NCHS Board Announces
New NCHS Executive Director

As the new Executive Director of the Nicollet County Historical Society I would like to introduce myself in the last newsletter of 2013, before I start my duties on January 21, 2014! My name is Alyssa Auten and I come to the NCHS with a background in architecture, historic preservation and museum management. My education took me to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for an undergraduate degree in architecture with a minor in history. After working at an architecture firm for a year I attained my Masters degree in historic building conservation from the University of Bath in Bath, England.

I have spent the last four years as the Site Manager for the Folsom House Historic Site in Taylors Falls, another Minnesota Historical Society partnership site. I also spent the past year and a half working part-time in Centuria, Wisconsin, as the Preservation Project Consultant for the Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative’s 75th Anniversary project. During my time in Taylors Falls I sat on their Heritage Preservation Commission for three years and acted as a liaison and consultant with the Taylors Falls Historical Society for four years.

I have a real sense of pride in our state’s history and could not be more excited to get to know St. Peter and the vast history in which it sits. Thank you to those I’ve met for your support and warm welcome to the Nicollet County Historical Society. I look forward to meeting the rest of you and working hard to promote our society, its wonderful historic sites, and the heritage of which we are so proud.

Alyssa Auten, NCHS Executive Director

Director’s Column

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah!

Everyone here at NCHS hopes you have the merriest of holiday seasons. It has been an absolute honor and privilege to serve as director of NCHS since 2004. I am very sad to leave, but this season I am filled with thanks for all of the relationships and memories I have now. NCHS has been a big part of my life that I will miss dearly. I know the organization will be fine without me. I look forward to seeing the great things in store for NCHS and the communities it serves.

Thank you all so much.

Ben Leonard, Director

Inexpensive Christmas Gifts

by Peggy Powers

Most certainly you promised yourself last Christmas that your future Christmas remembrances would be completed in ample time, and under no circumstances would the next Christmas season find you in a rush and hustle, planning and finishing belated Christmas gifts. What an idle dream that was, for here it is, Christmas time approaching again, and you are racking your brain and attempting to decide what to give at the eleventh hour. In a great turmoil, isn’t it so?

What not to give would be a more appropriate phrase. For in the selection of your gifts some regard has to be given to the adaptability and utility of the present. A wise idea is to spend more time than money in thinking what would be suitable and practical for each individual. Your gift would be all the more appreciated if it expresses something of yourself and shows that your own personal touch has been bestowed upon a selection of the tokens.

The real essence of the Christmas spirit is not the expenditure. How easy it is to purchase gorgeous gifts if one has the seller’s roll! But if the recipient can buy the same article with little effort, the gift idea will not be remembered very long. Let your gifts be expressions of love and thoughtfulness. The thought and the time you put into gifts of your own handwork will mean much more than if you simply give something for the sake of giving.

Dr. Dave Engen to speak at annual meeting.

Standing in Place: People, Places, and the Power of Audio Storytelling

Drawing on several years of recording stories in Blue Earth and Nicollet Counties, Dave’s talk will explore the importance of those places between home and work (“third places”) where community is formed and celebrated. His presentation will feature several audio stories profiling individuals and places here in Southern Minnesota as well as explore the ways audio storytelling can be used to capture local voices and stories.

Dave Engen is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He is the author of The Wagon Wheel Project (with photographer John Cross) and the creator of Voices from the Valley, a website featuring audio stories highlighting people and places throughout Southern Minnesota. He teaches courses such as Communication and Community and studied audio documentary at Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies.

The Nicollet County Historical Society Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26th 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. Come and enjoy this 10th anniversary 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 Kris at 507-934-2160. Reservations with payment are due by Friday, January 17, 2014.

SEASONS Greetings!

In warm appreciation of your support during the past year, all of us at NCHS extend our very best wishes for a happy holiday season and throughout 2014.

Alyssa Auten, NCHS Executive Director

Passing of a Friend

A ll of us at NCHS mourn the sudden passing of archaeologist Doug George. Doug worked for the Minnesota Historical Society and State Parks and led the archaeological dig at Fort Ridgely in 2005. He worked across Minnesota and excavated many historic sites including Lac qui Parle, Birch Coulee Battlefield, Lower Sioux Agency, and Grand Mound. Doug was a great archaeologist and a wonderful person. We will miss him dearly.

Ben Leonard, Director
NCHS Board Announces
2014 Slate for Board of Directors

The Nominating Committee of your Nicollet County Historical Society presents the following slate of board members for the 2014 term. We encourage you to attend the annual meeting to show your support for the Society and these dedicated volunteers.

Nita Aasen, St. Peter
Michael Callahan, St. Peter
Eileen Holz, St. Peter
Maria Lokensgard, Norseland
Pam Morson (2nd term), Lafayette
Bob Schabert (2nd term), Courtland
Joe Urban, St. Peter

NCHS Book Store

Don’t forget the Historical Society Book Store for that hard-to-find “perfect” gift for the history lover in your family. We have an excellent variety of local and regional books to be just the thing for the hard-to-gift on your list.

District 6 School Restoration

Work has continued in earnest this fall on the former District 6 school and New Sweden Township Hall. The building now has a new foundation, reinforced basement, and basement windows. The furnace and new electrical will be installed soon. This spring more needs to be done to repair the porch and steps, as well as a thorough interior restoration. With a bit more time, work, and money the old school will be hosting programs and serving the community once more.

“We are well satisfied with the number of contributions that have made this work possible. There seems to be a lot of interest in the community,” says Friends of District 6 President Garfield Eckberg. “We are too Garfield! Thanks to you and the other committee members for all that you are doing to preserve our rural school history. Interested in helping out? Contact Garfield at 507-327-3237 or gre37@hickorytech.net.

Upcoming Events

Jan. 9, 7 p.m., TSHC / Documentary Film
Queens of the Sun
Short Films Collection: Sunshine, Aquadettes, Record Breaker, and Mr. Happy Man

Jan. 26, 1 p.m. / Gustavus, Jackson Campus Center
Banquet Rooms
NCHS’s 89th Annual Meeting

Feb. 6, 7 p.m., TSHC / Documentary Film
Jiro Dreams of Sushi
The story of 85-year-old Jiro Ono, considered by many to be the world’s greatest sushi chef. He is the proprietor of Sukiyabashi Jiro, a 10-seat, sushi-only restaurant of its kind to be awarded a prestigious three-star Michelin Guide rating, and sushi lovers from around the globe make repeated pilgrimages, for a coveted seat at Jiro’s sushi bar.

Mar. 6, 7 p.m., TSHC / Documentary Film
Queen of the Sun
From the director of The Real Dirt on Farmer John comes a profound, alternative look at the tragic global bee crisis. Juxtaposing the catastrophic disappearances of bees with the mysterious origins of the bee itself, the film weaves an unusual and dramatic story of the heart-felt struggles of beekeepers, scientists and philosophers from around the world. Featuring Michael Pollan, Gunther Hauk and Vandana Shiva, Queen of the Sun reveals both the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.

Shipping Exhibit to Smithsonian

The Commemorating Courtship exhibit is packed up and ready to be shipped to the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. It goes on display in January. It will later travel to the Mall in Washington D.C. The exhibit will be on display in January. It will later travel to the Mall in Washington D.C. The exhibit will return to us at the Smithsonian by the end of 2015. We’ve talked about it a lot — but who can blame us? It’s a tremendous honor to have NCHS, Gustavus, and our history on display at the Smithsonian!

Collection Spotlight

Wettergren Dairy Milk Box

This insulated box was once placed on doorsteps by dairy homeowners. Much like the milk, full bottles of milk were delivered, and empties taken back to St. Peter’s Wettergren Dairy. The box would keep milk cool until bottles were placed in the refrigerator. Once commonplace, milk delivery largely disappeared over the last 30-40 years. But now with an emphasis on organic and local farming, it’s making a comeback in some parts of the country. The Wettergren and Sons Dairy was started in 1931. Business slowly grew and that same year the family bought out the milk route of veteran Walter Olson. Just 4 years later the dairy expanded and leased a new addition next to the Smidts’ Creamery. The two businesses shared a bottling plant, refrigerator, and boiler. In 1943 the creamery was purchased by Stan and Gloria Davis. Later the Davis’s company would grow into the international Davisco.

Several miles of multi-use trails have been built by volunteers in the Traverse des Sioux park between St. Peter Minnesota and the Minnesota River. Those volunteers are being spearheaded by Gustavus College’s Dave Newell, Dan Oachs, and Paul Hanson. Over four miles of trails were built this fall. The group is hoping to triple that next year, and add signage. “It’s a great addition to the site. We couldn’t be happier,” said NCHS director Ben Leonard. “Hopefully the Treaty Site History Center will become a hub for bicycle traffic through the beautiful flood plain forest. It’s one of St. Peter’s hidden assets.”

To learn more, follow the group on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TraverseTrails or email TraverseTrails@gac.edu to be added to their mailing list.

Annual Meeting Registration Form

Sunday, January 26, 2014

The event will be held in Jackson Campus Center. Gustavus Adolphus College, with the meal starting at 1:30 p.m., business meeting at 2:30 p.m. and program at 2 p.m.

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 Dr. Dave Engen program (2 p.m.) at $5/person

Name(s)

Address

Acct. Number

Expiration Date

Phone (_______)

Authorized Signature

Email

Checks should be made payable to: Nicollet County Historical Society

Return by Monday, January 17 to: Nicollet County Historical Society, 1851 North Minnesota Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082

Collection Spotlight

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After 43 years in business the Wettergren Dairy was sold to Clover Leaf, Incorporated in October of 1973. Bob Wettergren reflected on his dairy career, “many of our customers are now third generation customers. ... There is a personal satisfaction in serving such customers. I would definitely do the same thing if I had it to do all over again.”