Smithsonian Exhibit coming to St. Peter’s Treaty Site History Center!
Connecting Minnesota Communities Through Water and the Humanities

Science. Water connects them all through community. People around the country are drawn to the water. This most critical resource is essential for life and needs protection. The Nicollet County Historical Society, in cooperation with the Minnesota Humanities Center, will celebrate this connection as it hosts Water/Ways, a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street program. Water/Ways will be on view at the Treaty Site August 23, 2016 through September 25, 2016.

Six greater Minnesota communities will explore the meaning of water—by telling their local water stories and collectively envisioning their water future.

St. Peter and the surrounding community has been expressly chosen by the Minnesota Humanities Center to host Water/Ways as part of the Museum on Main Street program—a national/state/local partnership to bring exhibitions and programs to rural cultural organizations. Minnesota is one of only five states chosen by the Smithsonian to launch this new traveling exhibit. Six greater Minnesota communities will explore the meaning of water—by telling their local water stories and collectively envisioning their water future.

Water/Ways reveals the central nature of water on our lives by exploring how people use water, how water unites communities, how water affects every element of life, and how we care for our water and protect this valuable resource for the future.

“We are very excited to be able to bring Water/Ways to our area,” said Nicollet County Historical Society Executive Director Alyssa Auten. “It allows us the opportunity to explore this fascinating aspect of our own region’s water, and we hope that it will inspire many to become even more involved in the cultural life of our community and how we use water.”

Through a year-long engagement process before the Smithsonian exhibit arrives, communities will create companion exhibitions and conduct local story-collecting initiatives. Host communities will also create media

Water/Ways continued on page 4
Members

Thank you to the following renewing and new members of NCHS since the July 2015 Crossing.

Renewed Patron Members:
- Jolly & Chris Corley
- Roland & Edi Thorstensson
- Elsa M. Cornell
- Gil & Peggy Carlson
- Eileen Holz, Saint Peter
- Maria Lokensgard, Norseland
- Bob Schabert, Courtland
- Mark Ulman, North Mankato
- Joe Urban, Saint Peter

Renewed Sustaining Members:
- Pastor Craig & Teresa Benson
- Ruth Brandel
- Paula Goblirsch
- Steve & Maureen Scholl
- Steve Metzen & Kay Cordella
- David K. Nelson
- Barb Wilkinson

Renewed Family Members:
- Dan & Crystal Bock
- Dan & Crystal Bock
- Pa Doua Chee Moua, Teresa Saum
- Annaliese Endorf, Rachel Montpetit
- Dan Cochran, Amber Bentler
- Allison Brown

Renewed Individual Members:
- Roy V. Bennett
- Sarah Cooper, Bri Dickel
- Bob Sandeen
- Jack Buser
- Rose Alsleben
- Laura Johnson

New Family Members:
- Marie Benson
- Colleen Flaherty
- Becky Polkack
- Mayo House Manager

New Individual Members:
- Becky Pollack
- Mayo House Guide, Amanda Johnson
- Mary Bilesmer
- Jane Haala

Past Officers:
- Alma Forst, President
- Scott Hermanson, Vice President
- Marie Dranttel, Treasurer
- Pam Morson, Secretary

Executive Board
- Officers:
  - Alma Forst, President, West Newton Twp.
  - Scott Hermanson, Vice President, St. Peter
  - Marie Dranttel, Treasurer, St. Peter
- Pam Morson, Secretary, Lafayette

Directors:
- Nita Aasen, Saint Peter
- Steve Baxa, St. Peter
- Steve Baxa, St. Peter
- Michael Callahan, Nicollet
- Rhonda Dass, North Mankato
- JoAnn Gieseke, Nicollet County
- Julie Gilbert, Saint Peter
- Eileen Holz, Saint Peter
- Maria Lokensgard, Norseland
- Bob Schabert, Courtland
- Mark Ulman, North Mankato
- Joe Urban, Saint Peter

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- Office Manager, Elaine Deschaine
  - elaine@nchsmn.org
- TSHC Site Manager, Jessica Becker
- TSC Museum Assistants, Jack Buser, Sarah Cooper, Bri Dickel, Pa Doua Chee Moua, Teresa Saum
- TSC Maintenance, Wayne Passen
- Harkin Store Manager, Ruth Grewe
- Harkin Store Site Guides, Rose Alseben, Donna Dose, Robin Grewe, Glenn Stryker
- Ft. Ridgely Manager, Amber Bentier
- Ft. Ridgely Guides, Dan Cochran, Annaliese Endorf, Rachel Montpetit, Charlotte Nack

The upcoming year is going to be busy with exciting updates and improvements. I’m so glad you’ll be along for the ride.

Alyssa Auten, Director
Please join us for the 2015–16 documentary film series. A partnership between St. Peter Community and Family Education and the Nicollet County Historical Society, films are screened every month at the Treaty Site History Center, through May.

**Thurs., Nov. 5, 7 p.m.: University Avenue: One Street, A Thousand Dreams**  
57 min., not rated. Free. “University Avenue means different things to different people. It’s always been eclectic, unruly, noisy, gritty. And the street has seen its fortunes rise and fall over the decades. But its purpose has always been the same: to provide a vital link between Minneapolis and Saint Paul for people and commerce.” Lou Bellamy’s opening narration sets the stage for this journey down one of the most fascinating and influential streets in the Upper Midwest.

**Thurs., Dec. 3, 7 p.m.: Aboriginal Architecture**  
93 min., not rated. Free. For more than three hundred years, Native communities in North America have had virtually no indigenous architecture. Communities have made do with low-cost government housing and community projects designed by strangers in far away places. Thankfully, across the continent, political, financial, and cultural changes have created a renaissance of Native design. Modern Aboriginal architects are turning to ancient forms, adapting them in response to changes in the natural and social environment, and creating contemporary structures that hearken to the past.

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**Coffee on the Patio**  
**NOTE DATE & TIME CHANGES!**

Please join the Nicollet County Historical Society for its monthly “Coffee on the Patio” series to drink coffee and talk about local history! This program is held the following upcoming Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m:  
- October 28: Cemeteries of Nicollet County  
- November 25: Holiday Celebrations  
- No December Coffee on the Patio  
- January date to be determined; topic will be Historic Blizzards

We invite you to come by to share any memories or stories you might have about a particular topic. We’ll be gathering at the Treaty Site History Center, just north of St. Peter off of Highway 169. Coffee and a light snack provided. There is no cost to participate. We hope to see you there!
Water/Ways
continued from page 1

projects to facilitate community-wide conversations and develop high-profile programs, events, and stewardship projects about water and its value to the community and the state. Auten explained “The Water/Ways exhibit and the support provided by our state and national partners will serve as a platform for grassroots collaboration and engagement with our entire community and region.”

Events in St. Peter include the main Water/Ways interpretive exhibit, which will be on display at the Treaty Site History Center, and a companion art exhibit at the Arts Center of St. Peter featuring water-inspired fine art. The Nicollet County Historical Society will partner with Gustavus Adolphus College, the Department of Natural Resources, and the City of St. Peter to develop additional public programming and are seeking out other organizations and participants in the months ahead to help share our local stories.

“The Arts Center of Saint Peter is excited to help celebrate Water/Ways at the Treaty Site History Center. Fortunately, the exhibit dates coincide with the Arts Center’s annual show of member-artists’ work. Our members love a challenge, and they love a theme—so for the 2016 membership show, we’ll invite members to share work that represents or is inspired by water. That might mean a pastel drawing of a riverbank, a photograph of an ice-covered branch in Minnesota Square Park, or a clay vessel or tapestry or collage with water as an abstract element. Look for the show at the Arts Center summer of 2016 and plan to join us for a closing reception at the Arts Center on August 19, 2016, co-hosted by the Arts Center and Nicollet County Historical Society. We’re grateful to the Smithsonian Institution and to NCHS for inviting us to share in this unique exhibition.”

Water/Ways is part of Museum on Main Street, a unique collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), state humanities councils across the nation, and local host institutions. To learn more about Water/Ways and other Museum on Main Street exhibitions, visit museumonmainstreet.org/water.

Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress. Additional statewide support is being provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Minnesota Historical Society.

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 60 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.

Smithsonian Water/Ways at the Treaty Site Help us prepare for this exciting new exhibition!

The Smithsonian Water/Ways exhibit is an incredible opportunity for NCHS. We anticipate a huge increase in visitors during this exhibition and we want our space to look its best! Water/Ways will be presented in the Henry and Emilia Schmidt Gallery and Irene Miller Dahl Gallery (North Gallery), on the north side of the building, and we are busy preparing that space for this exciting time.

Water/Ways continued on next page
**Water/Ways continued from previous page**

NCHS staff are hoping to update the adjacent North Patio with new rain gardens, additional native plantings and interpretive signage that explains the interconnection between the Minnesota River, the Traverse des Sioux prairie and the Treaty Site History Center. Grants and funding sources for this project are currently being researched. If this project comes to fruition in 2016, we’ll be looking for volunteers who want to help dig in the dirt while learning about native plants. It should be a great way to herald the coming spring! More details and news of this project will be in future editions of *The Crossing*.

Likewise, we’ll be working with volunteers and interns to create a locally-focused companion exhibit to *Water/Ways*. We’ll be collecting stories from Nicollet County residents—what is YOUR relationship to water? What does the Minnesota River mean to you? What is your favorite swimming lake in the area? We need volunteers and interns to help collect and compile these stories.

We also need funding to produce the banners and displays that will share these stories with our Water/Ways visitors.

Most importantly of all, we also hope to make improvements to the North Gallery itself. The rooms are in need of some updating after years of use. The space is in need of new carpet. Additional and updated lighting would also greatly enhance the gallery. As we remove the existing exhibit (“Tales of the Territory”), we’ll also need to refresh the paint on the walls.

We want to ensure our visitors will be impressed by this Smithsonian exhibition, but these changes are not just updates for *Water/Ways*. We have a long list of rotating exhibits planned for the North Gallery, all the way into 2018. Stay tuned—we’ll soon be revealing the schedule of traveling exhibits coming to the Treaty Site in 2017–18!

Of course, updates like this are never free. That’s why we’re asking you to please consider a special donation to help improve our North Gallery. Donations will go not only towards things like replacing carpet, lighting and paint, but will also help us purchase items for future exhibit displays. Please help us realize the potential of the Nicollet County Historical Society and our building by contributing in any way you can to this wonderful opportunity.

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**YES, I/We would like to help NCHS to prepare for Smithsonian *Water/Ways*...**

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Please make checks payable to: **Nicollet County Historical Society**

Donations should be mailed to: **Smithsonian Water/Ways Spruce-Up**

Nicollet County Historical Society
1851 North Minnesota Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082

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Please watch the NCHS website, Facebook & Twitter and MNHS website for further events and details for additional programming.
NCHS Sites Information...

Cox House Corner ...

New Year’s Day Bloody Mary Bar at the Cox House

A party.
A benefit.
A service brought to you by the
Arts Center & the Historical Society.

Friday, Jan. 1, 2016, 4-6 pm
At the Cox House Museum

Admission: $20
[Gets you 1 trip to the bloody bar.
Additional trips $10, while supplies last.]

Barkasp & DJ: Alyssa Auten
Tarot reader: Ann Rosenquist Fee

Tips for bar & tarot services benefit
the Arts Center of Saint Peter &
the Nicollet County Historical Society

21+. Tickets: acesp.org/support/happynewyear

New Year’s Day Benefit at the Cox House

NCHS has teamed up with the Arts Center of Saint Peter for a fun, new event this holiday season! Join us on January 1 for the first annual “New Year’s Day Bloody Mary Bar at the Cox House” benefit and party. Tickets on sale soon, call the Treaty Site or Arts Center for more information.

Harkin Happenings ...

Harkin Ending Season by Ruth Grewe

I hope that you have made it out to the Harkin Store this season. During the autumn season we featured programs of varying topics. On October 11 we had Horses-Horseshoes-Leather-Ropemaking-Transportation with Dan Cochran with his display of the leather works, and also Thane French who made rope for visitors to bring home. The October 18 program was the “happy trails” to the season with “Lonesome Ron’s Roundup”, where anyone was welcome to come play with Ron and “jam” that afternoon. We look forward to seeing you next season. Come and visit our store and learn about Alexander Harkin, the pioneers and what they did to develop Minnesota.

Ruth Grewe welcomes a group tour to the Harkin Store.
With the onset of fall the Mayo House has wrapped up the 2015 season. The close of the season brings to mind that winter is right around the corner and how fortunate we are have so many modern amenities available to us. I think of the humble life Dr. Mayo and his family lived in such a small house and yet in its time, it was considered quite impressive.

Being a doctor 150 years ago did not bring in much money, especially on the frontier. Patients would often have bartered for the doctor’s services with meats from hunting or vegetables from their gardens. With fall being the time to gather in the yields, fall might also have been bountiful for the Mayo family with patients settling their accounts based on what they could spare from harvests. This didn’t mean that the Mayo’s didn’t work hard at creating their own stores for winter. Louisa Mayo is quoted to say, “Minnesota is a hard place,” as she goes on to name the chores she performed while raising her family along the Minnesota River. She would have worked throughout the summer in her own garden to make sure her cellar was stocked for the winter ahead.

The 2015 tours of the Mayo House incorporated themes to highlight the comparison of daily life between then and now. Starting the season off was a tour based on the tools that were available to Dr. Mayo as he built the house by hand in 1859. During the kids tours, games were played by touring children like ninepins, whirligigs, and Jacob’s ladders. For the hundreds of people who toured the Mayo House this summer and the thousands who have toured over the years, I hope a glimpse into the Mayo Family’s life has given them a moment to reflect on the comparison between today’s life and that of those 150 years ago.

The season at Fort Ridgely has been great! We hosted Company B re-enactors along with the New Ulm Battery and the 2nd Minnesota Regiment in June. Historian Arn Kind was also there to recruit visitors to join the army. It definitely was not “Sargeant Kinds school of Ballet”. Kind drilled, marched, and had a great time with the visitors as he gave them a great dose of history. The re-enactors had a good time camping at the Fort as well.

We had many authors visit us throughout the summer. Vince Botz from Stearns County talked about his book Stearns County and the Dakota War of 1862. Author Curtis Dahlin paid us a visit to promote his new book Friends, Betrayal, Murders; The Massacre of the Paul Kelzmann Party. Both of these wonderful books are available at the Fort Ridgely gift shop.

Our many Children’s Days have brought out families and introduced kids to old time crafts and games. We teamed up with Scott Kudelka from the DNR so kids were also able to participate in archery, nature hikes, and digital photography!

On October 3rd we held our first “Fun Fall Trail Run/Walk” through Fort Ridgely State Park! This was a 5K that started at the Commissary building at 10 a.m. and all proceeds went to the Fort Ridgely Historic Site, NCHS, and the State Park. Participants received a free t-shirt as well as other prizes. Participants enjoyed the fall colors and we’ll look forward to seeing you at next year’s run.

Thank you to everyone that stopped by this season. We’ll look forward to seeing you in 2016!
Report on summer activities:

**Mahkato Wicipi**

by Teresa Saum

Nicollet County Historical Society was present at the Mahkato Wicipi in the Education Tent. Pow Wow, or Wacipi (Wachee-pee in Dakota means “they dance”) time is the Native American people’s way of gathering to sing, dance, and celebrate with friends old and new. This is a time to renew thoughts of the old ways and to preserve a rich heritage. It is a celebration of the community. The theme of the Pow Wow is reconciliation so all are welcome, Native and non-Native. More information on the Wicipi can be found on their web page at http://www.mahkatowacipi.org/.

History on Tap

In August, the Nicollet County Historical Society had an amazing opportunity to host the second **History on Tap** program in the original Engesser rathskeller at the historic Engesser Brewery in St. Peter! Participants sipped beer while learning about homebrewing from Patrick’s On Third’s Award-Winning bartender, Mathias Ove. We’re currently planning the third **History on Tap** program to be held during St. Peter’s 2016 Winterfest, so watch for more details!

Engesser items on display at the Engesser rathskeller.
Nicollet County Historical Society was present at the Nicollet County Fair! We had a table with books, maps, t-shirts, and an authentic voting box from Klossner that we used to collect names for a drawing for a free family membership. We also hosted the display Saint Peter Public School’s history panels. Over 1,200 people came by to buy books, register for prizes, and to tell stories. Volunteers, staff members, and board members manned the booth all five days of the fair. What a great opportunity to participate in this annual county-wide event!

Save the Date: Annual meeting

NCHS Annual Meeting

NOTE DATE AND LOCATION CHANGE!

Please join us for the Nicollet County Historical Society’s annual meeting, Saturday, January 23, 2016 at the Treaty Site History Center. This coming year we’re changing things up because 2016 is bringing changes to the Treaty Site and NCHS, and we want to share them with you! 2016’s annual meeting will feature an open house of the Treaty Site, hors d’oeuvres, a cash bar, the business meeting and a program featuring our to-be-unveiled new website and highlights of the upcoming exhibit changes! Open house at 3 p.m., program at 4:30, business meeting to follow. More details and registration information will be in December’s newsletter.

New Faces at NCHS

Goodbye to Susie, welcome Jessica as Site Manager

We’re sad to announce that Susie Carlin has resigned from the Site Manager position at the Treaty Site History Center. Susie has done a great job representing and making improvements at the Treaty Site. We’re happy that she’ll still be helping with the upcoming Smithsonian exhibit and some additional projects around the building. Thank you, Susie!

On that note, we’re very happy to announce that Jessica Becker has accepted the position of Site Manager at the Treaty Site. Jessica has worked at the Treaty Site as a Museum Assistant for six years and shows real knowledge and pride in the museum. We’re excited to have her on board!

Welcome Pa

My name is Pa Moua and I am currently a freshman at Gustavus Adolphus College. I am from Oakdale, Minn. and my ethnicity is Hmong. I am interested in the Nursing program and am currently taking general courses toward that major. I love to be involved with community work and leadership organizations. I also love working with people and building connections. In my free time, I could be found watching “Grey’s Anatomy” on Netflix or spending time with my family and friends.
History Center Events...

November 19 (Thursday) at 7 p.m.
American Bison

As the largest mammal on the Great Plains, millions of bison once roamed North America and played an integral role in the livelihood of many American Indian tribes. The American bison is an animal built to live in harsh conditions and has managed to survive despite reaching only around 400 animals in the 1890s. We will talk about the distribution of bison prior to the arrival of Europeans, the differences between the words “bison” and “buffalo,” and the resurgence of this American icon along with their reintroduction to Minneopa State Park.

A Brief History of Jack-o’-Lanterns

Every October, carved pumpkins peer out from porches and doorsteps in the United States and other parts of the world. Gourd-like orange fruits inscribed with ghoulish faces and illuminated by candles are a sure sign of the Halloween season. The practice of decorating “jack-o’-lanterns”—the name comes from an Irish folktale about a man named Stingy Jack—originated in Ireland, where large turnips and potatoes served as an early canvas. Irish immigrants brought the tradition to America, home of the pumpkin, and it became an integral part of Halloween festivities.

http://www.history.com/topics/halloween/jack-o-lantern-history

Artifact & Archival Donations

accepted into our collections since the July 2015 Crossing:
Irene Russell Busler: publications owned by Harkin/Russell family members.
Elizabeth Russell: items owned by Harkin/Russell family members.
Fay Reagan: dress believed to have been the wedding dress of Annie Klein, who married Joseph Engesser in Nicollet County on November 27, 1883; outdoor photograph at the time of the wedding of Cecilia K. Engesser to Raymond C. Fay in St. Peter on Aug. 7, 1912.
Arlene Foster: fabric assortment, curtain panels, apron, rug, slip.

Jane Haala: Nicollet High School yearbooks from the following years: 1964, ’66, ’92.
St. Peter High School: yearbooks from the following years: 2003, ’04, ’05, ’06, ’09 (two copies), ’11, and ’13.
Dayton Hale: postcard collection with many from St. Peter and other area communities.
Erika Holmquist Wall: photographs showing damage from the Mar. 1998 tornado.
Ken Giese & Rosemary Dummer: Dist. 16 School bell.
John Kayser: items concerning the Kayser & McCabe families of St. Peter; political items concerning Mrs. Ida McCabe Kayser.
Marlin Peterson: postcards from Klossner, St. Peter, and Bernadotte (the Riverside Creamery).
Ruth Klossner: postcards from Klossner, St. Peter, and Bernadotte (the Riverside Creamery).

Cindy Mohr: St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fairfax, MN, booklet 1890-1990.
Faith H. Graefe: St. Peter Lions Club uniform of Mark Himmerthal, Nicollet Co. Bicentennial Markers by Fred Wetherell.
Mary Eikes Fox, David R. Eikes, Donna Eikes Lietzke: printing supplies from Roy Eikes; items concerning Roy Eikes and his positions as a Nicollet Co. commissioner; copy of the Nov. 1968 Nicollet News; correspondence, photos, & other items concerning the 1965 flood at North Mankato, 1962, ’75, and ’78 Atlases of Nicollet Co.; assorted booklets & publications about Nicollet Co., including three from Holy Rosary in N. Mankato.

John Kayser: items concerning the Kayser & McCabe families of St. Peter; political items concerning Mrs. Ida McCabe Kayser.
William B. Darrow: Spring 2015 issue of Arkansas Historical Quarterly (containing article about former St. Peter resident James Hendi).

Garrfield Eckberg: documents from Nicollet County Farm Bureau.

http://www.history.com/topics/halloween/jack-o-lantern-history
Society Thanks the Questers

For over 140 years the E. St. Julien Cox House and grounds has stood as a timeless and elegant example of Victorian era architecture and landscaping. In 1971 the Cox House opened as a historic house museum under the operation of the Nicollet County Historical Society. However the house and grounds would never be what it is today without a little help from some very special people. From nearly the beginning the Minnehaha Chapter #111 Questers have played an integral part in the upkeep and promotion of the Cox House.

The Minnehaha Chapter #111 Questers group was organized and chartered in 1959 and has been going strong in the St. Peter area ever since. The primary focus of the group is study and research. NCHS is lucky the Questers decided to take an interest and liking to the Cox House.

Since the early 1970s the women of the Questers have shown their support through various fundraisers and events. Anyone who has attended Christmas at the Cox House can see just how much hard work and dedication the Questers have to the Cox House. From the 1990s to 2014 they decorated and opened the house for Christmas at the Cox House where the young and young at heart could enjoy an open house atmosphere and experience the house in all its Victorian charm at Christmastime. When decorating the house they even loan out and display their own antiques and collectibles for the public to enjoy.

The Questers also have sponsored and contributed to the Trunk Show in 1998, the Cherished Collectibles show in 2000, the Victorian House tour in 2007, and many more. Perhaps most notably though, the Questers are responsible for the ever popular Annual Heritage Plant Sale at the Cox House. They have been involved in this event since its inception in 1990 to help raise awareness and profits for the Cox House.

The ladies of the Questers have contributed time, expended effort, raised money, and even made donations themselves in the form of money and items, all to keep the house looking and running smoothly. The Nicollet County Historical Society would like extend a heartfelt thank you to this special group and the women who have helped make and keep the E. St. Julien Cox House what it is today.
Glimpse of the Past:
St. Peter’s water works established in 1880s
by Bob Sandeen

This article previously was published in the Sunday, October 4, 2015 issue of the Mankato Free Press.

When the first settlers arrived in this area in the 1850s, they were faced with the task of obtaining a safe and reliable supply of water. Wells often dug to depths of about 10 or 15 feet served the people of St. Peter for many years. However, the water from those wells was dangerous to use. After testing numerous samples, Dr. G. W. Merritt stated his opinion of the water in the June 15, 1887 issue of the St. Peter Tribune by writing that “in every instance it was found to be dangerously impure.”

The same issue of the Tribune described a project to provide the city with the type of water supply that it needed. It was believed that connecting Lake Pettis, east of St. Peter, to the community by a system of pipes would be desirable. The lake was believed to be fed by springs, which would provide a constantly replenishing supply of water of sufficient quantity and quality. For various reasons, that plan was not adopted.

Instead, a new Water Works system was constructed. An iron standpipe, 60 feet high and 20 feet in diameter, was built on top of the hill a short distance north of Gustavus Adolphus College. Water pipes were placed below three miles of the city’s streets. They originated at the Water Works building that was built into the hillside east of Front Street and south of Nassau Street in 1888. Many of us remember that building as the Power House. The standpipe was filled with water pumped from a well 45 feet deep at the Water Works building by two Smedley pumps with a capacity of 1,750,000 gallons per day.

On November 12, 1888, as reported in the St. Peter Herald four days later, the Water Works Committee members of the St. Peter City Council “were authorized to purchase a car load of coal for use of water works engine and pumps.” The council also began the process to hire qualified personnel to operate and maintain the system.

The November 14, 1888 issue of the Tribune describes an initial, unplanned, test of the system on the 13th. Spontaneous combustion started a fire “in a manure pile next to Sackett & Fay’s stable by the mill.” The Sackett & Fay Flour Mill was located where the municipal building is currently located on South Front Street. “The alarm brought hundreds of spectators to the scene eager to see the action of the new water works and as the fire ladies came running down the street with two new red hose carts and ladder trucks they were merrily cheered.” After additional purple prose, the article described the actions of the firemen. “Lustily the brave firemen unfurled their brand new hose and with confidence and fortitude expressed upon every face they marched against that conflagrating manure pile. They routed it, they scouted it, they put it all to flight. The town was saved, the water works were a blessing and everybody felt relieved. Damage seventy-three cents.”

The November 21, 1888 Tribune described the first public test that was done by the contractors on the 15th. “Water Thrown 143 Feet High” was one of the story’s subheadings. The standpipe was said to have a capacity of 140,994 gallons of water. Readers were told that “it would take just seven hours for one stream one and one eighth inches in diameter to empty it, and it would provide seven of our largest fire streams one hour without one drop being pumped by the engines” at the Water Works building.

An evening banquet with a very lengthy menu was held at the Nicollet Hotel after the test. There were 200 diners, 40 of whom had to wait until the first 160 were served. An orchestra, several speeches, and singing by some of the local young women entertained the audience.

The November 28 issue of the Tribune alerted residents of the city that one of the contractors was asking to be paid an additional $18,000. The Tribune and the City Council were not inclined to agree that the request was an acceptable one. The Council repeatedly found reasons to defer the issue to future meetings.

Water Works continued on next page
Water Works continued from previous page

The same issue of the newspaper contained Ordinance No. 44, which set the goal of “establishing water rates, rules, regulations and penalties, for the government of water takers, licensed plumbers and others.” Readers learned that the annual water rate for a bakery, if kept to two barrels per day or less, would not exceed eight dollars. Blacksmith shops would pay three dollars for one fire, and two dollars for each additional fire. Churches would pay five dollars, and dentists would pay six dollars. “Stores, for the sale of any goods except liquors and drugs” were to be charged five dollars per year. Liquor stores would pay 25 dollars, and the fee for drug stores was seven dollars. “Water closets, for barber shop, saloon, several offices, or in a public place, each” were 10 dollars per year. They were three dollars per year in a private house. Dozens of other fees or regulations were also in the article.

The January 16, 1889 issue of the Tribune again mentioned the problem concerning the additional $18,000 fee of one of the contractors, and that “the works had not been in the possession of the city although they had been practically completed for some time.” The contract stated that the works were to have been completed by November 15, 1888, and that the city could take possession if the work was not progressing at an acceptable rate. The subheading of the article reads as follows: “Forcible Possession Taken Last Thursday by the City.” The raid on the pump house was made by two council members, the Chief of Police, the Nicollet County Sheriff, the City Engineer, a member of the Tribune staff, and others. A council member told the contractor’s machinist who had been taking care of the equipment that the city was now in possession of the Water Works. With that statement, the city took over operation of the system, which cost about $40,000, according to figures elsewhere in the same issue of the newspaper.

The February 6, 1889 issue of the Tribune described “the official test of the efficiency of the water works of our city.” Over about a two-hour period, firemen sprayed eight streams of water in various directions from locations along Minnesota Avenue. Water was sent onto or over the roofs of buildings in the business district, as well as along Nassau Street. A ninth stream of water was flowing near the Engesser Brewery, which was located on South Front Street, between Pine and Jefferson Streets. Mr. Smedley, the designer of the pump engines, monitored their operation and found them to be operating perfectly. It was noted that the “avenue and adjacent streets were a great big skating rink, nothing more nothing less, on Saturday morning” after the test on Friday.

Saturday also saw a successful test of the water pipes of the system by forcing them to hold water at a pressure of 175 pounds per square inch. Once the boilers were tested and approved on another date, the system was complete.

The Power House was constructed in 1888 southwest of the mill pond in St. Peter, Minnesota, and was demolished in 1987. The building contained a well 45 feet deep and pumps to move water to a standpipe above the city. For several years, two dynamos inside the building were used in the process of generating electricity and providing it to city residents.

From the collections of the Nicollet County Historical Society
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14 the CROSSING
2015 & 2016 Calendar of Events:

Event/Program information:

Harkin Store, Fort Ridgely, Mayo House: $6 adults (18–64), $5 seniors (65+) and college students, $4 children (ages 6–17). Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members

Treaty Site History Center: $5 adults (18–64), $3 seniors (65+) and children (ages 6–17). Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members.

Oct. 28 Coffee on Patio: Cemeteries of Nicollet County, 10:30 a.m. (see page 3)

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE & TIME

Nov. 1– Feb. 28 TSHC CLOSED ON SUNDAYS

Nov. 5 Documentary Film Series:
University Ave – One Street, A Thousand Dreams, 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)

Nov. 19 American Bison Program, 7 p.m. (see description on page 10)

Nov. 25 Coffee on Patio: Holiday Celebrations, 10:30 a.m. (see page 3)

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE & TIME

Nov. 28 Mayo House Interpretive Society sponsored Afternoon Christmas Tours, 1 p.m.

Dec. 3 Documentary Film Series
Aboriginal Architecture, 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)

Dec. 5 Mayo House Interpretive Society sponsored Afternoon Christmas Tours, 1 p.m.

Dec. 11 Mayo House Interpretive Society sponsored Christmas Candle Light Tours, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 12 Mayo House Interpretive Society sponsored Christmas Candle Light Tours, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 20– Jan. 10 2016 TSHC CLOSED

2016

Jan. 1 New Year’s Day Party at Cox House, 4–6 p.m., pre-registration required, (see page 6)

Jan. 14 Documentary Film Series (film TBD), 7 p.m.

Jan. 23 NCHS Annual Meeting and Open House, 3 p.m. (see page 9)

Please watch the NCHS website, Facebook & Twitter and MNHS website 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
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NCHS Membership Application

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My check is enclosed □  Please debit my credit card □

Acct. Number ______________________________________
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□ Please save mailing costs, I will read my newsletter online.

Yes! I would like to support my Nicollet County Historical Society in 2015–16 at the following level (please check one).

□ Individual $30  □ Family $45  □ Sustaining $75
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