



the CROSSING

a publication of the Nicollet County Historical Society

October 2014 • Volume 19 / Issue 3

The Grapes of Wrath Day

On August 28, a first-of-its-kind “Big Read” event was hosted by Saint Peter High School at the Treaty Site History Center, focusing on the timeless literary classic *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. It was the first-ever Big Read event for the high school. Inspired by Gustavus Adolphus College’s practice of assigning all freshmen to read the same book for orientation, the high school teachers decided to do something similar. All high school juniors were given a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* to read over the summer. Since 11th grade is the year when all students enroll in both American history and American literature, the book was chosen for its ability to connect those subjects.

Teachers Wendy Severns and John Byrnes began planning the event in the spring. Without any special funding, they managed to pull the event together on “a shoestring budget.” All SPHS juniors attended the event, which included guest speakers, breakout sessions, and a viewing of the classic movie of the same name.

Speakers included SPHS/MS Principal Paul Preimesberger and Nicollet County Historical Society Executive Director Alyssa Auten, who spoke to the students about local history and its connection with *The Grapes of Wrath*. One highlight for many students was the series of photographs of Saint Peter during the depression.

James Dimock, communication studies professor at Minnesota State University Mankato, was the keynote speaker at the Big Read event. In his speech, he emphasized that the events which transpired in *The Grapes of Wrath*, especially the family’s arduous journey to escape poverty, remain relevant in modern times.

In breakout sessions, teachers and community volunteers combined music, history, art, literature, and agricultural presentations to give the kids a multi-disciplinary event. Special guests for the day included *The Grapes of Wrath* protagonists Ma and Pa Joad and singer Woody Guthrie.



Above top: Ma and Pa Joad (SPHS teachers Wendy Severns and John Byrnes) relate their troubles at *The Grapes of Wrath* Day festivities as local musician Ron Arsenault keeps the spirit by leading the juniors in singing some Woody Guthrie songs.

photo by Kurt Hildebrandt

Above bottom: Students watch a film that describes life in the 1930s.

photo by Alyssa Auten



The weather cooperated by providing a beautiful blue-sky day, so the students ate a picnic lunch outside. When they returned, they watched the classic 1940 film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* featuring Henry Fonda. In all, 129 SPHS students plus ten teachers and community members visited the Treaty Site to make *The Grapes of Wrath* Day a fun and successful program.

Left: A team of students participates in an activity designed to show the steps that led to the development of the NRCS (National Resource Conservation Services) during one of the breakout sessions.

photo by Kurt Hildebrandt

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Contact Information:

Executive Director, Alyssa Auten

alyssa@nchsmn.org

Collections Manager, Bob Sandeen

bob@nchsmn.org

TSHC Site Manager, Susie Carlin

susie@nchsmn.org

Office Manager, Kris LeClerc,

Jeremy Freeman

kris@nchsmn.org, jeremy@nchsmn.org

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Treaty Site History Center

1851 N Minnesota Ave., St. Peter, MN 56082

Phone: 507-934-2160; Fax: 507-934-0172

Hours: M.–Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m.;

Sun. 1–4 p.m.;

Archives: M.–Sat 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

General info via email: museum@nchsmn.org

or research@nchsmn.org

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Phone: 507-354-8666

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72404 County Road 30, Fairfax MN 55332

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after October 19th

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118 N Main St., Le Sueur MN 56058

Phone: 507-665-3250 or 507-934-2160

Hours: Fri. & Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Sun. 12–4 p.m.

CLOSED FOR THE SEASON:

after October 26th



Alyssa Auten

Director's Column

A Season of Surprises for the Nicollet County Historical Society

This summer was one of many unexpected hiccups for the Nicollet County Historical Society: flooding in late June that closed the Treaty Site History Center's doors for almost a week, the leaking of the skylights at the Treaty Site that required extensive repair, the immense construction project on Highway 169, and the need for a new roof at the E. St. Julien Cox House. Despite these challenges, the talented and dedicated staff at the Nicollet County Historical Society persevered and accomplished one of the busiest and successful summer seasons we've ever had. Over 70 programs at our six historic sites kept visitors engaged and excited about history.

Many of these 70 programs were scheduled for this fall season. We partnered with the St. Peter School District and hosted the entire 11th grade class at the Treaty Site for "The Grapes of Wrath Day." The Documentary Film Series is also back at the Treaty Site; 59 people attended the September 4 film, *America's Lost Landscape: The Tallgrass Prairie*. Fort Ridgely hosted a showing of the movie *Dakota 38* and a question and answer session by Jim Miller, the reconciliation ride's creator, on September 20. The Treaty Site will be hosting Scott Kudelka on October 16 for his program on Swan Lake and the Harkin Store is still doing special programs every Sunday through October 19.

These are just a few of the programs our historic sites host, but the Nicollet County Historical Society is more than just programs. We facilitate research; work with interns and students; manage our archives and 3-D collections; and aim to create excitement about the county's history.

Part of the excitement of running a county historical society is the unexpected surprises that occur. We received a call about a donation of an historic St. Peter Post Office sorting desk that still has labels of addresses in St. Peter (you can see it in the Treaty Site lobby!) and an email from a man in Washington State reminiscing about his ancestors' lives in the old settlement of Traverse des Sioux (see a special article written by him on page 14). Despite the challenges and 'hiccups' for the Society this summer, there are pleasant surprises that remind us why we love history and why we do the work that we do.

Alyssa Auten, Director

FILMS ON THURSDAYS

Season 6 / 2014-15 Film Series Continues

The Nicollet County Historical Society, along with Saint Peter Community and Family Education and other special community partners, are happy to have started another successful documentary film series. *Admission to the film series is free for everyone!* 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., Oct. 9, 7 p.m.: *Connected by Coffee*
please note the corrected date

70 min., not rated. *Connected by Coffee* follows two North American coffee roasters on a 1,000-mile journey across Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua to listen to the stories of the people who grow their coffee. On the way they meet with soldiers who have become growers, powerful women who are controlling their own destinies, and countless farmers joining together to form cooperatives. We'll witness how coffee is changing from a tool of oppression into a tool for empowerment, and how it is transforming small-scale growing communities across the world. And we'll see the indomitable spirit of people who are determined to live joyfully in the face of economic, social, and environmental challenges. As ethical consumer practices like fair trade grow, questions arise about how fair they really are amidst the historical injustices of global politics and international trade.

Connected by Coffee confronts these questions and motivates consumers to make a difference. Throughout the journey we learn how every cup of coffee we drink connects us in a very real way to the people who produce it.

Connected by Coffee will be shown as a partnership between NCHS, Saint Peter Community Education, Saint Peter Reads, the St. Peter Food Co-op, and River Rock Coffee.

Thur., Nov. 6, 7 p.m.: *Superior Dream*

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



Thurs., Dec. 4, 7 p.m., *The Past is Alive Within Us: The U.S.-Dakota Conflict*

117 min, Not Rated: This film examines one of the most difficult chapters of Minnesota's history: the state's involvement in the Dakota War as the Civil War was simultaneously raging. It's a mix of historical information and contemporary stories. Designed to build a better understanding of historical interpretation and encourage critical thinking, the film will look at the subject through the lens of public memory.



Thur., Jan. 8, 7 p.m.: *Passage*

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



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New Faces at NCHS...

Join us in welcoming...

Susie Carlin: I'm excited about my new role as Site Manager of the Treaty Site History Center. This community and its history are important to me. I've lived in Saint Peter since 2007 and I have served as a City Council member (Ward I) since 2010. I'm originally from Florida, where I graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Science at the University of Florida. My first job was as a collections assistant at the Florida Museum of Natural History and it feels wonderful to work in a museum again! I've always gravitated towards roles in which I can help people connect academic research to daily life, and that's what excites me about the Treaty Site History Center. I believe that there's something special about visiting a historic site filled with actual artifacts—getting to see, touch, and experience the real thing.

I have been married to my husband, Joel, for 11 years and we have a 2-year-old son. Recently, my family had the opportunity to live and travel in China for six months. Stop by and I'll tell you some stories of our adventures.



Susie Carlin,
Treaty Site site manager

Jeremy Freeman: I grew up in Le Sueur, Minn. and moved to St. Peter in 1993. My hobbies which at times have been professional include, photography, cartooning, graphic design, and drumming for his band, Depot Creek. I am currently pursuing another college degree in a yet unnamed major. I enjoy spending time with his wife Michel, dog Nigel, family and friends. When I have any time off I likes to read books, watch movies, dream about writing the greatest screenplay ever, and research history, especially his family's.



Jeremy Freeman,
NCHS Office Manager

Loren Files: I grew up in the small town of Surrey, North Dakota. When I was 17, I joined the Army National Guard. After high school, a few friends and I started a band. We started playing shows around North Dakota, then moved to Minneapolis. Over the course of 12 years, we recorded four full-length albums and numerous demo CDs. We played hundreds of shows around the midwest in places like Chicago and Indianapolis. In 2008, I chose to return to college. I attended Minot State University in North Dakota, where I earned a B.A. in History and Sociology. It was there that I met my wife Kymn. She has a B.A. in Theatre Arts and we met in a production of "Execution of Justice." We moved to the Mankato area in 2013 so I could attend graduate school at Minnesota State University Mankato. I am currently pursuing a Masters degree in History and will graduate in spring 2015.



Loren Files,
NCHS intern

New Faces at NCHS continued...

Rachel Montpetit: Hi, my name is Rachel Montpetit and I am very happy and excited to be working for NCHS at the Fort Ridgely location. I am a native of New Ulm where I live on a family farm with my husband Rick and daughter Hannah. This farm has been in my family for over 100 years.

I have a great interest and love of reading and history. I can't think of a more interesting subject to study! When we travel we always soak up the local history and historical sites of the area. I am also employed as a Para-Professional for District 88 in New Ulm. Thanks so much and hope to see you at Fort Ridgely!

NO
PHOTO
AVAILABLE

Rachel Montpetit,
Fort Ridgely site guide

NO
PHOTO
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Rebecca Schueler,
Fort Ridgely site guide

Rebecca Schueler: Hi. My name is Rebecca Schueler. I grew up on a farm north of Sleepy Eye. I love Fort Ridgely and the history that surrounds it.

NCHS goodbyes...

Good-Bye, Kris!

We are sad to report that Kris LeClerc, our Office Manager since 2012, is moving on to a new position. Kris is now working as the Cataloguer for the Traverse des Sioux Library System. Kris took on many important roles as our Office Manager and she will be very missed. Thank you, Kris, for all your hard work these last two years and good luck in your future endeavors!

and Matthew

Society board member Matthew Horak has resigned his position on the board due to new employment responsibilities. The Society thanks him for his service. The vacant position will be filled with elections at the NCHS Annual Meeting.

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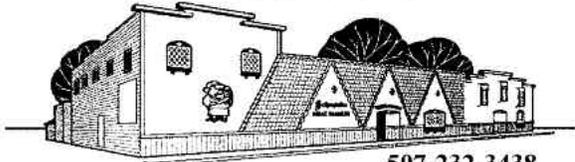
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Construction Season Updates

Treaty Site Landscape Renovation

Right top: The crew from Nielsen Blacktopping removes the old sidewalk in front of the Treaty Site History Center.



Right bottom: The new sidewalk bed gets prepped as part of the new landscape design by Creative Landscape of Mankato.

Blue Heron Landscaping designed the final layout of the project. Landscaping plants are also being selected by Blue Heron Landscaping. For information on how to donate funds for the plants, see below.

The memorial bricks will be incorporated into the new landscape design. Now would be an excellent time to add your family's, ancestor's or business name.

Last year, NCHS received a very generous, anonymous donation to fund a renovation of the Treaty Site History Center's front entryway. On September 15, the work crews began work on the project site. Within a few weeks, we hope to have a beautiful, welcoming new entryway! Key design elements include native landscaping and a place for tour busses to drop off guests. The memorial bricks currently in front of the building's entry will be re-installed to complement the new design.

For now, please pardon our dust (and mud). Please note that *WE ARE OPEN!* while the construction is ongoing, but access to some of our doors may be limited. And in no time at all, we'll have an eye-catching new exterior that will attract visitors—new and old—to our exhibits.



.....

New Sign!

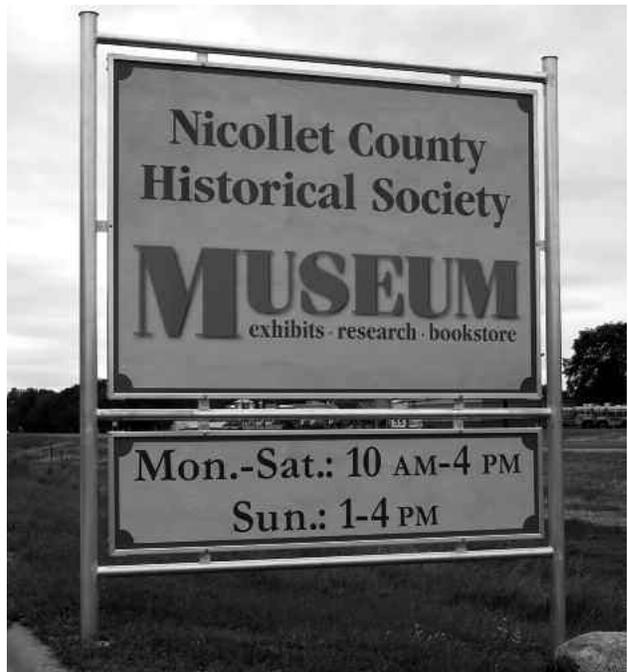
Thank you to Schmidt Foundation for the funds for a new sign. (picture at right)

.....

Want to help us complete this project?

- Buy a brick, tree or shrub!
- Brick: from \$125-\$500
- Tree: \$250
- Shrub: \$100

To make your donation, call Alyssa or Susie at 507-934-2160.



Highway 169 Construction

It's been a long summer of construction, but the end is in sight for the Highway 169 flood mitigation project. Since June, traffic has been reduced to a single lane in each direction. For a period of three weeks in August, no through traffic even passed by the Treaty Site, as most vehicles were diverted along a detour. In October, traffic will switch to one lane each way on the outside lane of both north and southbound Hwy. 169. Through all of these challenges, people have still managed to find us, visit our exhibits, and enjoy our prairie. We're sure that you will, too!

Please note that there will be a permanent traffic revision for the Treaty Site as a result of this project. Visitors will no longer be permitted to make a left turn as they exit the facility and will instead use the "Reduced Conflict Intersection."

Reduced Conflict Intersections

from <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadwork/rci.html>

What are they?

Reduced Conflict Intersections, or RCIs, are intersections that decrease fatalities and injuries caused by broadside crashes on four-lane divided highways.

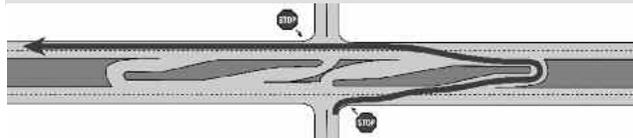
Why do they work?

A typical four-lane divided highway intersection has 42 possible vehicle conflict points. RCI's reduce conflict points to as few as 18.

With an RCI, drivers from the side street only have to be concerned with one direction of traffic on the highway at a time. You don't need to wait for a gap in both directions to cross a major road. Traditional four-lane divided highway intersections have an elevated risk of severe right-angle crashes (commonly called "T-bone" crashes), especially for drivers attempting to cross all four lanes of traffic or turn left. At a traditional intersection, motorists from the side street need to look in both directions to cross a four-lane divided highway. Left turns require the same level of attention.

How do they work?

In an RCI, drivers always make a right turn, followed by a U-turn. Motorists approaching divided highways from a side street are not allowed to make left turns or cross traffic; instead, they are required to turn right onto the highway and then make a U-turn at a designated median opening. This reduces potential conflict points and increases safety.

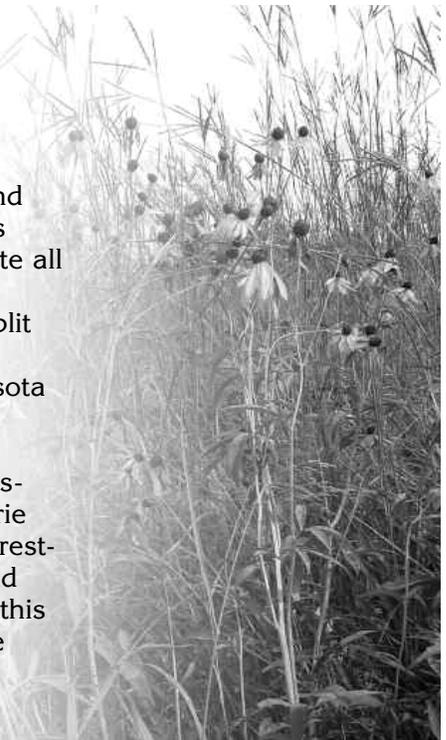


Left hand turn onto a divided highway using a Reduced Conflict Intersection.

Prairie Restoration Project at Traverse des Sioux

The restored prairie on the Traverse des Sioux Historic Site, north of the Treaty Site History Center, has a large amount of invasive species growing amongst the native prairie plants. A restoration project has been proposed by the Many Rivers Chapter of the Prairie Enthusiasts to bring the prairie back to its original state. This project will take about three years to complete and will cost around \$2,500. Randy Schindle, DNR employee and member of the Prairie Enthusiasts, has put together a staged plan of prairie burns,

mowing, herbicide treatments, and haying to restore the prairie. He's also found sources that will donate all the seed to us for no cost! The remaining project costs will be split between the Nicollet County Historical Society and the Minnesota Historical Society (owners of the site). If you know a farmer who would be willing to supply and distribute hay over parts of the prairie next summer; OR, if you are interested in prairie restoration and would like to make a donation towards this upcoming project, please call the Treaty Site at 507-934-2160.



NCHS Site Information

Cox House Corner ...

Sprucing up for Christmas

This summer has been a busy one at the E. St. Julien Cox House! Not only did we host guided tours, two weddings and a baby shower, we also had to have a new roof put on the house. It was leaking in many places due to ice dams and failing cedar shingles. The back shed also had a new roof installed and the carriage house had major repairs to its roof. The House looks beautiful and is gearing up for the winter season; which means Christmas at the Cox House is just a few months away! Make sure to put us on your calendar for December 13 and 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. to walk through the Victorian-decorated house.



Ridgely Report ...

Fort Ridgely by Amber Bentler

This season at Fort Ridgely has been an adventure. We started out with big changes such as a new credit card capability through the “Square” system and a couple of new exhibits. By adding the Square and the ability to accept credit cards it made it easier for visitors to come through the museum as well as make purchases in the gift shop. We had many pleasantly surprised visitors when they saw the system.

We also had many positive remarks about the exhibits. One exhibit being the twelve panel display “Commemorating Controversy”, which was put together by students at Gustavus and received a national award last year. The other exhibit was the nine American Flags we put up through the museum. We were able to educate many people on some flag facts and maybe even inspired some people to find more facts on their own.

The end of our season is drawing near, the last day will be October 19th. There is one more program this season on October 11 with naturalist Scott Kudelka. Scott will be talking about the Minnesota River and all of the things we use it for. Please join us for this educational program at 1 p.m. We plan on working on some new programming over the winter for next year so watch for some new things next Spring!

Thank you to all who visited us this season as well as those that helped to make this year a great one. Hopefully we will see you yet this fall and again next year.



History Center Highlights...

Need a Gathering Place? by Susie Carlin

Did you know that the Treaty Site History Center is available for rent?

The Melva Lind Gallery on the south side of the facility seats approximately 100 people. It includes an overhead projector, screen, and microphone. For an additional fee, stadium seating can be set up to improve the visibility of all guests in the room. It's the perfect space for a wedding reception, annual meeting, or educational seminar. Rental rates start at just \$175.

The Josie Stone Conference Room features a large conference table that was originally used by the North Mankato City Council. It seats up to 15. The conference room is an excellent space for board meetings. Rental rates start at \$75.



Harkin Happenings ...

Take a Fall Trip to Harkin by Ruth Grewe

As the 1870s Harkin Store draws to a close for the season, we still have some great programs coming. As you are traveling, take Nicollet County Road 21—the road to the Harkin Store—and enjoy all the pretty colors of the trees. The store has 40% original merchandise on the shelves and you hear a very interesting store about the family that ran the store in the 1870s. We are open in October on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the first two weekends, with programs on Sunday afternoons. Our first program is on October 5th with Preparing for Winter, a display of the equipment and things they used and did. October 12th is Horses-Horseshoes-Leather-Transportation, pictures and displays, leather working, and rope making demonstrations. October 19th is Lonesome Ron's Round-up, Lonesome Ron and friends saying good-bye to the 2014 season and fall colors with music. The colder weather also will be here so enjoy the stove or the porch for a great relaxing time at the store. We are open for MEA week on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Our hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. any day we are open. Our season has been a great one, so if you and your family have not been to the store please come. See you next year on Saturday, May 2nd.



W.W. Mayo House ...

Several Programs Remain by Becky Pollack

The Mayo House season is winding down for 2014, but a few great events remain on our calendar. Sunday, October 5th from Noon to 4 p.m., as the leaves change to their beautiful autumn hues showing off the the Minnesota River Valley in it's full glory, visit the Mayo House for a tour showcasing the artwork on display in and relating to the W.W. Mayo House. This collection includes portraits of Dr. Mayo and Louisa Mayo, Green Giant Marketing Art, the Mothers Statue and folk art from the mid-1800s.

Also not to be missed this year are the Mayo House Christmas tours. This year we offer two formats of our Christmas tours, an afternoon and evening option. View the Mayo Home decorated for a turn of the century Christmas. Enjoy special Christmas music in the parlor performed by local musician(s). Children will enjoy a craft table that allows them to make a small gift and ornament from the past. Cookies and cider will be served. Tours will include interpretation of holiday traditions from the 1850s to the turn of the century, incorporating traditions both the Mayo and Cosgrove Families would have celebrated while living in the Mayo Home. If you are interested in helping decorate, interpret Christmas traditions, and/or act as a docent for the Mayo House during the Christmas events, we would love to have you. Contact Becky at mayohouse.bp@gmail.com or 612-756-1870.

"The gal who gave the tour was very knowledgeable and was very interesting. Nice place to stop while you're traveling through."

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St. Peter Lions Club: archival records from the St. Peter Lions Club.

William Lindberg: Red River Cart.
Clifford G. Johnson: St. Peter and Nicollet County items.

- Engesser Brewery bottle opener
- Levenson Market bottle opener
- Community Hosp. baby spoon
- Letter box from The Citizens State Bank of Lafayette
- Deck of cards, First VIC Club
- *Gustavians* 1946 & 1952
- LP Records:
 - Christmas: The Gustavus Choir; Favorite Swedish Hymns, Vols. 1 & 2; The Gustavus Choir Sings, The Gustavus Stage Band 1972, The Gustavus Stage Band '83-'84; Heart Songs by Marie and Al Maas; Hymns and Fanfares: Gustavus Brass; Music for Concert Band: The Gustavus Band; Reflections: includes the Gustavus Choir; The Sound of Men: The Gamma Chorus; Things Are Getting Better: The Gustavus Stage Band; To Thee We Sing: The Gustavus Choir, Brass Ensemble, and Organ.*
- CD: *Grump: Jersey Got Away*
- *Bud and Betty's Appetite for friends: Bud and Betty Peterson*
- *Cooking With Joy: Minnesota Soybean Growers Association*
- *Favorite Recipes of Scandian Grove*
- *'76 Cookbook: Nicollet County Extension Clubs*
- *Recipes from Minnesota: Betty Malisow*
- *S.P.R.T.C. Employee Recipes*
- *Stars in the Kitchen: The Order of the Eastern Star, Chapter 174*
- *Final Time, A Husband's Reflections on His Wife's Terminal Illness: Robert G. Esbjomson*
- *Sermon on a Perfect Spring Day: Poems: Philip Bryant*

Pell Johnson: badge worn by John A. Johnson of Co. K of the 2nd Inf. Reg. of the Minn. National Guard. [This is not Governor Johnson.]; ashtray with Engesser Brewery emblem from the brewer's Rathskeller.

Helen Hunter: *RETURN, a memoir of my childhood*. Extended portions of the manuscript concern Helen's childhood in St. Peter.

Chester R. Tollefson: corn husker from Tollefson farm.

Jodee Vogel: business ledger from Nicollet, rural mailing list of farmers in Nicollet Co. from Aug. 1914.

Liz Zurek Beaudry: mail sorting table from the St. Peter Post Office.

Brian Oviatt: 1911 Minnesota Legislative Manual.

Roberta Bartholdi: assorted audiovisual equipment.

Gladys Rasmussen, in memory of butter maker Holger Rasmussen: New Sweden Creamery items (large, inscribed, concrete blocks from the creamery; to be kept at the District 6 School).

Kathy Blank: *Built on the Rock, 150 Years, 1864-2014, Immanuel Lutheran School, Courtland, Sesquicentennial Celebration*.

Neil Siebenbruner: *Service Record World War I and II, St. Peter and Community*.

Collections Spotlight

The Society accepts an historic sorting desk into its collections!

St. Peter Post Office Sorting Desk

A few months ago the Nicollet County Historical Society received a phone call about a potential donation of an old St. Peter Post Office sorting desk. The desk is estimated to be from the early 1900s. The sorting shelves have labels for various addresses in St. Peter that probably correspond to the 1940s or 1950s. We visited the Post Office and talked to them about their history and to see if they knew anything about the desk, or maybe even had a similar one still in use? While there is not a similar desk, staff at the Post Office loaned NCHS some really wonderful historic documents about the history of St. Peter's Post Office. We were even allowed to take a picture of a currently-used sorting desk; notice the similarities—both desks have a drawer, hooks for postal bags, and even the open slot for the route binders! The desk is currently being used in the Treaty Site History Center's lobby as a display for our book store. We are planning on creating a small display about the history of St. Peter's postal service. Thank you to Liz Zurek Beaudry for donating the desk to the Society!



Original sorting desk from the St. Peter Post Office from early 1900s, repurposed as a fixture in the Book Store.



Present-day sorting desk in the back room at the St. Peter Post Office.



St. Peter Post Office at 300 South Third Street, during its construction in 1918.

photo from the collections of the Nicollet County Historical Society.

Harold Nelson Gift

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to humbly thank Harold Audley Nelson for bequeathing a generous sum of money to the institution upon his passing on August 22, 2014. Harold was born on December 11, 1924 in New Ulm to Oscar and Cora (Hendricks) Nelson. He served in the U.S. Army during WWII in the Pacific Theater from 1944–1946 with the 41st Infantry Division. After the service he attended the Minneapolis Bible Institute. He returned to farming and worked in manufacturing in the Minneapolis and St. Paul area. Harold enjoyed building, working with his hands and traveling around the world. He was a member of Swan Lake Lutheran Church in Brighton Township. The Society is so grateful for his generosity.



Harold "Andy" Nelson as a young man.
courtesy of New Ulm Journal

NCHS Annual Meeting Announced

Please join us for the Nicollet County Historical Society's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 18, 2015 at Gustavus Adolphus' Jackson Campus Center banquet hall. The dinner service will begin at 1 p.m. business meeting, speaker 2–3 p.m. Speaker to be announced.

LaVonne Craig

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to honor and remember past-president, member and supporter, LaVonne Craig, who passed away on August 18. Our thoughts go to LaVonne's family and our gratitude for her involvement with the Nicollet County Historical Society cannot be expressed enough; she will be missed dearly.



Former NCHS president, LaVonne Craig
courtesy of Mankato Free Press

County Fair Report



The Nicollet County Historical Society had a great showing at the Nicollet County Fair on August 6–10. We displayed the Fair Board's exhibit about the history of the Nicollet County Fair, as well as the exhibit about Gustavus student's 2012 trip to Petatlan, Mexico (St. Peter's Sister City). We also sold books and shirts and saw over 970 visitors stop at our booth. NCHS would

like to thank the many volunteers who gave their time to sit at our booth and talk with visitors. *We'll see you all next summer at the Fair!*



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Nicollet County
Historical Society
at the Treaty Site History Center

Eagle Scout Completes Project at TdS Trails



Jacob Gurrola

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to thank Kasota resident, Jacob Gurrola, for choosing to complete his Eagle Scout project on our Traverse des Sioux trail system! Jacob and other members of his troop built bat and bluebird houses, cleaned the interpretive signs, and helped improve the trails over a week in late July. Great job, Jacob!

Traverse des Sioux Park Land Trails Update

Trail volunteers have been working hard in the past few months to restore the new trails following the summer flooding. Approximately 8 miles of trails are available, now that they have been cleared of debris left behind by the flood. On September 7, nearly 30 volunteers, many of them Gustavus Adolphus College students, spent a couple hours removing sticks, logs, and flood debris along the trail that was marked out earlier this spring. On other weekends, the dedicated core volunteers have been out on the trails to improve this wonderful community resource. Each week, they manage to get a few more directional stickers applied to signposts, a little more bridge work installed, and a few downed trees removed. They encourage you to get out there and enjoy the nice fall weather on the trails, but be careful, of course, until the trail volunteers can address a few more tricky spots on the routes.

photo by Eileen Holz

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Treaty Site Event...

Thursday, October 16, 2014, 7 p.m.

Swan Lake

A Special Prairie Pothole Lake

Join Scott Kudelka, Minneopa Area Naturalist, as he teaches us about Swan Lake. North America's largest wetland complex is located north of the Minnesota River near Nicollet and considered one of the most important breeding and migratory stopovers for a diverse selection of birds. In this presentation we will talk about the rich history of Swan Lake and the struggle to save this valuable resource. **Free and open to the public.**

Bob "the Birdman" Dunlap's birdlist from Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area:

Greater White-fronted Goose
Snow Goose
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Trumpeter Swan
Tundra Swan
Wood Duck
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Canvasback
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Gray Partridge
Ring-necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Eared Grebe
Western Grebe
American White Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
American Bittern
Least Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White-faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Rough-legged Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Virginia Rail
Sora
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Killdeer
American Avocet
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Hudsonian Godwit
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Stilt Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Wilson's Phalarope
Bonaparte's Gull
Franklin's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Caspian Tern
Black Tern
Common Tern
Forster's Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Black-billed Cuckoo
Great Horned Owl
Short-eared Owl
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Northern Shrike
Yellow-throated Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
White-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
American Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Lapland Longspur
Smith's Longspur
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Palm Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Ovenbird
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
American Tree Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Le Conte's Sparrow
Nelson's Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Harris's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Western Meadowlark
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Rusty Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

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New Sweden 150th celebration a success!



Attendees pictured at the anniversary and class reunion, also were all students of Dist. 6 before its close in 1958.

photo by Ruth Klossner

As noted in our last newsletter, the Friends of District 6 have been busy completing restoration projects on the District 6 schoolhouse. On Sunday, September 14 over 100 people

attended the New Sweden 150th event and class reunion to celebrate the schoolhouse's history and future. Visitors had a chance to look around the schoolhouse, learn about the history of the school and the township through a display of historic records, items, and photographs, then celebrate at the Norseland Area Preservation Association's "Harvest Fest" at the Scandian Grove Church. Congratulations are in order to the members of the Friends of District 6 for their hard work in preserving the history of this wonderful schoolhouse. If you are interested in learning about volunteer opportunities or want to donate to future preservation projects, contact the Friends of District 6 President Garfield Eckberg at 507-327-3237 or gre37@wildbluecoop.com.

The Herkelrath Family, Early Settlers in Traverse des Sioux

written and submitted by Jim Herkelrath



Johannes Herkelrath

Johannes Herkelrath and his family were among the early immigrants settling in Traverse des Sioux, building a wooden house on their land in about 1854. But before the family had settled in Minnesota, they had undergone quite an adventure just getting to America. From first-person accounts passed down three generations:

The decision to immigrate to America was made during one of the routine “roundups” of young men for conscription into the Bavarian army. There existed a German kaiser then, who was constantly fighting wars (there was continued unrest during that period in Germany, as there was an overall attempt to unite the Federations). Typical of the day, troops would ride across the countryside, stopping at each farm—looking for young men of eligible age to conscript into the army. According to family stories, the four eldest male children of Johannes Herkelrath hid in the barn hayloft when the kaiser stopped in their town to change horses for his coach.

The family left their farm under cover of darkness in March 1847 and travelled to Antwerp, Belgium, where they waited to board a ship headed to America. After a prolonged wait, they were able to sail on the Black Ball Line’s packet ship *Desdemona* to New Orleans, where they arrived August 16, 1848. On the waterfront (in clear view of the family), was a slave auction being held. Upon seeing this, Anna Barbara

turned to her husband Johannes and said: “My God, and we left Bavaria for this?”

Apparently, the family quickly sailed up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, to Belleville, Illinois, where there was a large German population. The family stayed in Bellevue for five years before moving to Minnesota. Travelling with the Herkelrath family were other German families, many from the same small Bavarian town of Heuchelheim. These families also travelled to Traverse des Sioux with the Herkelraths in 1854. Names often referenced in our family bible include Schreiber, Rasch, Reisel, Diebold, Sabel, and Heilmann.

At Traverse des Sioux, the Herkelrath family bought land and began farming. They also built one of the first wooden houses at that time, which stood until about 1927. My Grandfather was raised in that house, and until his death had pleasant memories of the big barn and “the barrel of cabbage always kept at the side of the house for sauerkraut.” The family Bible records family member births and deaths, and even the brand used on the animals for identification!

Johannes Herkelrath died in Traverse des Sioux in a farming accident in 1866. All of the children eventually moved west to California, where the families grew and enjoyed each other’s company over the generations. Anna Barbara stayed at the old Herkelrath house in Traverse des Sioux, taking care of her youngest son’s children until she died in 1892, and was buried next to Johannes. While lives were fully lived on the plains in those early days, the Herkelrath tradition of passing the stories from Grandparent to Grandson was kept sacred, which is why they exist today and hopefully, for generations to come.



Anna Barbara
(Baum) Herkelrath

Bottom right: The Herkelrath house at Traverse des Sioux (probably about 1893)

All photos courtesy of and possession of Jim Herkelrath



2014–2015 Calendar of Events:

Event/Program information:

Harkin Store: \$5 adults (18–64), \$3 seniors (65+) and children (6–17) Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members

Fort Ridgely: \$5 adults (18–64), \$3 seniors (65+) and children (6–17) Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members

Mayo House: \$6 adults (18–64), \$3 seniors (65+), college students and children (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 (6–17) Free for age 5 and under, MNHS and NCHS members

Oct. 5	Preparing for Winter, 1 p.m.	Harkin Store
Oct. 5	Mayo House Artwork Tour, 12 p.m.	W.W. Mayo House
Oct. 9	Documentary Film Series: <i>Connected by Coffee</i> , 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)	TSHC
Oct. 11	River program with Naturalist Scott Kudelka, 1 p.m.	Fort Ridgely
Oct. 12	Horses-Horseshoes-Leather-Transportation, 1 p.m.	Harkin Store
Oct. 16	Swan Lake, A Special Prairie Pothole Lake, by Scott Kudelka, 7 p.m. (see description on page 13)	TSHC
Oct. 19	Music with Lonesome Ron's Round-up, 1 p.m.	Harkin Store
Nov. 6	Documentary Film Series: <i>Superior Dream</i> , 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)	TSHC
Nov. 29	Afternoon Christmas Tours, 12 p.m.	W.W. Mayo House
Dec. 4	Documentary Film Series: <i>The Past is Alive Within Us: The U.S.-Dakota Conflict</i> , 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)	TSHC
Dec. 6	Afternoon Christmas Tours, 12 p.m.	W.W. Mayo House
Dec. 12	Christmas Candlelight Tours (evening), TBA	W.W. Mayo House
Dec. 13	Christmas Candlelight Tours (evening), TBA	W.W. Mayo House
Dec. 13	Christmas at the Cox House, 1–4 p.m.	E. St. Julien Cox House
Dec. 14	Christmas at the Cox House, 1–4 p.m.	E. St. Julien Cox House
Jan. 8, 2015	Documentary Film Series: <i>Passage</i> , 7 p.m. (see description on page 3)	TSHC
Jan. 18	NCHS Annual Meeting, 1 p.m.	Gustavus Adolphus College Jackson Campus Center, Heritage Room

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W.W. Mayo House

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