NCHS Annual Meeting

Please join us for the Nicollet County Historical Society’s annual meeting. We are delighted to welcome our speaker, Molly Huber, Outreach Coordinator for the Minnesota Digital Library and the Minnesota Reflections collection. The meeting will be held on Sunday, January 18th at Gustavus Adolphus College. The meal will begin at 1 p.m., business meeting at 1:30 p.m., and program at 2 p.m.

Cost for the dinner and this great program is just $15 for members, $20 for non-members, and $5 for those wishing to attend the program only. For details and registration call Jeremy at 507-934-2160. Reservations with payment are due by Friday, January 9, 2014. Reservation Form is on page 11 of this newsletter.

New Opportunities Through the Minnesota Digital Library by Molly Huber

For generations, the Nicollet County Historical Society has preserved and made available the history of the area. Until recently however, one usually had to make an in-person visit to one of the NCHS’s buildings to take advantage of the accumulated resources. There is magic in experiencing historic objects and documents in person, and as a historian and former museum curator this is something I love and have spent much of my life doing. However, for many reasons, it is not always possible to make a personal visit. Also, how do you know the resources are there? And how do you share what wonderful things you have found? A confluence of developments in technology have made it possible for more history to be done on a wider range than ever before, which is an exciting new opportunity for county historical societies like the NCHS.

The Minnesota Reflections project of the Minnesota Digital Library is a prime example of a new type of tool, something not possible before the days of high speed internet connections and readily available digitization. Minnesota Reflections is a collection of digitized resources from cultural heritage organizations across the state, selected, assembled, and made available in one free online location, reflections.mndigital.org, for anyone who wishes to use it. Reflections includes photographs, maps, newsletters, diaries, oral histories, film and other unique historic resources. The Nicollet County Historical Society has been an early and frequent contributor to this project and played a key role in its success. I recently joined the Minnesota Digital Library as its new Outreach Coordinator,
A very happy holiday season to all of you!

This is our final newsletter of 2014 and you’ll notice it’s a bit longer than usual. That’s because the staff at the Nicollet County Historical Society has been busy creating some really terrific programs and events for the coming year, and we want to share them with you! Despite the challenges of 2014, many of which you learned about in previous newsletters, we had an extremely successful year and hope to make 2015 even better. Please take some time to look at what’s coming in the New Year.

As my first year as the Director of the Nicollet County Historical Society comes to a close I want to thank you all for your knowledge, support, and encouragement during these last eleven months. I feel extremely honored to be leading NCHS into 2015 and cannot wait to see what the next year will bring. Have a wonderful holiday and I hope to see you all at our annual meeting!

Slate of new board member candidates

- Julie Gilbert, St. Peter
- Rhonda Dass, North Mankato
- Mark Ulman, North Mankato

Goodbye to current board members

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to extend a giant thank you to board members who are finishing their final terms with us. We’ve so enjoyed having you on the board and appreciate all the time and encouragement you gave to the organization.

- Tami Skinner, St. Peter
- Lori Lahlum, North Mankato
- Matt Horak, St. Peter

A special thank you goes to all the past, current, and future board members. We sincerely appreciate your dedication and service to the historical society. If any member is interested in becoming a board member, please do not hesitate to contact Alyssa at 507-934-2160 or at alyssa@nchsmn.org.

Alyssa Auten, Director
Thurs., Jan. 8, 7 p.m., Passage
108 min, PG-13. A brilliantly innovative telling of the story of Dr. John Rae who discovered the awful truth about the fate of the Franklin Expedition’s attempt to find the Northwest Passage. It was news that shook the English-speaking world: celebrated explorer Sir John Franklin and his crew of 128 men had perished in the Arctic ice during an ill-fated attempt to discover the Northwest Passage. More shocking, they had descended into madness and cannibalism. Passage is the story of incredible sacrifice, stunning distortion of the truth and single-minded obsession. It challenges the way we look at history.

Thurs., Feb. 5, 7 p.m., The Typist
Not Rated. Larry Tillermans, a life-long resident of St. Joseph, Minn., is featured in the film The Typist which chronicles his experience as a WWII serviceman who participated in the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi criminals. After years of carrying this emotional burden, Larry decided to share his experiences with as many people as possible, a tireless effort that brought the value of first-person testimony to a world that sometimes struggles to remember the lessons of the past. The documentary, produced by an award-winning local PBS affiliate KMSQ, includes an interview with Dr. Daniel Wildeson, director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education at St. Cloud State University. We are pleased to announce that Mr. Tillermans will be present to talk with the audience after viewing the film.

Thurs., Mar. 5, 7 p.m., Superior Dream
49 min, Not Rated. An expedition around Lake Superior. Circumnavigating the world’s largest freshwater lake by sea kayak. And they filmed it! Lucas Will and Greg Petry (Saint Peter native) paddled over 1,200 miles in 97 days. Their journey officially started on June 26, 2010 in Duluth and finished on the very same beach on October 3, 2010. As an added bonus, Greg Petry will be on hand to discuss the experience.

Thur., Apr. 2, 7 p.m., Cox House Shorts film series
Not rated. The Cox House Shorts film series shines a light on the life in the Victorian Midwest during the late 1800s. Using archival photos and documents from around the region, as well as the “living archive” of the E. St. Julien Cox House museum, these short films share the experiences of local people in the context of pressing issues of the day, including the roles of women, life as a child, disease and death, the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, and really wide streets! The Cox House Shorts are student films created in a collaboration between the Department of Communication Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College and the Nicollet County Historical Society.

Minneapolis Institute of Art

Thurs., Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Dr. John Rae

After a number of years at the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and it is my job to raise awareness of this rich resource and encourage use and participation. And let me tell you, there are some fabulous things in there!

Beyond the simple joy of finding wonderful new things to view, explore and learn about, how can the Minnesota Digital Library and Minnesota Reflections be useful to you? And how does it help organizations like the NCHS build awareness of your community and its unique history in the larger world? Join me at the Annual Meeting in January for an overview of the project itself, how it can be used for research, some history of NCHS’s participation in it, and to learn about our partnership with the Digital Public Library of America, which is opening up exciting new possibilities. I look forward to seeing you there!
Join us for these upcoming events...

Prairie Restoration Workshop
Sunday, March 1, 3 p.m., Treaty Site History Center

Have you ever considered converting your lawn or pasture to drought-tolerant, beautiful native prairie plants that provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife? This workshop, a partnership between the Nicollet County Historical Society and Seed to Site, will cover that and more! Genevieve Brand of Seed to Site will discuss what it takes to eradicate unwanted grasses from a site, how to select an appropriate seed mix, how to seed, and most importantly, how to establish a long-term management plan for a prairie restoration site (prescribed fire, herbicides, mowing?). The restored prairie at Traverse des Sioux will be undergoing a renovation in 2015; come to this class to get a glimpse of that process and learn about the steps involved. Later in the spring, we’ll be planning a field day where participants can tour prairie restoration sites in the region—stay tuned for more details!

Registration will be available through Saint Peter Family & Community Education—look for the brochure to arrive in your mailbox the first week of January! Call NCHS for more details at 507-934-2160. $10 per person. Deadline to register will be Friday, February 27.

Murder Mystery at the Cox House
Friday, March 13, 6 p.m.
Cox House, 500 North Washington Avenue

It’s August 14, 1914. And you are aboard the S.S. Libertainia, sailing for Southampton. Captain Bayard has gathered all the passengers and crew members of his ship to hear the tragic news...German military forces have just invaded Russia and Belgium, and the British and French governments have declared war. Suddenly, the lights go out and shots ring in your ears! Moments later, the Captain lays before you on the ground, dead.

Intrigued? Reserve your space now! Each guest will be assigned a role in advance. Full costumes are encouraged; some props will be made available on the night of the event.

Enjoy the historic home of E. St. Julien Cox, a delicious meal catered by the Saint Peter Food Co-op, and the drama of a good mystery...all while supporting the Cox House and the Nicollet County Historical Society. $35 per person. Doors open at 6 p.m. Please arrive no later than 6:30 p.m. The event will last approximately four hours.

Registration will be available through Saint Peter Family & Community Education—look for the brochure to arrive in your mailbox the first week of January! Call NCHS for more details at 507-934-2160. $35 per person. Deadline to register is Monday, March 2.
Welcome Teresa Saum

Teresa will be volunteering at the front desk of the Treaty Site and will be managing our social media.

“I have lived in St. Peter since 1978. I spent most of my career as a special education teacher at the Hoffman Learning Center, retiring in 2011. Since retiring, I have worked part-time at River Rock Coffee, been an occasional substitute teacher, worked in my garden, and done a variety of volunteer projects.

“I love to read, write, walk outside, and have bread giveaways on Facebook and Twitter.”

Volunteer!

Do you want to get more involved in the Treaty Site History Center? Have you considered volunteering with us? We currently have an opening for a front desk attendant. This person would be responsible for greeting guests and answering phones. We’d like someone who could commit to working a regular schedule, perhaps one day per week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Also, we’re always looking for individuals who can help with special events. Opportunities include: becoming a docent to lead group tours; helping to manage some of the special events like Night at the Museum or the Murder Mystery at the Cox House; creating new temporary displays to highlight special artefacts from our collection.

Do you have a special talent or interest that you want to use? Let us know, we can design an activity to put your talents to use!
At the pleasure of the NCHS Board of Directors a By-Laws and Policy Committee has been appointed to review those Society documents for updating since their last amendments in the late 1990s.

As such the Board has conditionally accepted the revised Society By-Laws at their November meeting for presentation to the membership at the NCHS Annual Meeting to be held January 18, 2015.

The majority of the updates to the By-Laws were to 1) recognize the employment of an Office Manager who has taken over some of the duties of the Society’s Treasurer, 2) to eliminate the office of Historian on the Board of Directors, and 3) to update language (i.e. sex to gender).

The most major change to the By-Laws suggested by the committee was to Article XIII to be able to conduct the business of the Society in a timely manner, with the suggested new wording to be:

ARTICLE XIII – Amendment 1
1. Any amendments to Articles III #3, IV #1, or V #3, #8, or #10 must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any annual meeting, provided two weeks shall have elapsed after said notice of the meeting. The Board of Directors may amend any remaining By-Laws at any regular or special meeting, provided notice of the meeting has stated the purpose thereof.

Please see following, those articles that would require member approval (deletions and rewording are marked).

ARTICLE III - Membership
1. The Society shall be composed of active and honorary members. Active members shall include life and annual members, or other categories as established by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IV - Government
1. The Nicollet County Historical Society shall be governed by a Board of Directors, with each member of the Board either an annual or life member of the Society. The Board of Directors shall not exceed fifteen in number. To provide for continuity, five members, each to serve a three-year term, shall be elected each year. No Director shall serve more than two terms until at least one year interposes lapses between them. The county auditor or a member of the board of County Commissioners may be elected to the Board of the Nicollet County Historical Society.

ARTICLE V - Board of Directors
3. Seven members of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business at any regular or special meeting of the Board of Directors.

8. Members of the Board of Directors who do not attend the majority of meetings in any calendar year, without having given notice of their intended absence, shall be replaced by the Board after giving a one month’s notice of the intent to replace them.

10. The Board of Directors may appoint a member of the Society to fill an unexpired term which may become vacant on the Board of Directors or membership may elect at the next annual meeting.

A pdf of the entire NCHS By-Laws will be available online at http://nchsmn.org/ and members of the board of directors can be approached at the upcoming annual meeting if you have any questions about the changes proposed. Thank you for your input at the annual meeting.
Students Visit Christmas at the Cox House

On December 8, 9, and 10, local students had the chance to see the Cox House in its beautiful Christmas decorations. Second grade students from South Elementary and John Ireland Catholic School visited over a three day period. They learned about Victorian-era Christmas traditions and sampled some wonderful treats. The students were amazed by some of the differences between that era and a modern Christmas. The lack of electricity—and therefore the choice to use real candles on the tree—always surprises the children.

The second-grade tradition of visiting the Cox House at Christmastime has been around for many years. Currently, the program is organized by Mary Ann Hanson, a retired teacher from South Elementary. She first became involved when her own classes of students toured the house. Now, she works from home to coordinate the many volunteers and arrange the schedule of classroom visits.

We’d like to thank the volunteers who devote time every year to make these school visits possible. It couldn’t be done without their dedication!

Remembering William Harvey

The Nicollet County Historical Society was saddened to learn of the death of William Harvey. Mr. Harvey served as a teacher at Saint Peter High School from 1963–1993, where generations of students gained a knowledge and appreciation for myth and poetry. He had been a member of NCHS for several years and recently rode in the NCHS bandwagon in the 2014 Fourth of July parade, where he served as grand marshall. Mr. Harvey’s influence on the community of Saint Peter will be remembered for a very long time and he will be dearly missed.

Cox House Window Repair

The E. St. Julien Cox House has a new set of windows, thanks to a Schmidt Foundation Grant, Wood and Windows, and Bob Vogel! Almost 20 window frames throughout the house had rotten wood and needed to be replaced. The Schmidt Grant allowed us to hire talented carpenters to build new frames that have been installed and painted by Vogel. These windows are essential to the home’s protection and we are excited to have this project completed!
NCHS is helping to celebrate Winterfest in Saint Peter this year! Check out the Saint Peter Chamber of Commerce website for details on even more fun events happening around town: http://wwwstpeterchamberswinterfest

When boredom threatens in the dark, dull days of winter, don’t despair. This year, help is on the way. NCHS is one of a number of St. Peter organizations that have joined forces to beat the seasonal blahs. Winterfest is coming your way January 31—February 8.

**Night at the Museum / Saturday, January 31 / Doors open at 6:30**

Bring your family to a night of entertainment at the Treaty Site History Center during Winterfest. Wear your pajamas, bring a sleeping bag and join us as we watch that Minnesota classic movie, *The Mighty Ducks*!

Children must be accompanied by an adult. Admission is $4 per person, ages three and younger are free.

Doors open at 6:30 so families will have time to come in and explore the museum before the movie. Movie starts at 7:30. Special thank you! to Angie’s Boomchickapop for donating popcorn for the event.

**Super Snow Sunday / Saturday, February 8, Beginning at 3:30**

The Historical Society is offering a blizzard of family fun on at Super Snow Sunday, February 8, beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Join us in the south parking lot of the Treaty Site History Center for some fun wintertime activities! We’ll light the bonfire at 3:30. Bring your own s’mores ingredients or we’ll have some for purchase.

Scott Kudelka, DNR Naturalist, will lead a snowshoe hike from the parking lot at 4 p.m. Bring your own snowshoes or rent a pair of ours ($3 for kids, $5 for adults). Snow shoe supplies are limited, so call in advance to reserve a pair at 507-934-2160.

Fat tire cycling enthusiasts will also meet in the parking lot to take a bike ride on the City of Saint Peter’s Traverse des Sioux Park trails behind the Treaty Site. Before the ride, they’ll be on hand to talk to visitors about fat tire bikes and demonstrate what makes them uniquely suited to snowy riding.

Other details are still being established, but may include a skijoring demonstration and even sleigh rides! Stay tuned for more details!

Call 507/934-2160 or e-mail museum@nchsmn.org with questions.

**History on Tap: The History of Schell’s Brewery & Beer Sampling**

**Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m. / Treaty Site History Center / Registration required.**

In the first event in our History on Tap series, learn about Schell’s brewery and its 150+ years of operation in the region.

A representative from the August Schell Museum of Brewing will discuss the role of the Schell’s Brewery and family in the founding of New Ulm, the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, and Prohibition. We’ll also learn about the current beers available at Schell’s and have a tasting.

Afterwards, join the Winterfest festivities outside (registration not required) in the south parking lot, where the Treaty Site will be hosting a bonfire and other outdoor activities.

Registration is required and will be available through Saint Peter Family & Community Education—look for the brochure to arrive in your mailbox the first week of January! Call NCHS for more details at 507-934-2160. **Must be 21 to participate.** $15 per person. **Deadline to register is Monday, February 2.**
A Winter Mirage

In the midst of a cold Minnesota winter, it’s good to be reminded that beauty can be found in every season.

Peter Kissel of Washington D.C. recently shared an old family letter with us. The letter was written by his great-grandfather’s sister, Nancy Haas Vincent, who moved to the area in the 1870s from Northern New York. The family farm was located three miles north of Fort Ridgely. The Fred she refers to is her younger brother Frederick Haas who had also moved there with his wife. Fred and his family moved back to New York in 1877 because the grasshoppers destroyed their crops, but Nancy and her family remained in the area.

“On the morning of the ninth of this month (Febr. 9, 1874) when I first went out doors, all around every thing looked so strange that I thought of the fairy tales I read when a child. It really seemed some mighty fairy had come over night and transported me to some other land. It was a clear sunny morning. At ordinary times all we can see south of here, is brother Freds house and two or three others at the mean distance of two miles, but on that morning I could see across the Minnesota river (three to four miles off) whose banks are lined by a heavy belt of timber and beyond that lay spread out for miles and miles the most beautiful landscape of groves, belts of timber, valleys and towns I ever saw. Even the cottonwoods about 40 miles from here plainly hove in sight. I wish I could fully describe the splendid panorama spread out before me and what I felt beholding its lovely charms. Then I came around to the north side of the house. Here I could not see so much of a change, and as it was now time to get breakfast ready I went into the kitchen. Frank B. had stayed at our house that night. He and my husband were out at the stable, but they soon came to the house and called me out again. North, where a few minutes before I had seen nothing extraordinary, now appeared large and long stretches of timber and buildings for which we could not account for, but have since heard that what we saw then was Glencoe and the country around that town, between 30 and 40 miles north from here. Looking to the south again, we could distinguish the smoke and steam of the locomotive on the Winona and St. Peters R.R. moving along, which must have been at a distance of 13 and 15 miles at least. To the East too, we could see for miles buildings and groves at other times below the line of vision here. We have these mirages often, but never before have we seen any like this one, so perfect and so beautiful. We did not eat breakfast very early that morning.”

Excerpt from letter written by Nancy Haas Vincent on February 18, 1874.
We would also like to say thanks to these business members:

- Culligan Mayer
- Community Insurance Agency
- Dave’s Place
- First National Bank
Enclosed is my/our check for the amount of:

$________ for _____ reservation(s) at $15/person (members)
$________ for _____ reservation(s) at $20/person (non-members)
$________ for _____ reservation(s) for the Molly Huber program (2 p.m.) at $5/person

Name(s) __________________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
Phone (_______) _________________________________________________
E-mail __________________________________________________________

Checks should be made payable to: Nicollet County Historical Society
Return by Monday, January 9 to: Nicollet County Historical Society, 1851 North Minnesota Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082

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2015 Calendar of Events:

Event/Program information:

Harkin Store: closed for the season
Fort Ridgely: closed for the season
Mayo House: closed for the season
Treaty Site History Center: $5 adults (18–64), $3 seniors (65+) and children (6–17) Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members

Jan. 8 Documentary Film Series:
Passage, 7 p.m. (see description on page 3) TSHC

Jan. 18 NCHS Annual Meeting,
with presentation by Molly Huber
1 p.m. (see description on page 1),
Reservations required, use form above
Gustavus Adolphus College
Jackson Campus Center

Jan. 31-

Feb. 8 St. Peter’s WinterFest 2015
throughout St. Peter

Jan. 31 NCHS WinterFest Event:
Night at the Museum
Family Night: movie, treats Doors open at 6:30 p.m. (see description on page 8)
$4/person, 3 & under free
TSHC

Feb. 8 NCHS WinterFest Event:
History on Tap: The History of Schell’s Brewery & Beer Sampling
2 p.m. (see description on page 8)
Registration required, must be 21 to participate
TSHC

Feb. 8 NCHS WinterFest Event:
Super Snow Sunday
bonfire, s’mores, snowshoe hike, bike ride, 3:30 p.m. (see description on page 8)
TSHC

Feb. 5 Documentary Film Series:
The Typist, with Larry Tillemans
7 p.m. (see description on page 3)
TSHC

Mar. 1 Prairie Restoration Workshop
with Genevieve Brand of Seed to Site
3 p.m. (see description on page 4)
Registration required
TSHC

Mar. 5 Documentary Film Series:
Superior Dream, with filmmaker Greg Petry
7 p.m. (see description on page 3)
TSHC

Mar. 13 Murder Mystery at the Cox House
mystery, dinner, suspense
6–10 p.m. (see description on page 4)
Registration required
E. St. Julien Cox House
500 N. Washington Ave.

Please watch the NCHS website, Facebook, and Twitter for further events and details for additional programming.
Your membership dollars at work...

Treaty Site History Center  E. St. Julien Cox House  Alexander Harkin Store  Historic Fort Ridgely  Traverse des Sioux Townsite  W.W. Mayo House

NCHS Membership Application

Name ________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________

Phone (_______) _________________________________
E-mail ____________________________________________

My check is enclosed ☐ Please debit my credit card ☐

Acct. Number ____________________________ ☐
CVV Code ___________ Expiration Date _________________

3 #s on rev–Visa®, MC®, Disc®, 4 #s on rev–AE®

Authorized Signature _________________________________________

☐ Please save mailing costs, I will read my newsletter online.

Yes! I would like to support my Nicollet County Historical Society in 2015 at the following level (please check one).

☐ Individual $30
☐ Family $45
☐ Sustaining $75
☐ Patron $100
☐ Supporter $200
☐ Benefactor $500
☐ Life Member $1,000

Please make checks payable to:
Nicollet County Historical Society

Membership applications should be mailed to:
Nicollet County Historical Society
1851 North Minnesota Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082