County Historical Society



Volume 5, Issue 2 / July 2000



100 Years - July 28-30, 2000 - Congratulations!

Lafayette Centennial Celebration

Village of Lafayette located in Lafayette Township of Nicollet County was incorporated on April 28, 1900. The small village grew due to the Minneapolis/St. Louis Railroad that ran through the town from 1896 to 1975. Today Lafayette is the home to over 500 residents and 30 businesses.

The City of Lafayette will celebrate its Centennial on the weekend of July 28-30, 2000. Highlights of the celebration include scavenger hunts, a talent show, music, food and the parade on Sunday, July 30 with former actress Tippi Hedren as Grand Marshal. To understand Hedren's connection to Lafayette check out Lafayette's new centennial history book available in the Treaty Site

History Center Museum Store or at select locations in Lafayette.

Another highlight to the weekend and for the rest of the summer is the exhibit "Lafayette, Days Gone By" now featured at the Treaty Site History Center. A smaller exhibit will also be on display at the Centennial celebration.



photos courtesy of Lafayette Centennial Committee

NCHS President's Report

by Herb Poncin

Summer is here!

All of our summer activities have begun. We will be entered in parades again with a team of horses, pulling the old St. Peter Cornet Band Wagon. Come and see us!

I invite you to visit the Harkin Store this summer. It is nine miles northwest of New Ulm, in a quiet country setting along the Minnesota River far removed from the hustle and bustle of modern life. Step into the store and it takes you back to a

century ago when life was far different than today. The merchandise on the shelves is of that distant time, so stay awhile and visit and enjoy it.

Visit the E. St. Julien Cox House this summer. All of the tornado damage to the house and the Carriage House has been repaired. You can see the life of Judge Cox and his family and how they lived in luxury of more than a century ago. The Carriage House is equipped with the modes of transportation of that period.

On a business note. I would invite all of our committees and the membership to keep in touch with us. If you have concerns or suggestions or just want to visit, please tell either the staff or me what is on your mind. We want to hear from you. That's what makes it fun, when we can all work together.



An Overview of Tallgrass Prairie

Scott Moeller, Naturalist, KCCB

Presenter Scott Moeller is the Kossuth County Naturalist, based out of Algona, Iowa. Scott has extensive experience with prairie plants and prairie restoration, and has been performing small-scale restorations since 1993. Additionally Scott has conducted prairie restoration research for Iowa State University, and obtained his master's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology in 1999.

Join us at the Center on a Sunday afternoon and learn about the prairie your ancestors saw, crossed, and were awed by as they settled on the Tallgrass Prairie.

Sunday, July 30, 2:00 p.m. at the History Center

How to Contact NCHS
931 has been changed to 934

Treaty Site History Center:
(507) 934-2160
Fax (507) 934-0172

E. St. Julien Cox House:
(507) 934-4309

Museum: wea13@mnic.net

Reta Casper, Assistant Director:
reta@mnic.net

Jessica Potter, Curator/Archivist:
jessica@mnic.net

Web Site:
www.nchs.st-peter.mn.us

Harkin Store Update

The Harkin Store opened its doors for the season on May 6. Open free of charge that weekend as part of New Ulm's "Company's Coming" tourism promotion, we had 163 visitors. The month of May the site had 991 visitors, 11 school groups and 1 tour group. On May 28 we had a program of bluegrass music by Bob Bovee and Gail Heil with Dick Kimmel from New Ulm sitting in on a few numbers. Great day! Lots of fun and good music and 232 visitors. Dairy Day on June 11 was a success with 173 visitors sampling ice cream and butter and meeting Missy the cow and her calf, Muffin. Other programs planned for the season are: July 2, patriotic celebration; July 9, hair weaving; July 23, Appalachian dulcimer music by Lorraine Dunn; July 30, music from Alexander Harkin's homeland, Scotland, with bagpipe music by William Dobbs; and on August 6 our 21st Annual West Newton Day with lots of activities and music.

Come visit the Harkin Store this season for a step back in history.

The site could use some volunteers to help in the gift shop or take admission. For more information call NCHS at 507/934-2160 or the Harkin Store at 507/354-8666.

Also a great big THANK YOU to the Courtland Lion's Club for their donation of \$250 for programs.

Opal Dewanz, Site Manager

Kent Fichtner

Summer Student Volunteer

Hello, my name is Kent Fichtner. I live in St. Peter, Minnesota. I haven't lived here all my life, I lived out in South Dakota. There is not much to me, well, besides the fact that the music I listen to and little things like that. I like to listen to every type of music like Bach to a heavy metal music band from Germany named Romstine, from 3 Dog Night to a man by the name of Weird Al. I also love books and chess sets. I got the books on WWII from my Grandpa Bill. He has given me some of the coolest books about the second World War. Like *The Journal of WWII*, *The Post War* and *Hitler's book that he wrote in jail*. He has also started me on collecting chess sets. I now have 11 of them including two from Spain and Russia, both given to me by my dad's friend, one made of wood and even a 4-way chess set. There is more to me than just music and books. I have played the trombone in band for about five years and have gotten pretty good grades. I started to play baseball when I was in fourth grade and am still going at it, that would be six years of playing baseball. I played football for about two years and didn't like it that much so I stopped. I was also in Boy Scouts for about six years.

I have a family of two parents, one sister and a noisy dog. My dad's name is Scott, my mom is Deb, my sister Kristen, she is 19



Kent is a great help to the staff. One project he will be helping the Curator with is sorting a new donation with some WWI articles.

years old, and our dog is Radon, he is seven. My dad works for Blue Earth County. My mom works in CSFA or Citizens Scholarship Foundation of America. She helps towns give money to kids so they can go to college. My sister works up at Gustavus in the food service. The reason I wanted to work at the Treaty Site is because I love history. I'm thinking about going to school and getting a degree in WWII history. Well, that is about four years ahead of me right now, because I'm only in ninth grade, but it doesn't sound all that bad. I'm thinking about a double major in WWII history and chemistry. It is pretty strange but it is what I like.



A bit of history *Thoreau in Minnesota*

this solitary exception, the journalists of St. Paul, St. Anthony, and Minneapolis were apparently ignorant of the fact that a “celebrated abolitionist” was in their midst.

The “Frank Steele” remained at the agency only one day and on the night of June 20, it lay halfway between Redwood and Fort Ridgely, and it paused half of the following night fifteen miles above Mankato grounded by a fallen tree which had disturbed a “cartload of bats.” After the five hundred mile cruise and the cost of ten dollars, June 23rd found Thoreau in Red Wing. Thoreau wrote to his friend, Frank Sanborn that he was reading his mail on top of the great isolated bluff that overlooks the valley and that remains the most conspicuous feature of Red Wing today. He wrote,

“The top, as you know, rises to the general level of the surrounding country, the river having eaten out so much. Yet the valley just above and below this must be three or four miles wide.” Thoreau traveled with his friend, Horace Mann on the “War Eagle” to Prairie du Chien, took the train to Milwaukee and June 30th found them lodged at the Mackinaw House in Mackinac and rested for five days and continued their journey to Concord via Toronto, Ogdensburg, Vermont and New Hampshire reaching Concord in the middle of July, 1861.

Excerpted from Minnesota History A Quarterly Magazine, Volume 16, No. 35, March 1935, No. 1, *Thoreau in Minnesota* by John T. Flanagan.

According to John T. Flanagan in the *Minnesota History A Quarterly Magazine*, Vol 16, March, 1935, number 1, Henry Thoreau traveled up the Minnesota River, June 1861. The excursion was scheduled to begin June 17 in St. Paul and travel to the Redwood Reservation for the payment of annuities to the Sioux Indians. The “Frank Steele” and the “Favorite” left for Redwood at 4 o’clock on Monday afternoon and were accompanied with the Great Western Band. “But perhaps the peak of the enthusiasm was reached by a writer in the Minneapolis State Atlas of July 3, who described the party on the “Frank Steele”.

We had a very choice and select company, among whom were Gov. and Mrs. Ramsey...Horace Mann, Jun., son of lamented statesman, Samuel May, Esq., Henry D. Thoreau, Esq. the celebrated abolitionist, &c - there being about 25 or 30 ladies...

This quotation is of special importance since, so far as John T. Flanagan knew, it the only direct reference to Thoreau made by the Minnesota press. With

NCHS Membership Update

by Marilyn Robertz,
Membership Committee Chair

Thank you to all NCHS members who have renewed their 2000 annual memberships. (Please check your address label on this newsletter to see if a “00” appears after your name.)

We are pleased to welcome these new members to the Society:

Dr. and Mrs. Pat O’Brien,
St. Peter

Wade and Kathleen Olsen,
Eagan, MN

Dean Phelps,
Mapleton, MN

Alice Holz,
Park Rapids, MN

Upcoming Newsletters

Future editions of *the Crossing* will be published on:

- October / November 2000
submission deadline:
October 15, 2000
- December 2000
submission deadline:
November 23, 2000

The staff of *the Crossing* invites you to share your knowledge of Nicollet County by contributing an article for the newsletter. Does your family have a story to share? Would you volunteer to interview a senior citizen and do an oral history article? Do you have a Nicollet County anecdote to relate? Do you have an old picture with a story to tell? Share your talents. Contact Reta Casper, Newsletter Coordinator, 931-2160 or reta@mnnc.net.

Native American/Pioneer Garden

by Tina Mielke

Kid Link, a prevention program serving St. Peter at-risk youth in the 5th–8th grade, will be taking over the Treaty Site History Center's Native American/Pioneer garden. The children involved in the project will be planting, maintaining, and harvesting the garden throughout the summer and early fall months. This will be a continuous project for the Kid Link youth, with the harvest seeds from this year being used for planting future crops.

As coordinator for the Kid Link program, I am very excited about the garden project. The garden will provide the children involved with a new learning experience, including history on the gardening practices of Dakota and pioneers in America. Children will also gain skills and knowledge of

gardening, which they may use in future years. Community involvement amongst kids is encouraged in Kid Link, and the



garden will provide a source of pride for their involvement in a community project. The garden project will also provide structured time for children during the summer months.

The Kid Link program is based on Search Institutes 40 assets. The goal of the program is to raise the assets in the youth involved. The more assets a child has, the less likely he or she will be involved with at-risk behavior. The program also offers a mentoring component, which matches at-risk youth with an adult companion.

We invite you to stop out during the summer and check on the garden's progress. With the help of Reta Casper, NCHS Assistant Director, and Brian Weiderich, St. Peter Youth Recreation Specialist, Kid Link has many new ideas and plans to help the garden flourish!

For more information on the Kid Link program, please contact me, Tina Mielke at 931-4210, ext. 424.



The Quilters

The NCHS Quilters continue to meet on Wednesday afternoon from 1 to 4 pm at the museum. We would be happy to welcome anyone interested in helping and guarantee a pleasant afternoon with the group. If you're a beginner, we'll be happy to help you get started.

We recently completed projects that Pat Poncin had initiated before her death and happily shared with her children two Nine-Patch quilts—a small crib size and a single bed size.

Our present project is a scrap quilt created by one of the quilters, and we have two projects waiting in the wings when it is completed. Please consider volunteering one afternoon a week.

This group has given almost \$1,700 to the museum and it's a very pleasant way to share your time and talent. If you're interested, contact the museum or Bev Wetherill, 931-4417.

A Special Thank You from the Society to the Quilters for their recent \$500 donation. Proceeds resulted from this group's diligent and tireless volunteer work for the benefit of the society.

News of the E. St. Julien Cox House

A Letter from *Mariah*



Dear Friends,
After a month of generous rain my gardens and lawn are looking better than ever. Faithful volunteers who meet on Thursday mornings keep my flowers and shrubs looking in tip-top shape. The plants are just about like the ones I remember from back east. Did you notice all the tulips and crocuses that bloomed this past spring? And just lately my two new Northern Catalpa trees put forth their first flowers for all my visitors. A vegetable garden with all those old fashion kind of plants has been added and will taste mighty good when I add my fresh herbs.

Looking like she has been dressed in her best Sunday fin-

ery, my house has never looked better. New paint outside and inside along with new wall covering and carpet certainly makes a woman feel proud of her house. Mr. Cox is grateful that his horse Good Friday is back at the carriage house along with his carriages. Now we can really take a Sunday drive and maybe pack a picnic lunch.

I invite you to "come a calling" real soon so that I can show off all my new things.

Sincerely,

Mariah

Mariah Mayhew Cox
(Gerry Tostenson, Manager)

Cox House Heritage Plant Sale a Success

The Cox House Garden Committee held its annual heritage plant sale on May 13th and despite wet and chilly weather, the volunteers managed to raise \$650.00. The money will be used for needed items in the garden, with the remaining money being used by the society in support of the house. Many thanks to all who dug and potted plants, helped ready the carriage house, marked prices and, of course, worked the day of the sale. Also a big thank you to the clean up committee. A good job by everyone.

There are good youth out there!

On Saturday, June 10th, ten youth from Trinity Lutheran Young Peoples League of Nicollet came to the E. St. Julien Cox House and planted fourteen shrubs around the house and carriage house. The Aid Association for Lutherans funded the project through a \$500.00 grant for Lutherans Youth Serve Program. Leaders Lori Enter, Megan and Jason Rupnow, along with manager Gerry Tostenson and garden committee co-chair Barb Olmanson

guided the young people. Not only did they plant the shrubs; but also dug the holes, added water and peat moss, pine chips, and cleaned up after the job was done. They were friendly, mannerly, and a pleasure to work with. Youth participating were Brittany Enter, Nancy Lendt, Cindy Lendt, Cody Jensen, Josie Unnasch, Bryant Polzin, Jason

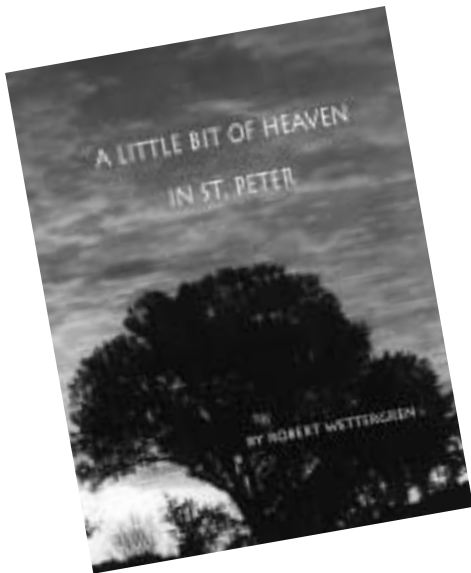
Lahmiller, Ben Polzin, Kyle Compart, and Dustin Lange.



Museum Musing by Ceil Headlee

Books, books and more books. We like to promote the power of books and the enjoyment of reading. While some books are read once, then relegated to the bookcase shelf, we at the Treaty Site History Center are told that the books found in the gift shop are read, reread and passed on to others to enjoy.

Two new books which are a source of area history and sure to please are Robert Wettergren's *A Little Bit of Heaven in St. Peter* and *The History of Lafayette* published by the Lafayette Centennial Committee.



Wettergren's book is a compilation of articles written for the St. Peter Herald spanning a 26 year period. He goes back in time to the founding of St. Peter by Captain William B. Dodd up to 1998 when on March 29th, a tornado devastated St. Peter. His memories of St. Peter are fascinating as he takes us on a journey back to early St. Peter, to

businesses no longer here, organizations which have weathered the times, some still with us, and gives us insight into the fiber of the residents of St. Peter who helped to make St. Peter what it is today.

The second book *The History of Lafayette* was written and compiled to honor 100 years of history and the brave settlers who emigrated to a new country and a new way of life.

The significant changes that took place in the town of Lafayette make for interesting reading. You will find information about businesses, schools, government and various organizations that contributed to the history.

The Centennial celebration will be held July 28, 29 and 30th. The township was organized in 1858, platted in 1896 and incorporated as a village on April, 1900. The Centennial committee's is to be congratulated on this fine publication with the many stories and photos showing past history.

Both books make great conversation pieces worthy of placement on the coffee table. They will be read, reread and passed on never gathering dust in the household. They will bring smiles and rekindled memories to the readers.

You can purchase your copy at the gift shop in the Treaty Site History Center. Happy reading!

Memorials have been received for the following...

In memory of Bill Herberg

Given by Arlyce and David Bussman

In memory of Bill Herberg

Given by Carl and Lois Annexstad

In memory of Floyd Martinson

Given by William & Marilyn Robertz

In memory of Harold Thompson

Given by Mr. and Mrs. Mike Thompson

We appreciate your thoughtfulness.

We remember...

...with honor the following members who have been lost to our Society and to our community since our last newsletter.

Franklin Gerholz,
of Minneapolis, member
Floyd Martinson
St. Peter, Life member

Nicollet County Historical Society

1851 N. Minnesota Avenue
 St. Peter, MN 56082

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Permit #56 St. Peter, MN 56082
--

Board of Directors and Staff

Executive Board:

Herb Poncin
 President

Edi Thorstensson
 Vice-President

Carl Aanonsen
 Secretary

Bob Bruns
 Treasurer

Eunice Holz
 Historian

Directors:

Lois Annexstad
 Brenda Aufderheide
 James Brandt
 Shari Brostrom
 Arlyce Bussman
 John Christenson
 Ron Goodrich
 Gary Schmidt
 Judy Schultz
 Leonard Wabasha

Carl Aanonsen
 Immediate Past President

Staff:

Reta Casper
 Assistant Director

Jessica Potter
 Curator/Archivist

Christopher Wright
 Technical Coordinator

Gerry Tostenson
 Cox House Manager

Opal Dewanz
 Harkin Store Manager

Marolyn Kleinert
 Weekday Docent, TSHC

Ceil Headlee
 Weekend Docent, TSHC

the Crossing is a quarterly publication of the Nicollet County Historical Society. Subscription is free with a Society membership.
 Newsletter Coordinators. Reta Casper
 Newsletter Print Designer Eileen Holz
 ©2000 Nicollet County Historical Society, St. Peter, Minnesota

NCHS / TSHC Events Calendar

On-Going Exhibits

"Lafayette Days Gone By" Open through September 2000	Treaty Site History Center
They Came to the Crossing	Treaty Site History Center
Traveling the Old Fort Road	Treaty Site History Center
The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux	Treaty Site History Center

Mini-Exhibit

St. Peter Businesses Research by Mr. Bidelman's St. Peter High School History Class	TSHC Audio-Visual Room
--	------------------------

July 2000

July 2	Patriotic Celebration , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.	Harkin Store
July 4	Cox House Closed, see you at the Parade	Cox House/TSHC
July 9	Hair Weaving , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.	Harkin Store
July 23	Appalchian Dulcimer , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. (see article on pg.3)	Harkin Store
July 30	Music from Alexander Harkin's Homeland , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. (see article on pg. 3)	Harkin Store
July 30	Tallgrass Prairie Program , 2:00 p.m. Scott Moeller, Kossuth County, Iowa Naturalist	Treaty Site History Center

August 2000

August 6	21st Annual West Newton Day , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.	Harkin Store
----------	--	--------------

September 2000

September 9	Back to School Program and Sale , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.	Harkin Store
September 10	Preparing for the Winter , 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.	Harkin Store
September 24	Buttonbox Jamboree	Harkin Store

October 2000

October 15	Seth Eastman Program , 2:00 p.m. presented by John Christenson	Treaty Site History Center
------------	--	----------------------------

Please clip and post or mark your calendar today and join us for these educational, history-filled, and fun events.



Bandwagon back in use

Recently discovered among some family papers of the Holz family was this picture of "the Clown Band from G.A.C. in the old Band Wagon" taken at the "Scrap Day" parade 30 September 1942. It was mailed by Mary Holz (Mrs. W. H.) to her son Walter, who was at that time stationed in Alaska during WWII.

You can enjoy the recently restored St. Peter Cornet Bandwagon as it will be participating in several local events and parades including St. Peter's Fourth of July parade.

Site Information:

Nicollet County Historical Society and the Treaty Site History Center

1851 N. Minnesota Avenue, Saint Peter, MN 56082
 (507) 934-2160 • FAX: (507) 934-0172 • www.nchs.st-peter.mn.us



Hours: Year Around
 Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
 Sunday 1 p.m.–4 p.m.

Consider the History Center as a unique meeting place for your group or organization. Contact our staff for information and reservations. Tours and programs are also available.

E. St. Julien Cox House 500 N. Washington Avenue, Saint Peter, MN 56082 • (507) 934-4309



Hours: May & September Saturday and Sunday 1 p.m.–4 p.m.
 June, July & August Wednesday–Sunday 1 p.m.–4 p.m.
 Closed October–April

Admission: Each site NCHS Members No Charge
 Non-members \$3.00
 Center and House on same day Non-members \$5.00
 Children 12 & under Free

Harkin Store

P.O. Box 112, New Ulm, MN 56073 • Phone (507) 354-8666



Hours: May Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
 June, July, August Tuesday–Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
 September– October Friday–Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
 Closed 3rd Weekend in October–April

Admission: NCHS Members No Charge
 Non-members \$1.00

Watch for further details...

Marilyn Robertz was recently interviewed by a television crew that does freelance work for Bob Villa’s television show, *Restore America*, on the Home and Garden network (HGTV). This show is on preservation and the newly refurbished Cox House was used as a backdrop for a portion of the taping. The program’s main feature will be the major restoration project undertaken by Mark and Judy Ahlstrom, St. Peter to restore the old Schumacher house, built by Marilyn’s grandfather, and extensively damaged in the 1998 tornado. The program will air at a future date and time not presently known.

