



the CROSSING

a publication of the Nicollet County Historical Society

July 2015 • Volume 20 / Issue 2

6th Grader Memorial Designs on Display at Treaty Site

Students from Northeast Middle School in Minneapolis visit the Treaty Site.

A few months ago the Nicollet County Historical Society was contacted by a sixth grade teacher in Minneapolis about reviewing his classes' proposals for memorials to be built about the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Director Alyssa Auten agreed and reviewed 28 proposals that included students' drawings of what the memorial was to look like and a letter describing why the memorial was designed the way it was. Six projects were chosen to be displayed in the lobby of the Treaty Site History Center for the summer. In June, the class from Minneapolis traveled to St. Peter, got a tour of the Treaty Site History Center and Traverse des Sioux trails, and got to see their classmates' work on the wall! This class of sixth graders is extremely talented, thoughtful and NCHS is proud to show their work!



Treaty Site's Patio Grand Opening—Big Success!

On Sunday, June 14, over 100 people gathered at the Treaty Site History Center to celebrate the Grand Opening of the building's new patio and landscaping. After receiving a very generous anonymous donation two years ago the Nicollet County Historical Society was able to enhance the front entry to the Treaty Site

Patio continued on next page 5

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Members

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

Renewed Benefactor

Renewed Advocate

Business Members:

Nelson Printing Co.
Weber's Custom Catering

Renewed Family Members:

Wayne & Theresa Bjorklund
Abbi & Daniel Carleton
Sandra Gappa
Myrtle R. Gieseke
Sara & John McKay
George & Joyce Merino
Carolyn Meyer
Dan, Lori & Isaac Oachs
Roger & Myrna Schoeb
James & Diane Stenson

Renewed

Individual Members:

Opal Dewanz
Marty Duncan
Elaine Hermanson
Dale E. Himmelman
Rita Kramer Joerg
Edward F. McLean
Ronald McMillin
Jim Pitmon
Ron Roselli
Beverly Sohm
Agnes Stensby

New Patron Members:

Brian & Deborah Fors
(The History Writers)
Dave Solheim

New Family Members:

Dan & Diane Cochran

New Individual Members:

Karen Annexstad
Humphrey
Barbara A. Jerabek
Karen Robison
Shirley Zimprich

Executive Board

Officers:

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

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Julie Gilbert, Saint Peter
Eileen Holz, Saint Peter
Maria Lokensgard, Norseland
Bob Schabert, Courtland
Mark Ulman, North Mankato
Joe Urban, Saint Peter

Contact Information:

Executive Director, Alyssa Auten
alyssa@nchsmn.org

Research Coordinator, Bob Sandeen
bob@nchsmn.org

Office Manager, Elaine Deschaines
elaine@nchsmn.org

TSHC Site Manager, Susie Carlin

**TSHC Museum Assistants, Jessica Becker,
Jack Buser, Sarah Cooper,
Marian Determan, Teresa Saum
Loren Sundboom**

TSHC Maintenance, Wayne Passon

Harkin Store Manager, Ruth Grewe

**Harkin Store Site Guides, Rose Alsleben,
Donna Dose, Robin Grewe,
Glenn Stryker**

Ft. Ridgely Manager, Amber Bentler

**Ft. Ridgely Guides, Dan Cochran,
Annaliese Endorf, Rachel Montpetit,
Charlotte Nack**

Mayo House Manager, Becky Pollack

Mayo House Guide, Amanda Johnson

Treaty Site History Center
1851 N Minnesota Ave., St. Peter, MN 56082
Phone: 507-934-2160; Fax: 507-934-0172
Hours: Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m.;
Sun. 1–4 p.m.;
Archives: Mon.–Fri. 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

General info via e-mail: museum@nchsmn.org
or research@nchsmn.org

E. St. Julien Cox House
500 N Washington Ave., St. Peter MN 56082
Phone: 507-934-2160

Tours of 10+ available by appointment.
The Cox House is available year-round for a
variety of programs and facility rentals.
Please call for more information.

Harkin Store
PO Box 112, New Ulm MN 56073
Eight miles east of New Ulm on Co. Hwy. 21
Phone: 507-354-8666, harkinstore@mnhs.org

Hours: May, September, First 3 Weekends
in October:
Sat. & Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Memorial Day–Labor Day:
Tu.–Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
and Monday holidays
10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Fort Ridgely
72404 County Road 30, Fairfax MN 55332
Phone: 507-508-2848

Hours: Memorial Day weekend–Labor Day
Fr.–Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sept., first 3 weekends in Oct.
Sat.–Sun. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
& Monday holidays 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

W.W. Mayo House
118 N Main St., Le Sueur MN 56058
Phone: 507-665-3250

Hours: May–Sep.: Sat. 10 a.m.–1 p.m.



Alyssa Auten

Director's Column

At the Nicollet County Historical Society, we say that this area has been a “gateway and a gathering place for thousands of years.” We often tell our visitors that in the past, geography and geology played a major role in why people chose to settle where they did. Thousands of years ago Native Americans frequently gathered here to cross the Minnesota River and utilize resources within the “Big Woods” forest to the east of the river, and in the prairie to the west of the river. This part of history is one of the main things we teach at the Treaty Site History Center and at the Traverse des Sioux State Historic Site trail system just north of the History Center.

This summer, I encourage all of you to come out to Traverse des Sioux prairie and spend some time walking the trails that take one in and around the historic settlement of Traverse des Sioux. These trails meander through our restored prairie, into the forest, and along the Minnesota River. We’ve been told that one can really feel the history of this place by walking our trails. There’s the old river crossing, an almost 400-year old cottonwood tree, and interpretive markers to show one where Sibley’s trading post sat and where the Bornemann Hotel was. In fact, in its heyday, Traverse des Sioux boasted 70 buildings (taverns, churches, hotels and more) and about 300 residents!

As if the Traverse des Sioux trails didn’t have enough to offer, a group of motivated, local mountain bikers have spent the last few years developing a series of walking and biking trail loops within the City of Saint Peter’s Traverse des Sioux Park that sits just East of the Treaty Site History Center. Almost ten miles of trails explore the area along the Minnesota River, affording one beautiful views of the river, the landscape and nature.

The history of this area can be experienced indoors or out at each of our historic sites—Harkin Store that sits on the Minnesota River, Fort Ridgely that overlooks the valley, or the W.W. Mayo House, sitting among the quaint downtown of Le Sueur, there’s plenty to see and learn. The Nicollet County Historical Society has a multitude of experiences to offer to its members and the public, from these historic sites to programs and trails. This summer, I invite you to bring a picnic and spend some time immersed in nature and in history.

Alyssa Auten, Director

FILMS ON FIRST THURSDAYS

Season 7 / 2015-16 Film Series Planned

The Society will once again partner with St. Peter Community and Family Education to present our seventh season of documentary films starting in September. They're shown every month from September through May. Admission to the film series is free for all! The Treaty Site History Center is located one mile north of downtown Saint Peter at Highways 169 and 22, across from the Mankato Clinic.

Thurs., Sept. 3, 7 p.m.: *Split Rock Light: Tribute to an Age of Steel* 35 min. for two short films, not rated. Along with the building of the Split Rock Lighthouse Visitor Center, constructed in 1986, the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) produced a 22-minute long interpretive film called *Split Rock Light: Tribute to the Age of Steel* to show at the historic site. The popular and award-winning film was shown at the historic site until 2013, when MNHS produced a new Split Rock film. The new 13:30 long film, titled *The Story of Split Rock Lighthouse*, was designed to meet the current interpretive program at the site, and was produced using state of the art sound and picture quality. On September 3, Lee Radzak, historic site manager of Split Rock Lighthouse, will show both films and discuss the films and how they reflect the story of Split Rock Lighthouse.



photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

Thurs., Oct. 1, 7 p.m.: *The Folsom House* 10 min., not rated. Join NCHS Executive Director Alyssa Auten in an evening discussing her previous place of employment, The Folsom House Historic Site in Taylors Falls, Minnesota. Alyssa will present the film she helped create as the introduction to visitors of the historic home. Alyssa will then present information about the history of the Folsom family and their story. This 1855 frame home sits within Taylors Falls' National Register Historic District, Angel Hill. The home was built by lumber baron W.H.C. Folsom after he moved his family to Taylors Falls in 1850. Folsom was a lumber baron, owned the general store in Taylors Falls, served as a State Representative for many years and was involved in Minnesota's Constitutional Convention. The Folsom family lived in the home until 1968 when their grandson, Stanley, sold the home to the Minnesota Historical Society. Today, the home features views of the St. Croix River and is furnished with original items belonging to the Folsoms.



photo by Alyssa Auten

Coffee on the Patio!

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 **Tuesdays at 10 a.m.:**

July 21: History of the State Hospital

August 25: History of Railroads in Nicollet County

We invite you to come by to share any memories or stories you might have about the 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 will be provided. There is no cost to participate.

We hope to see you there!



History Center Events...

Monetary Donations

received since the
March 2015 Crossing:

Patrick's on Third
Lisa Heldke
Mel Craig
Loren & Roxane Sundboom
Arn Kind
The Estate of
Mary Ann Zins
Lions Club District 5M2
Ralph Thrane

Non-monetary

Willis E. Anthony
Fred Muellerleile

Memorials

received since the
March 2015 Crossing:

In Memory of
Anna Mae Wiest
Given by
Ken & Lois Ahnholz
Janet Anthony
Carol Jackson

In Memory of
Armin Altman
Given by
Hermanson Family

In Memory of
Robert "Bob" Gleisner
Given by
Elizabeth Russell
Lorna Russell Runck
& Ilene Russell Busstler

In Memory of
Marge Halvorson
Given by
Saint Peter Minnehaha
Chapter 111 Questers
Richard & Janet
Wettergren

In Memory of
Gilbert Isenberg
Given by
Robert & Leona Isenberg

In Memory of
Harold Olson
Given by
Ardith & Tory Nelson

In Memory of
James Eckberg
Given by
Owen & Evie Swenson

In Memory of
Mary Ann Zins
Given by
Cape Horn Well Association

In Memory of
Kimberly Ann Rethwill Hogg
Given by
Robert & Leona Isenberg

It's back! The Prairie and Big Woods trail tour series!

Please join us again this year for our "two-part trail tour" presented by Scott Kudelka, Minneopa Area Naturalist. The two programs, one in July and one in August, will take place on the Traverse des Sioux trails and will teach participants about the two very different landscapes on either side of the Minnesota River—the Prairie and the Big Woods.

During the Prairie tour we will learn how—prior to Euro-American settlement of southern Minnesota—the tall-grass prairie dominated the landscape through the Minnesota River basin. A hike through our restored prairie will give us a chance to learn about some of the plants and wildlife found in this ecosystem. Scott will talk about its benefits to the natural environment and how people over time have viewed and managed it as a resource.

During the Big Woods program we will examine how these forests formed in the first place, some of the rare species found in this ecosystem and its history over time. The dense forest dominated by maple and basswood once covered a 3,000-square-mile area of southern Minnesota reaching all the way to present-day Mankato. Called "Bois Grand" or "Big Woods" by early French explorers, it was recognized as a distinct area from the band of hardwood forests.

The two-part program will take place starting at the Treaty Site History Center:

The Prairie: Thursday, July 23 at 7 p.m.

The Big Woods: Thursday, August 20 at 7 p.m.
Regular Site Admission.

Both of these tours will take place outdoors. Please wear good walking shoes and dress for the weather.

History on Tap: Homebrewing

Treaty Site History Center
Friday, August 28, 7 p.m.

Have you ever considered brewing your own beer?

Join the Nicollet County Historical Society and local homebrewers to learn about the practice of brewing beer in your home! These experienced brewers will share "secrets of the trade" including the science of brewing beer, best practices, and more. Following the program we will sample some home-brewed beer!

One of the homebrewers leading the discussion will be Mathias Ove, manager of Patrick's on 3rd and recently voted 2014 Best Bartender by SouthernMinn.com.

\$15/person.
Must be 21 to participate.
Min 10, Max 100.

Registration Deadline (through St. Peter Community Education): August 25



History Center Events...

Dakota Culture & History Days

Treaty Site History Center

August 11–13. (Tu.-W.-Th.), 9:30 a.m. to noon.

Learn about life in this area before St. Peter even existed! Staff members from the Lower Sioux Agency will join us in this three-day program that explores the history and culture of the Dakota people. There will be a mix of indoor and outdoor activities. Activities will include traditional Dakota games and pottery making. Children will also learn about the language, music, and daily life of the Dakota people in the 19th century.

This program is designed for children entering 3rd through 6th grades.

A light snack will be provided each day.

Cost: \$60 per child.

Minimum 10; maximum 30.

Registration Deadline (through St. Peter Community Education): August 4



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



Register for Digital Nature Photography

Digital Nature Photography

September 20, 1–2:30 p.m.

Photography is a great way to take some memories home with you after a visit to a natural area. Join NCHS and Scott Kudelka, Minneopa Area Naturalist, in this exciting class about digital photography. Participants will get a chance to learn how to use a digital camera and receive tips on how to shoot better photos. To practice their new skills participants will have a chance to shoot images of what they find interesting. Digital cameras are provided and each participant will be able to print one photo to take home.

20 people limit, registration required

Cost: \$8 per person

Registration Deadline (through St. Peter Community Education): September 11

Patio *continued from page 1*

History Center with new side-walks, a redesigned brick patio and thoughtfully chosen landscaping and plants. The new landscaping creates a much warmer welcome to the building and adds another place for people to gather.

During the Grand Opening Executive Director Alyssa Auten acknowledged those who made the project come together, those who had donated to the landscaping and event, and invited assorted people to speak. The St. Peter Color Guard from the American

Legion Post #37 was present and long-time NCHS volunteer, Herb Poncin, raised a new American Flag to complete the program.

Visitors received free admission to the museum and various refreshments were enjoyed. Local partners were present to discuss prairie restoration and other environmental projects; these partners included: Seed to Site, The Many Rivers Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts and the River's Edge Hospital's Mission Monarch program.

A huge thank you to those who helped bring this project to completion, the volunteers who helped with the grand opening, and to the guests who visited the Treaty Site History Center on Flag Day of 2015.

NCHS Site Information



Richard Tostenson

Cox House Corner ...

Cox House Site Manager Retires

In April 2015, our long-time volunteer and Cox House Site Manager, Richard Tostenson, retired from his duties at the Cox House. Richard has been a dedicated champion of the Eugene St. Julien Cox House since the 1980s and the Nicollet County Historical Society extends its sincerest gratitude and thanks for his hard work and support of the historic house.

Ridgely Report ...

Fort Ridgely Historic Site by Amber Bentler



Company B Weekend
photo by Amber Bentler

Fort Ridgely has had a great start to our season! On June 6 and 7 we hosted our second Company B weekend along with Historian Vickie Wendel. Wendel talked about “Women during the Civil War” and the 2nd and 5th Minnesota regiment re-enactors camped out, ran musket drills and fired cannons along with the New Ullm Battery. We have had independent historian John Labatte for his “Causes of the U.S. Dakota War” program, as well as Daryl Hrdlicka and his program about the telegraph and morse code. It was a great way to kick off the season.

Some of our upcoming programs include author Vince Botz on August 8 at 1 p.m. Botz will be discussing his new book *Stearns County and the Dakota War of 1862*. If you are looking for more cannon fire don't worry—the New Ullm Battery will be back on August 15 along with John Labatte. Author and Historian Curtis Dahlin will join us on August 16 to talk about his new book *Friends, Betrayal, Murders: The Massacre of the Paul Keitmann Party* at 1 p.m. We will also have a little something for college kids looking for research projects, author and historian Al Koenig will be here September 12th to talk about a series of earthworks forts that were erected and used from northern Iowa to central Minnesota. This is a subject that needs further research and could be a great project for a student or anyone that is interested! These are some of our programs for the history buffs out there.

If you are looking to just enjoy the prairie and have a little fun with someone special, we will be hosting our first “Date Night at the Fort” on August 22. Come explore the prairie, take a walk, enjoy food and drinks and other surprises. RSVP required by August 16 by calling 507-508-2848, cost is \$10 per person. We have also teamed up with the DNR this season for Childrens' Days. Kids can come and do old fashioned crafts and games at the Commissary and then they can participate in archery or digital photography depending on what else we have happening that day in the park.

These are only a few programs for the season, if you would like to see a complete list you can visit the Nicollet County Historical Society website or pick up a Fort Ridgely brochure. We look forward to seeing all of at the Fort this season.

Fun Fall Trail Run at Fort Ridgely

The Nicollet County Historical Society is hosting our very first Fun Fall Trail Run on Saturday, October 31! This will be a 5K trail run/walk through Fort Ridgely State Park and all proceeds will go to support Fort Ridgely Historic Site, Fort Ridgely State Park and collections at Nicollet County Historical Society.

The run/walk will begin at 10 a.m. so please come out and enjoy the beautiful fall colors, as well as a great run or walk through the woods and prairie. If you are interested in participating or volunteering at the event, please call 507-508-2848. The registration fee is \$25 per person. This will help support NCHS as well as a park many of you grew up experiencing and can continue to share with others.

Harkin Happenings ...

Harkin Family Visits by Ruth Grewe

The Harkin Store hosted a Harkin family get together on June 5th. We gave them a tour of the store and told them about the town, store, and their heritage.

Some of the 22 people had never been at the store because they came from out of state, from Colorado and Arizona. They had a very good time getting to know each other and looking at the books that we have of their family and of course they had quite a selection of food. Laughs and stories abounded.

With the weather being so unpredictable, we never know how many visitors we will get in a day. We have had many from out of the state, already. We are glad that many people are

interested in our 1870's general store and are happy to tell the story of the store, the town and Alexander Harkin. It is a great place to learn about the past. We have programs every Sunday afternoon, dealing with the past or displays or music.

Please come and join us for a nice relaxing time while learning about the area in your own back yard.

We are open everyday except Mondays until Labor Day from 10 to 5 p.m. Our gift shop is stocked with many books, toys, hand created and unique items, and 10 cent candy.

22 descendants of Alexander Harkin recently visited the store and home.

photo by Ruth Grewe



W.W. Mayo House ...

A "Giant" Amount of History at the W.W. Mayo House by Becky Pollack

What is the connection that links the Green Giant Company to the historic W.W. Mayo House? Join us for a "Giant Story" Mayo House Tour on Saturday, August 1st from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the historic W. W. Mayo House. This event is held in conjunction with Le Sueur's Giant Celebration. The "Giant Story" Tour focuses on the Cosgrove Family who lived in the Mayo House from 1874 to 1920. The Cosgroves were an influential family in Le Sueur as they were founders, CEOs and Presidents of the Green Giant Company for three generations. All three generations either lived in or were born in the Mayo

House. Hear about who owned the house, how it was passed on through Cosgrove generations, and how the Cosgroves are connected to the Minnesota State Fair. Browse the collection of Green Giant memorabilia generously donated by Mr. Ralph Thrane, retired Green Giant Executive and other Green Giant affiliates. The "Giant Story" Tour includes a timeline that depicts 75-plus years of Green Giant Company highlights, including the introduction of the Green Giant name and character. See pictures of the first Minnesota Valley Canning Company cannery and visit the room where board meetings for the company were held. The Green Giant heritage at the W. W. Mayo house makes for a fascinating tour that takes visitors beyond the Mayo Family time. The "Giant Story" Tour shows the small gothic house was indeed a place where two great Minnesota families helped build legendary businesses in Minnesota, the beginnings of the Mayo Clinic and the Green Giant Company can be found within its walls.



1928 Green Giant Logo
courtesy of
General Mills and
Walker Arts Center

Goodbye Lelia

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to thank Lelia Leonhardt for the knowledge and skills she brought as our Office Manager over the last few months. Lelia has resigned from NCHS to pursue a great new job opportunity in the Twin Cities and will be missed! Please help us in welcoming our new Office Manager, Elaine Deschaine.

Welcome New Office Manager,

Elaine Deschaine!



Elaine Deschaine,
NCHS Office Manager

I grew up on a dairy farm located between Gibbon and Winthrop, Minn. A Winthrop High School graduate, I received a B.S. in Business Administration with a minor in Accounting from Minnesota State University, Mankato. I presently live in St. Peter with my husband Dan. We have five adult children and seven grandchildren. I enjoy gardening, creative sewing, reading, cooking, traveling, biking, and “all things grandchildren.”



Bri Dickel,
NCHS Summer Intern

Welcome summer intern, Bri Dickel!

My name is Bri Dickel and I’m a senior history major at Gustavus Adolphus College. I’m a Minnesota native with a passion for both alpine skiing and orchestra, so during the winter you can probably find me practicing my scales or playing in the snow (when I’m not hunched over several textbooks, anyway). My primary historical interests are medieval and pre-modern European culture, American military history, and worldwide medical history. I’ve loved museums (especially their historical artifacts) since I was a kid, so I’m really happy and super lucky to have the opportunity to intern for the Nicollet County Historical Society this summer!

Wishlist Items

The Nicollet County Historical Society needs some things to help its operations! If you have any of these items and are willing to donate them, please contact Director Alyssa Auten at alyssa@nchsmn.org or at 507-934-2160. *Thank you!*

- Desktop computer and monitor with Windows 7 or higher
- Monetary donations for technology upgrades
- Fiberglass ladder, between 6' and 12' tall
- Paper cutter
- Label maker
- Fabric tablecloths for 6' to 8' long rectangular tables
- Large rug—around 8' x 6' (somewhat historic-looking)
- Monetary donations for collections project
- Laptop bag

Volunteers at County Fair

It's that time of year again! The Nicollet County Fair is less than a month away, August 5-9, and we are planning our booth. We will be featuring the exhibit about the St. Peter School District's 150th anniversary. This year's hours are Wednesday 3 to 9 p.m., Thursday and Friday 12 noon to 10 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you are interested in giving us a helping hand at the fair, please contact Alyssa at alyssa@nchsmn.org or call the Treaty Site at 507-934-2160.

from Friends of North Mankato

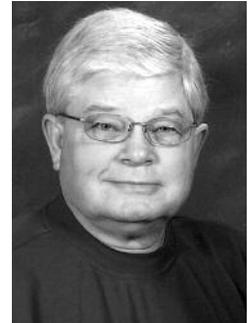


photo courtesy of Nancy Bruce

The Tschohl Farmstead, which sits on seven acres at the top of Lee Blvd. in North Mankato, is upper North Mankato's last significant historic site. However, it is currently listed at \$524,000 and could be sold at any time for development. Friends of North Mankato, a grassroots organization, is presently working to save this land because it is a noteworthy asset to the community and a valuable piece of history. Some historical aspects include a vintage barn and what might be the oldest Burr Oak in North Mankato. You can help the organization by donating to this cause. Tax-deductible gifts can be sent to: Attn: Lu V, Region Nine Area Inc., PO Box 3071, Mankato, MN 56002-3071. Checks are payable to RNAI, and the memo line must be filled in with "NMPARK" for the check to be accepted. To contact Friends of North Mankato, go to their Facebook page at facebook.com/northmankatofriends, e-mail them at northmankatofriends@gmail.com, or call them at (507) 469-3096.

Steve Hogberg's Docent Record!

On September 30, 2009 volunteer docent Steve Hogberg gave his first tour of the Treaty Site History Center to 22 people from Minnesota State University-Mankato. Steve has spent the last six years volunteering his time and knowledge to this site. To date, Steve has given 80 tours to 1,925 people. Very impressive! Thank you, Steve, for your dedication and support over the years!



Steve Hogberg

Become a Volunteer!

We are looking for volunteers! There are many opportunities to help out at the Nicollet County Historical Society. We need help with front desk coverage at the Treaty Site, collections and archival work, and many other projects and roles are available or could be created. If you are interested in contributing your time for the good of the Society, please contact Alyssa or Susie at 507-934-2160, or at their emails: alyssa@nchsmn.org or susie@nchsmn.org.

Thank you to Judy Scholl for the front lobby exhibits

A huge thank you is in order to Judy Scholl for her dedication to the rotating display in the lobby at the Treaty Site History Center. Judy has been putting together holiday and season-themed displays in the antique cabinet for over ten years. NCHS appreciates the time and creativity Judy puts into these displays, they are a great addition to the lobby!

A Judy Scholl creation in the TSHC front lobby



Nicollet County farm histories merge into 100-year commemoration

by Dana Melius



Marv Gieseke and Garfield Eckberg stand by the "concession stand" which for years served as the picnic headquarters for farm gatherings. It's located in Brighton Township and will again host a July 26 celebration.

Dana Melius, *St. Peter Herald*

Reprinted with permission from the *St. Peter Herald*

Nicollet County's farm history is as rich as its soils.

Garfield Eckberg is among those who want to celebrate agriculture's significant role in this region's economic vitality, its place in history here. And, oh, what a history. Three of the county's leading farm organizations all celebrate 100 years this summer.

Celebrating 100 Years of Nicollet County Agriculture is how it's being billed, now scheduled for Sunday, July 26 at the "old picnic grounds" in the heart of the county, 5-1/2 miles west of Highway 111 on County Road 5 – the historic Fort Road.

Tucked behind the old church, on the fifth generation Brighton Township farm site currently owned and operated by Marv Gieseke and his five sons, remains a shed which served pies and libations long before the term concession stand. It's still standing and will be the centerpiece of the July 26 grand picnic.

The early tentative plans are for an 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. meal

put on by the Nicollet County Pork Producers, with a program to follow. A church-sponsored pie contest, 4-H softball and plenty of history and honors are likely, according to the first poster. The committee also hopes to mark highlights from the Nicollet County Fair, as well.

Organizers include Eckberg, who will chair the ad hoc committee, along with Gieseke and sons, who have a bit of clearing ahead in preparation, dad said. But Nicollet County Extension farm educator Christian Lilienthal and Dennis Schmidt of Upper Midwest Management and president of the Nicollet County Farm Bureau will assist.

The Nicollet County Farm Bureau, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and United Farmers Cooperative (formerly Lafayette Farmers Coop) are all noting 100 years of service to the regional farm community. All dating back to 1915 is something worth celebrating, according to Eckberg.

"It's quite unique to look at the history of agriculture, particularly in Nicollet County," said the 77-year-old rural spokesperson, "where we've gone through 100 years. Nicollet County is still farm country, and Extension has had a role in that."

It's more significant than that, he added. For the roots of this region's farm activism and leadership can be tied to the joint beginnings and cooperation between Extension and the Nicollet County branch of Farm Bureau.

While the three organizations are all commemorating 100 years, the picnics weren't always held at the Gieseke farm site – sometimes referred to as Albert Jensen's Grove. But that 25th anniversary celebration of Farm Bureau and Extension did bring together a crowd of an estimated 3,000 on June 9, 1940, according to Eckberg.

"That building is still there," he said. "You'll see it as kind of a picnic like before we had electricity. It's amazing that everything's still there."

Well, everything is really just the shed, Jensen's Grove of oak trees, and a pasture where first base can still be seen. There's a winding road adjacent to the Swan Lake Lutheran Church Cemetery that Gieseke hopes will guide caravans through to the old pasture and picnic grounds.

Farm History *continued on next page*



Farm Bureau's June 9, 1940, picnic poster. Courtesy of Garfield Eckberg

"The highlight of those picnics used to be the 4-H softball games," Eckberg added.

And those 4-H clubs of Nicollet County were significant in the historical development and evolution of Extension, Eckberg said. The New Sweden 4-H club organized in September 1915, while the Norseland Club followed close behind.

The former Lafayette Farmers Cooperative slowly developed from its western Nicollet County location in the new UFC, which has become one of Minnesota's most successful farm cooperatives. UFC's corporate headquarters officially moved to Winthrop in 2007, but UFC's footprint remains deep into Nicollet County, with branches in Lafayette, Klossner and Norseland.

The coop actually originated as the Cooperative Creamery Association in 1916, and didn't purchase its first grain elevator until 1966 in Lafayette, then Klossner's two years later. In 1971, it was renamed Lafayette Farmers Cooperative. It took the UFC name in 1995.

Starting with just two employees and sales of slightly over \$35,000 in 1915, UFC has grown to over 300 employees and annual sales over \$230 million.

The forerunner to Farm Bureau, "The Farmers Club" launched in 1915. It merged seven different farm groups for a common cause, according to Nicollet County Historical Society notes. The University of Minnesota was already active in rural regions of the state, but not always welcomed, Eckberg noted.

Dennis Schmidt is thinking the July 26 picnic will be the major commemorative celebration, but there's likely to be smaller ones throughout 2015.

"I'm hoping that we might have a lot of different things throughout the year," Schmidt said.

Eckberg approved of that notion. Farm history, he said, is worth celebrating.



A very fine postcard of the 1907 St. Peter High School which was included in one of the scrapbooks recently donated to the NCHS collections by Marilyn Robertz.



Artifact & Archival Donations

accepted into our collections since the Mar. 2015 *Crossing*:

Fred Danner: Chicago & North Western Railway Dakota Division timetable number 1, effective May 13, 1951

Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Peter: directories from 1952, 1953, 1970, 1974, 1982, 1984, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2007, & 2011.

Stuart Hanson: St. Peter Lions Club documents

Curtis A. Dahlin: *Calamity at Lake Shetek, the Death of a Settlement*

Marlin Peterson: *Blizzard Ordeal of a Minnesota Cavalryman*, a book about a cavalry soldier named Benjamin Franklin.

Mary J. Christianson: document for two shares of the Nic. Co. Agricultural Society for Regina Pettijohn (the surname was incorrectly spelled as "Pettijohn" on the document) from 1932.

Norman and Judy Teigen: *Every Man/Every Soldier*, *Every Soldier's Bride*, a booklet about the World War Two experiences of Tosten and Norman Tostenson; several photographs, newspaper articles, and documents concerning the Tostenson family and the New Sweden area; assorted postcards sent to the Tostenson family.

St. Peter High School: yearbook for the 2013-14 school year.

St. Peter Tourism Bureau: 2015 Winterfest Medallion.

Monroe Elementary School, North Mankato: Principal's Album for the 2000-01 school year.

Wayne H. Wels, representing Lafayette Township: three ballot boxes (one in each color: in red, white, and blue) from Lafayette Township Hall in Klossner.

David Witte: two World War Two United States Navy uniforms worn by Alden Witte; wall-mounted coffee grinder; three irons and one handle

Nancy Beck: World War Two United States Army uniform of Wallace Beck; digital copies of photos and photocopies of numerous documents concerning his military service.

Marilyn Robertz: Virginia Laumann Barnes's St. Peter High School scrapbook (Class of 1922); Wilma Anita Laumann's St. Peter High School scrapbook and diploma (Class of 1928); funeral book for Alma Louise Schumacher Laumann (d. Nov. 4, 1953); notebook from Wilma Anita Laumann with sayings and addresses; genealogical information about the Laumann family; receipt for Mrs. Laura Laumann for a granite monument, dated 1902; Traverse des Sioux Commemorative Encampment shirt; Terry Morrow for State Representative shirt.

Lyon County Museum: St. Peter postcard; Minnesota Valley Stock Car Racing Association program from the 1967 season, the 15th year, in St. Peter

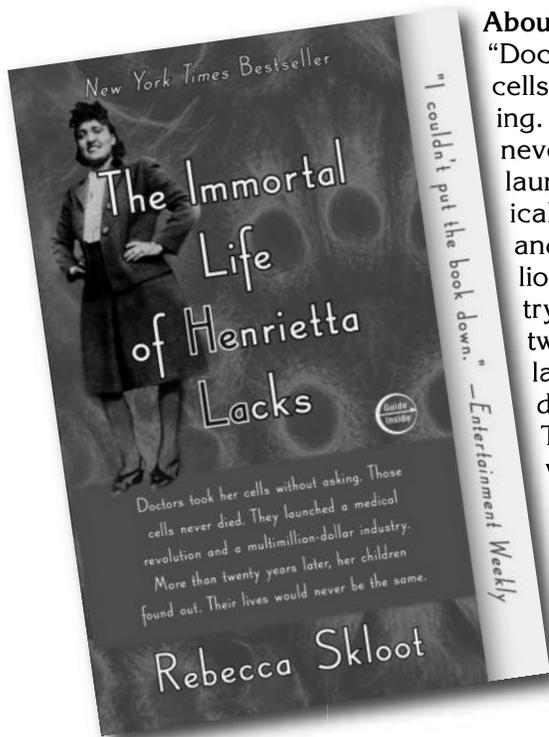
Patricia Rosenow: approx. 40 VCR tapes including Council meetings, a scrapbook, and other items all documenting the 1998 tornado; Wettergren's *A Little Bit of Heaven*

Area Events...

Join the Community Read

Gustavus and St. Peter Reads partner for *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Used with permission of Gustavus Adolphus College.



About the Book

“Doctors took her cells without asking. Those cells never died. They launched a medical revolution and a multimillion-dollar industry. More than twenty years later, her children found out. Their lives would never be the same.”

~ Rebecca Skloot

Henrietta Lacks known as HeLa to the

scientific world, was a poor, southern, African American farmer diagnosed with cervical cancer in the 1950s. While in the hospital, samples of her cells were taken without her knowledge and became the first human cells to grow in a lab and remain alive outside the human body.

Henrietta’s story continues today as her cells are still alive. The HeLa cells became one of the most important tools in medicine, assisting in the development of the polio vaccine, cancer drugs, invitro fertilization, and more. These cells have been used by millions of people, but Henrietta remained unknown until the publishing of this book. The HeLa cells were a huge part of

medical advancement, but they brought pain and suffering to the Lacks’ family. Behind the HeLa cells was a mother, a wife, a sister, and a friend, all who lost Henrietta in a tragic way. Though it was a struggle to accept the truth of what happened to their mother, the Lacks’ family has begun to focus on Henrietta’s positive contributions to today’s scientific world. This book will challenge you to see all sides of the story.

About the Author

When author, Rebecca Skloot, was in college, she first heard about Henrietta Lacks in her biology class and was eager to learn more about her. She was shocked to discover that no one knew anything about her. This set her on a mission to research and write this book that took more than a decade to write. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* was Skloot’s debut book and instantly hit the New York Bestseller list, where it remained for almost four years.

Skloot has a B.S. in Biological Sciences and a MFA in Creative Nonfiction. She specializes in narrative science writing and has written on a large range of topics including the HeLa cells, goldfish surgery, tissue ownership rights, race and medicine, food politics, and packs of wild dogs in Manhattan. Skloot gives talks at conferences, universities, and other groups throughout the U.S. on numerous topics.

Two Lacks family members are scheduled to speak at the Gustavus Reading in Common event on Tuesday, September 15, at 7 p.m. in Alumni Hall. This Meet and Greet and Q&A is open to the public.



Henrietta & David Lacks

Connecting Nicollet County program accepting applications

Applications are being accepted for the 2015-16 Connecting Nicollet County Leadership program. With a mission of connecting people, creating awareness of resources, and building leadership throughout Nicollet County, the program is now coming into its fifth year and has become well established with involvement by almost 130 participants!

In each monthly session from September through May, participants visit a different community across the county to tour local businesses, community and historical sites, agricultural venues, government agencies, school, and health care facilities. Participants also learn new leadership skills through professional workshops on conflict management, strategic thinking, leading effective meetings, cultural competency, dealing with change, visionary and ethical leadership, and generational trends.

This affordable opportunity is available to individuals or company-sponsored employees who live or work in Nicollet County. Space is limited to a maximum of 25 participants. Brochures and application forms are available by emailing Amy Pehrson at cncpcoordinator@gmail.com, calling 507-340-4073, or from any board member. Deadline is July 27.

NCHS Presence in Local Parades



Upper left: Nicollet Area Friendship Days Parade, June 28th

Right: Another very successful Old-Fashioned July 4th in St. Peter. NCHS participated in the annual parade with volunteers riding in the St. Peter Cornet Band Wagon.

Lower left: the history of the historic St. Peter Cornet Band Wagon is preserved on the wagon itself. From previous *Crossing* newsletters concerning the Band Wagon's history:

...A brief article from the March 1999 *Crossing* mentioned that "it sits in the back room all white and no wheels. Come July the bandwagon will sport a new red and gold coat of paint...the wheels have been sent to Iowa for repair at the Amish Colony".

...The July 2000 *Crossing* mentioned that the restoration project was complete and that the bandwagon would be in the July 2000 parade.

We would also like to say **thanks** to these business members:

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Nicollet County
Historical Society
at the Treaty Site History Center

Fort Ridgely
Harkin Store
Traverse des Sioux
E. St. Julien Cox House
Mayo House

2015 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.

July 18	Causes of the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 <i>program and battlefield tour, 1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
July 19	Shopping with Laura Ingalls, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
July 21	Coffee on the Patio: History of the State Hospital, <i>10 a.m.</i>	TSHC Patio
July 23	Prairie Trail Tour, <i>7 p.m., see page 4</i>	TSHC
July 25	Children's Games and Crafts Day, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
July 25	Children's Day, <i>Noon–4 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
July 25	Frontier Fun Kids Activities, <i>10 a.m.–1 p.m.</i>	W. W. Mayo House
July 25	Archery in the Park (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>6 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
July 26	Old Games Day, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Aug. 1	Civilian Conservation Corp Tour (<i>Lower Campground</i>), <i>2 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 1	"Giant Story" Tour, <i>10 a.m.–1 p.m.</i>	W. W. Mayo House
Aug. 2	36th West Newton Day, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Aug. 5–9	Nicollet County Historical Society at the Nicollet County Fair	Fair Grounds
Aug. 8	Stearns County and the Dakota War of 1862, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 8	Animal Tracks (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>2 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 8	Geocaching (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>4 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 8	Wild Edibles (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>7 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 9	Music "Best of the Worst", <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Aug. 11–13	Dakota Culture Days, <i>9:30 a.m.–12 p.m. (registration required), see page 5</i>	TSHC
Aug. 15	Causes of the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 15	Le Sueur Tigers Tour, <i>10 a.m.–1 p.m.</i>	W. W. Mayo House
Aug. 16	<i>Friends, Betrayal, and Murders</i> <i>The Massacre of the Paul Kietzmann Family, 1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 16	Bees and Honey, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Aug. 20	Big Woods Trail Tour, <i>7 p.m., see page 4</i>	TSHC
Aug. 22	Date Night at the Fort, <i>7 p.m. (RSVP required), see page 6</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 23	Archery in the Park (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>10 a.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 23	Prairie Hike, <i>1:30 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 23	Day in the Life of a Pioneer Woman, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Aug. 25	Coffee on the Patio: History of Railroads in Nicollet County, <i>10 a.m.</i>	TSHC Patio
Aug. 28	History on Tap: Homebrewing, <i>7 p.m. (registration required) see page 4</i>	TSHC
Aug. 29	Children's Day, <i>Noon–4 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Aug. 30	Old School Days, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Sept. TBD	Coffee on the Patio: TBD, <i>10 a.m. (watch for details)</i>	TSHC Patio
Sept. 3	Documentary Film Series: <i>film and discussion</i> <i>Split Rock Light: Tribute to an Age of Steel, 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)</i>	TSHC
Sept. 5	Mayo House Art Work, <i>10 a.m.–1 p.m.</i>	W. W. Mayo House
Sept. 6	Digital Photography for Children (<i>Upper Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>2 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 6	Nature Hike, (<i>Campground Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>4 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 6	Weather (<i>Campground Picnic Shelter</i>), <i>7 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 6	Music - Lonesome Ron Arrives at West Newton, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Sept. 12	Earthwork Forts talk, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 13	Snakes of the Minnesota River, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Sept. 19	Battle of Birch Coulee, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 19	Mayo House Art Work, <i>10 a.m.–1 p.m.</i>	W. W. Mayo House
Sept. 20	Digital Nature Photography, <i>1–2:30 p.m. (registration required), see page 5</i>	TSHC
Sept. 20	Afternoon of Leisure, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Sept. 26	Children's Day, <i>Noon–4 p.m.</i>	Fort Ridgely
Sept. 27	Sheep - Wool - Quilts, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Oct. 1	Documentary Film Series: <i>film and discussion</i> <i>The Folsom House, 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)</i>	TSHC
Oct. 3	Fun Fall Trail Run, <i>10 a.m. (registration required), see page 6</i>	Fort Ridgely
Oct. 4	Preparing for Winter, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Oct. 11	Horses - Horseshoes - Leather - Ropemaking - Transportation, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store
Oct. 18	Music Jamboree - Lonesome Ron's Roundup, <i>1 p.m.</i>	Harkin Store

Fort Ridgely
Harkin Store
Traverse des Sioux
E. St. Julien Cox House
Mayo House



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