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the CROSSING

a publication of the **Nicollet County Historical Society**

Spring 2025 | Volume 31 / Issue 1



HISTORY DISCOVERY PRESERVATION KNOWLEDGE HISTORY DISCOVERY PRESERVATION KNOWLEDGE

The Capital Story

by Bob Sandeen, Research Assistant

Reprinted from the *Waukegan, Illinois Chronicle, the Saint Peter Courier* published the following article in its May 24, 1855 issue:

CAPITAL OF MINNESOTA – There is a strong possibility that the seat of government of Minnesota will be removed before long from St. Paul to St. Peter. The latter place, a year ago, contained no white inhabitants; it now numbers hundreds, has beautiful stores and dwellings, a newspaper, shops of all kinds, etc., etc. The City is at the head of navigation on the noble Minnesota River, has the greatest facilities for commerce, and, occupying a central position, possesses many advantages over its big rival, St. Paul.

Ambitions of the St. Peter Company

By 1857, the St. Peter Company was actively working to bring the capital of Minnesota Territory from St. Paul to St. Peter. At the time, Minnesota was still a territory, and the shape of the future state had not yet been defined. The territory included all of present-day Minnesota and stretched westward to the Missouri River.



Northern Boundaries Proposed for Minnesota

Many wondered whether the future state would be tall (north to south) or wide (east to west). If the east-to-west version were chosen, St. Paul would end up in the extreme northeast corner. To advocates

of St. Peter, their community would be more centrally located—making it a logical choice for the capital. Adding to their advantage, Territorial Governor Willis Gorman was a member of the St. Peter Company.

Legislation and Legislative Drama

The following account of the capital removal effort is drawn from Richard John Jobes's master's thesis, *Saint Peter, Minnesota: The History of a Frontier Community, 1851–1905*, available in the archives of the Nicollet County Historical Society. Documents referenced in the thesis can also be found online through the Minnesota Legal History Project.

At the time, the Minnesota territorial legislature consisted of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Council. Legislation to move the capital to St. Peter was introduced in both.

On February 5, 1857, Representative Ozro A. Thomas (District 10, which included Nicollet County) introduced the bill in the House. The next day, William D. Lowry (District 9 Council member for Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona counties) submitted it to the Council.

Despite resistance, the Council passed the bill on February 12, and the House followed on February 18. Competing amendments to relocate the capital to Columbus, St. Cloud, or Nicollet Island all failed. The resulting Session Law—Chapter 1 of the Eighth Session of the Legislative Assembly—was titled:

An Act for the Removal of the Seat of Government of the Territory of Minnesota.

The full text is available on our website.

Capital continued on page 4

ORGANIZATION INFO

NCHS Board

Executive Board Officers

Dennis Schmidt, President, New Sweden Township
Tami Skinner, Vice President, St. Peter
Alma Forst, Treasurer, West Newton Township
Scott Hermanson, Secretary, St. Peter

Directors

Eric Annexstad, St. Peter
Mark Fiemeyer, Courtland
Bob Sandeen, St. Peter
Tracie Schwartz, North Mankato
Jon Smithers, St. Peter

NCHS Staff

Executive Director: Jessica Becker

director@nchsmn.org

Operations Coordinator: James Ihrke

office@nchsmn.org

Research Coordinator: Ruth Einstein

research@nchsmn.org

Collections Assistant: Anna Simmons

TSHC Museum Assistants:

Sara Busse & Erica Smith

NCHS Sites information

Treaty Site History Center

1851 N. Minnesota Ave.

Saint Peter, MN 56082

Phone: 507-934-2160

Hours: Tue.-Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

E-mail: info@nchsmn.org

E. St. Julien Cox House

500 N. Washington Ave.

Saint Peter, MN 56082

Phone: 507-934-2160

E-mail: cox@nchsmn.org

Traverse des Sioux

Adjacent to the Treaty Site History Center

1851 N Minnesota Ave.

Saint Peter, MN 56082

Open dawn to dusk year-round

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Jessica Becker

After a long winter, spring has returned –and with it, a renewed sense of energy at the Historical Society. As the landscape shifts from stillness to activity, so too does our work: caring for our collection, keeping and maintaining records, preparing exhibits, and welcoming visitors.

Whether through the new textile display at the Cox House or the upgrade of our collections software, we continue to invest in the future of this organization with purpose. Much of this work isn't flashy. It's patient, long-term work. And it's made possible by the commitment of our staff, volunteers, and members like you.

At the same time, we're mindful of what's happening beyond our borders. Across the country, cultural institutions are facing uncertainty—reduced funding, shifting priorities, and increasing pressure around how history is told. While NCHS does not receive direct federal support, we are part of that broader ecosystem and watching national developments closely. These changes remind us why local history work matters—and why being rooted in our place and mission is so vital right now.

We may be small, but we're steady. And we're proud to continue offering exhibits, programs, and resources that reflect the people and places of Nicollet County. This summer, we hope you'll stop in—whether for a self-guided tour at the Cox House, a Thursday morning hiSTORY hangout, or a quiet afternoon in the exhibits. History is made meaningful by those who engage with it.

Jessica Becker

Executive Director

STAY CONNECTED BETWEEN NEWSLETTERS

Love *The Crossing*? Don't wait for the next issue to catch up.

We're sharing Nicollet County history, behind-the-scenes stories, and event updates all the time—especially on Facebook. So far this year, we've posted

- Longer stories and photos about the 1965 flood and the 1998 tornado
- Exhibit features like the Cullen Trading Post in the Traverse Township case.
- Ripped from the headlines newspaper stories, photos, and trivia
- Operations, programs, and project updates and more!

Follow us at facebook.com/nchsmn for the latest.

We also send occasional email updates with upcoming programs, volunteer opportunities, and society news. Not receiving those?

Email us at info@nchsmn.org to get on the list!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Denny Schmidt, and my wife JoAnn and I reside on a farm in New Sweden Township, so we are on the very northern edge of the county. We now live on the farm I was raised on, bringing back many fond memories of country living. We are retired from day jobs but continue to have a small farming operation.

Upon retirement, I decided to get more involved in the Nicollet County Historical Society to take an active role in learning more about our Nicollet County history and working to preserve it. I got on the board 3 years ago and have served as Treasurer for the past 2 years. I will begin my second 3-year term and have stepped up to serve as President this next year. I look forward to working with our talented staff and dedicated board as NCHS near a century of keeping our history alive.

I would encourage members to take an active role and invite friends and neighbors to be a part of this history.

Denny Schmidt

NCHS President



Denny Schmidt, President
NCHS Board of Directors

MEMBERSHIP RECAP

Thank you to the following renewing and new members of NCHS since the last *Crossing* of 11-14-2024

Upgraded to Life Membership:

Cindy & Larry Mohr

Renewed

Business Advocate Members:

St. Peter Area Chamber
Karen Richter

Renewed Supporter Members:

Bill & Deb Dixon
Marie J. Renneke
Gene Retka
Kris & James Sack

Renewed Patron Members:

Al & Mary Behrends
Marcia Gustafson
Dale E. Himmelman
Ellis Jones
Marshall D. Peterson
Dave Solheim
Evelyn J Solo
Jennifer Spradling
Roland & Edi Thorstensson

Renewed Sustaining Member:

Donald E. Watts

Renewed Family Members:

Joni & Neal Anderson
Eric Annexstad
Claude & Sandra Brew
Gary & Mary Campbell

Duane and Brenda DeBlieck
Bryan Ebbenga
Charles & Carol Eggert
Scott & Mariah Eyer
Stuart D & Mary Ann Hanson
Allen & Mary Hildebrandt
Bill & Jane Horton
Lisa Isenberg & Philip Friedlund
Leona Isenberg
Peggy Kreber & Warren Wagner
Mary & Gordon Long
LeeAnn McMillan
Dana Melius
Tuff & Ginny Miller
Debra Nelson
Byron & Jill Norell
William & Mary O'Brien
Sandra & Verl Pettis
Theresa, William, & Sarah Shores
Judy C Teigen
Jeff Wettergren & Melanie Lynard
Janet Wettergren

Renewed Individual Members:

Steve Guse
Paul Honken
Jared Mlaker
Brad Wilmes

Renewed Senior Members:

Michael Annexstad
Ida Mary Asleson
Ruth A. Brandel

Nancy Bruch
Winnis Buesing
Melanie Covell
Steve Firkins
Daniel Groebner
Marlene Groves
Jane Haala
John Hickman
Lynnette Hoffman
Karen A. Humphrey
Clark P. Johnson
Marjorie Johnson
Vickie Johnson
Jane Klein
Jack & Jane Kolars
Margaret Lambert
Margaret Marschel
Harriet Mason
Jennifer Monke
Catherine Neitge
Bonnie Norman
Steven Poncin
Karen Reyelts
Karen Robison
Ron Roselli
Kenneth R Saffert
Marty Sterner
Joanna Swanson
Barbara Van Zee
Jerry Weldy
Barbara Wilkinson

New Patron Member:

Mark Fiemeyer

New Sustaining Member:

Cheryl Guentzel & Ken Gansen

New Family Members:

Dean & Cathy Becker
Lisa & Joel Boehlke
Nicole Helget
Bruce Lammers
Judy Schultz

New Individual Members:

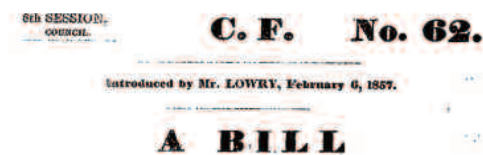
Sarah Buechmann
Scott Carlson
Erica Schwartz

New Senior Individual Members:

Julie Bitter
David Boys
Kristen A. Loken
Ruth Neely
Patti Pherson
Kristine Simon

We make every effort to provide an accurate listing of membership renewals and donors. If we have made an error please contact us at 507-934-2160 or info@nchsmn.org and we'll make corrections.

Capital continued from page 1



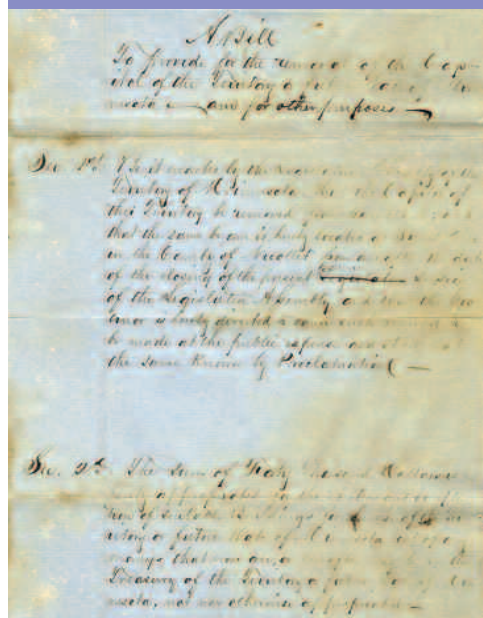
For the removal of the Seat of Government of the Territory of Minnesota.

Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of Minnesota Territory:

SECTION 1. That the seat of government of the Territory of Minnesota, now located at Saint Paul, be, and the same is hereby removed to Saint Peter, in the County of Nicollet; and that as soon as a perfect title can be obtained for ten (10) acres of land as near as practicable to the centre of the section lying between the upper and lower towns, or as heretofore designated Saint Peter and Traverse, (said ten acres to be in square form, and designated as the Capitol Square,) the Capitol buildings shall be located thereon; and whatever appropriation may be made by Congress for the erection of the Capitol buildings shall be applied to said object. The priorities of the towns of Saint Peter and Traverse shall, at as early a day as practicable, cause to be made a deed in fee simple to the Governor of the Territory or future State of Minnesota, and his successors in office, for the use of said Territory or State, for said ten acres of land.

Sec. 2. That the proposition of the Board of Directors of the Saint Peter Company (incorporated by an Act of the Legislature, approved March 1st, 1856,) be, and the same is hereby accepted; which proposition is in the following words and figures, to wit:

Minnesota Session Laws - 1857, Regular Session



Bill for Removal of the Capitol of the Territory or Future State of Minnesota, and for other purposes

The Bill That Disappeared

Before the act could become law, it had to be officially enrolled and presented to Governor Gorman for signature. However, Joe Rolette—Chairman of the Committee on Enrolled Bills and a legislator from Pembina opposed to the move—physically removed the bill from the capitol. Rolette returned only as the session was ending, leaving no time to act on the bill.



Joe Rolette

Although Gorman signed a copy of the original, a court later declared this invalid. Thus, St. Paul remained the capital of the territory—and ultimately of the state.

Where Would the Capitol Have Stood?

Speculation has long surrounded the intended location of the capitol building in St. Peter. Archivist Josie Stone of the Nicollet County Historical Society dismissed three commonly suggested sites:

- Minnesota Square Park
- The Winslow Hotel (South Third & West Walnut)
- The site later occupied by the Johnson & Company building (South Minnesota Avenue & West Broadway)

Stone referenced a letter written on February 23, 1857, by St. Peter attorney James Hinds to his parents:

"I sent you several papers containing the proceedings of our Legislature. I think I marked one or two pieces which referred to the contemplated removal of the seat of Government from St. Paul to St. Peter—or rather to the center of the School Section which lies between the latter named place and this (that is Traverse des Sioux)."

This school section was Section 16, Township 110 North, Range 26 West—one square mile. Its center is now at the northeast corner of the 500 block of North Fifth Street (southeast corner of Fifth and Union Streets).

A Building Prepared

The St. Peter Company had constructed a wooden building at the eventual site of the Johnson & Company building. It was meant to serve as the meeting hall for the upcoming Constitutional Convention—and potentially as a temporary capitol. The Company promised to build a grander structure elsewhere if the bill passed. When it did not, the building became the Nicollet County Courthouse.

The legislation included this clause:

"As soon as a perfect title can be obtained for the ten (10) acres of land as near as practicable to the centre of the section lying between the upper and lower towns, or as heretofore designated St. Peter and Traverse, (said ten acres to be in square form, and designated as the Capitol Square) the Capitol Buildings shall be located thereon."

(Slightly edited for clarity.)

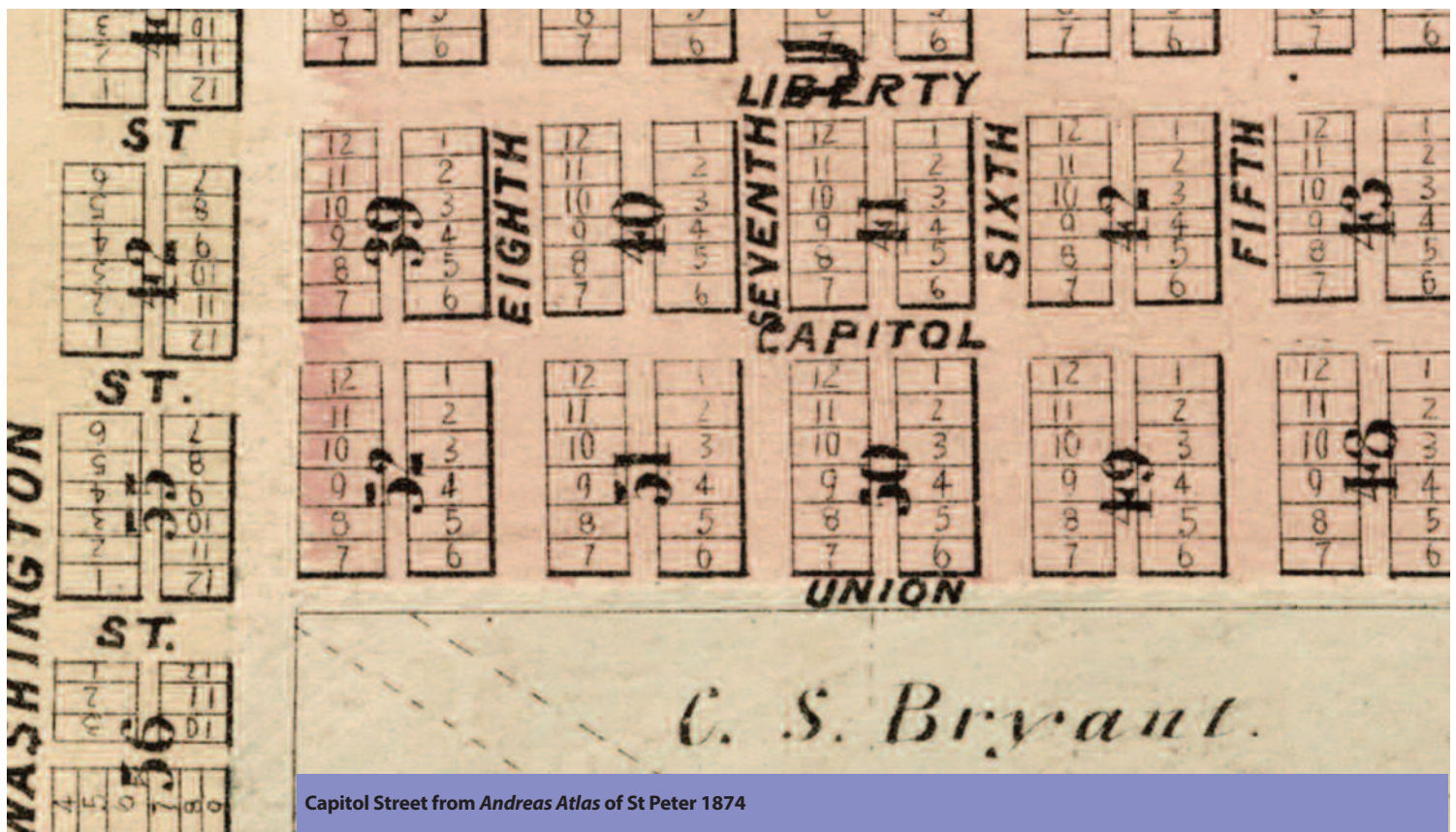
Maps, Memory, and Capitol Street

A map dated July 28, 1859, shows the "Union Addition to the Town of Saint Peter," located in the northeast quarter of the school section—today largely occupied by the Nicollet County Fairgrounds. This layout is clearer on the 1874 map in the *Andreas Atlas of Minnesota*.

Railroad Influence and Land Speculation

Representative Thomas and Councilman Lowry likely supported the move for good reason. Plans were underway for a railroad to connect Winona, Rochester, and Owatonna to St. Peter. Such a line would serve their districts while ensuring direct access to the capital.

Anticipation of the move caused land values in St. Peter to skyrocket. But once the bill failed, prices plummeted. Members of the St. Peter Company had hoped for considerable financial gain if the capital had moved.



Capitol Street from *Andreas Atlas of St Peter* 1874

Capitol continued from page 4

The Union Addition featured numbered streets and lots north of Union Street. Streets ran southeast to northwest (Minnesota Ave., Third, Fourth, Fifth, etc.), and east to west (Capitol, Liberty, Le Sueur, Miniowa, Mazasha, Dakota). Capitol Street runs through the center of the section and lies between St. Peter and Traverse des Sioux, making it the most likely candidate for the capitol building's location.

It is worth remembering that *capitol* refers to a building, while *capital* refers to the city. So, St. Paul is Minnesota's *capital*, and it contains the *capitol* building.

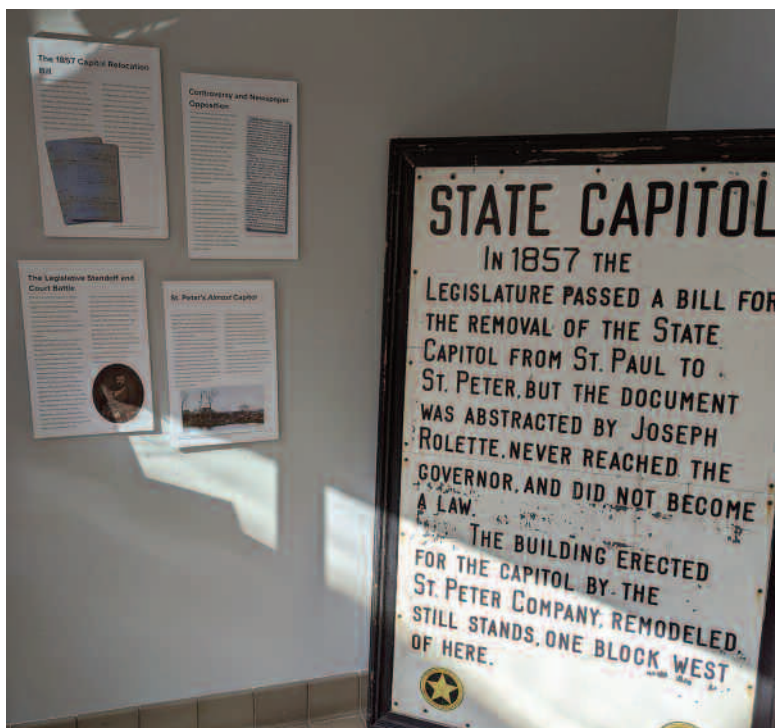
The proposed 10-acre Capitol Square would have taken up one-sixteenth of the 160-acre quarter section. While the capitol building could have been built elsewhere nearby, all evidence supports a location near the center of the section—validating Josie Stone's conclusions.

Interestingly, several individuals involved in the capital removal effort—such as Governor Gorman—were also involved in developing the Union Addition. Naming Capitol Street may have been both a memorial to their failed effort and a subtle hint about where the capitol would have stood.

A Footnote on James Hinds

James Hinds, author of the letter mentioned earlier, led a remarkable life. He served as district attorney in several Minnesota counties and briefly as a U.S. district attorney before relocating to Arkansas in 1865. There, he was elected to Congress in 1868—but was assassinated by a member of the Ku Klux Klan on October 22 of that year. He became the first sitting member of Congress assassinated while in office.

His former home still stands at 720 North Third Street in St. Peter. His widow later married William L. Ames, one of the founders of Rock Bend (later renamed St. Peter). Ames's brothers, Oliver and Oakes, were involved in the infamous Crédit Mobilier scandal—one of the worst in American political history.



Capitol display in the lobby of the Treaty Site History Center

HISTORY CENTER REPORT



Marlin Peterson picking up new gun safe.



Our new gun safe.

by James Ihrke,
Operations Coordinator

Spring has arrived at the Treaty Site History Center, and for me, that means it's tour season!

This year, we have already hosted guided tours for over 150 visitors, and many more are on the horizon. Do you have a group that would be interested in a guided tour? Let us guide you through the museum and along the prairie trail. We offer group discounts and would love to have you visit!

Our film series has had another successful year. Our recent screening of "Kitty to Cooperstown" was a highlight, especially since we showed it on Opening Day of the Minnesota Twins. Our last film of the season, "I Am D.B. Cooper," will be shown on Thursday, May 3rd at 2 p.m.

We are reaping the benefits of many updates done in the past year. Our roof repair last summer means fewer leaks this spring. Our new parking lot lights offer better visibility at night. Updating our offices and research room last year has given us the space to work on (and complete!) major projects, which frees up room for more treasures. We have also acquired a new gun safe, and our military expert, Marlin Peterson, is busy ensuring our collection is cataloged and well-organized.

I can't mention these changes without thanking the volunteers who make them happen. Volunteers run the front desk, assist on research projects, work as tour guides, and do so much more. We are always looking for more volunteers, so stop by if interested!



James Ihrke
Operations Coordinator



First spring tour to the crossing.



Come visit our log cabin!



State of Minnesota DNR Naturalists had their annual meeting at the History Center



We're sending our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Robert Weber, who retired after many years of dedicated service at the end of December. Robert started with us as a volunteer in 2009 and became a valued staff member in 2016. His hard work and care for our spaces have made a lasting impact, and we hope he's now enjoying time spent pursuing his art and giving back through community volunteering. We wish him all the best as he enjoys this next chapter of life.



We truly miss seeing Lynn Hanson's cheerful smile and fun stories around the History Center since her move in January. Lynn joined us as a volunteer and quickly became an important part of our team, working with Ruth on projects for the archives. Now that she and her husband have moved to Duluth to be closer to family, we hope she enjoys countless beautiful hikes in her new home. Thank you so much, Lynn, for all your wonderful contributions, and we wish you happy trails ahead!

ARCHIVES DONATIONS

Artifact & Archival Donations since last *Crossing* of 11-14-2024:

Frani & Mark Anderson: Watercolor sketch by St. Peter artist Charles K. Waterman.

Willis & Rachel Anthony: Treasurer's account book of the Nora Coronet Band, Nicollet, 1892-1899.

Arrow Ace Hardware and Rose Rustman: Polo work shirt worn by Rose Rustman; aerial photo of Saint Peter, 1992 (cost underwritten by Dave Neiman); Arrow Ace Hardware letterhead, promotional paint can, and Flood of 1997 certificate of appreciation signed by Mayor Jerry K. Hawbaker; Don's Ace Hardware order pad; Coast-to-Coast paper bags.

Becky Lund Briggs: Items from Citizens State Bank, Lafayette, which belonged to Earl and Ardis Lund.

Brown County Historical Society: Canteen used during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 by Captain William DeLaughter, Commander of Group #1 of the Le Sueur Tigers.

Eldon H. Brown: Hunting licenses of Reuben H. Brown; Nicollet County School diploma awarded to Ellen Johnson (Brown); map of North Mankato.

Jessica Buchite: Centennial church history, Church of the Visitation, Nicollet, 1865-1965; bulletin, Church of Saint Paul and Church of Saint Nicholas, 1975; transcription of an address delivered by Father Gene Schumacher, pastor and celebrant at the final Mass at St. Michael's, Belgrade Township, August 26, 1973.

Duane & Brenda DeBleck: Materials relating to the St. Peter Jaycees and the Rotary Club.

Craig W. Duehring: Family histories of the Henle, Lauterbach, Fink and Schilling families, including the Cook family of St. Peter.

Mark Fiemeyer: Print and digital photos; genealogical records; cancelled check on the account of Courtland Creamery Association at Courtland State Bank, 1916.

Jerry Forsythe: Wooden nickels from area businesses; medallions commemorating the 140th and 150th anniversaries of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux.

Sara Markoe Hanson: Photos and other items relating to the Cox House and to Lillian Cox Gault.

Daniel High: Materials relating to the military service of Roger High.

Andy Hopp: Potholder, Jeanne's Country Salon, Nicollet; promotional item, Trinity Lutheran Church and School; Dave Lange for Nicollet County Sheriff campaign literature; clipping, Zion Lutheran Church 125th Anniversary celebration, 2024.

Wayne Johnson: St. Peter Creamery promotional thermometer.

Paul Kaeding: Two calendars printed by the St. Peter Stone Sidewalk Company, 1919.

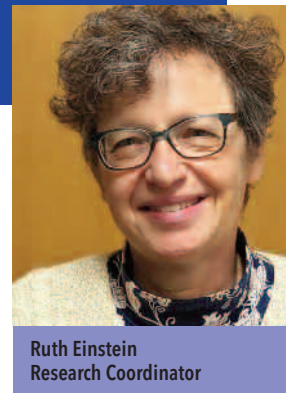
Michael Karlsrud: Photograph of the members of the St. Peter Gun Club, c.1897.

Archives Donations continued on page 8

FROM THE ARCHIVES

by Ruth Einstein

Research Coordinator



Ruth Einstein
Research Coordinator

Captain John J. Dean hailed from St. Peter, studied mechanical and aeronautical engineering at the University of Minnesota and the Boeing School, and served in the U.S. Navy. In 1941, Dean joined the American Volunteer Group (AVG) as a wingman and pilot. The AVG, commonly known as the Fighting Tigers, was established to help protect the Republic of China from invading Japanese forces and operated in the Burma-China-India Theater.

Dean was credited with downing one bomber and two fighter planes, and shared credit for several other "kills." In recognition, he was awarded the Chinese Air Force Grade 1 Star Medal and the Order of the Cloud and Banner, also known as the Order of the Resplendent Banner.

After the AVG was disbanded on July 4, 1942, Dean and other AVG pilots joined the Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAC), flying supplies on the "Hump" route over the Himalayas between India and China. Dean disappeared during a flight from Kunming to Dinjan on November 17, 1942. His remains were not recovered.



A "blood chit" issued to John Dean of the American Volunteer Group Flying Tigers. A translation of part of the message reads: "This foreigner has come to China to help in the war effort. Soldiers and civilians, one and all, should rescue and protect him".



Order of Cloud and Banner, awarded to Captain John Dean by the Republic of China, 1942.

Captain Dean is memorialized at Calvary Cemetery in St. Peter. As noted in a previous newsletter, Jared Mlaker has been uncovering and cleaning stones in Nicollet County cemeteries. While doing so, he has been updating our burial records of veterans, which I am sending in turn to volunteer Bobb Menk. Bobb is collating that data with other veteran records found in the archives at NCHS.

Bobb, who grew up in St. Peter and who has returned to Minnesota after retiring from a career in library and information science, is helping lay the groundwork for a future online exhibition that will illuminate the service of Nicollet County veterans.

Archives: Dean & Menk continued on page 6

Archives: Dean & Menk continued from page 7

he collections of the Society include a wealth of materials and photos associated with Nicollet County veterans. There remain many gaps, however, especially concerning career service members and veterans of post-World War II conflicts, such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Gulf War, and the War in Afghanistan. To donate materials relating to the service of a Nicollet County veteran, please contact me at research@nchsmn.org or 507-934-0591.

Archives continued from page 7

NCHS AWARDED STATE GRANT TO UPGRADE COLLECTIONS SYSTEM

We're thrilled to announce that the Nicollet County Historical Society has been awarded a \$9,925 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant to upgrade our collections management system. This project will help us move from an outdated program to a new, more powerful system called CollectiveAccess.

Why does this matter? Behind every exhibit, photo, or artifact we share with you is a record—who donated it, when it was made, and how it connects to Nicollet County history. Right now, our staff and volunteers spend a lot of time working around the limitations of our old software. The new system will make it easier to organize and access those records, saving time and improving accuracy.

Even better, once the migration is complete, anyone—researchers, students, or curious community members—will be able to browse our collections online through MNCollections.org. That means greater access to Nicollet County's rich past for everyone.

The grant will fund data conversion, system set-up, and training for our team. We'll also clean up old records to ensure that what you find online is clear, complete, and accurate.

We're excited about what this means for the future of our museum and archives. This upgrade strengthens our ability to preserve and share local history, honoring the people and places that make Nicollet County unique.

Stay tuned for updates as we make this transition!



This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Archives Donations continued from page 7

Sarah Geoline "Sally" Kelley: Certificates and diplomas issued to members of the Aaron and Geoline Pearson family; promotional items from Nicollet County businesses.

William K. Klein: Materials relating to the military service of Captain John J. Dean, and to the Klein family.

Ruth Klossner: Tellocin, Nicollet Public School yearbook, 2017.

Richard Lambert: Materials relating to the military service of Captain James Magner; copy of the Magner farm abstract.

Phil Lutzi: Commemorative medallion, 140th anniversary of the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux.

Margaret Marschel: Photographs of the Klingler, Anton, and Fesenmeier families; genealogical materials relating to the Klingler family; butter tub that belonged to Elizabeth Anton, purchased at the St. George Store.

Martin County Historical Society: Minnesota Centennial commemorative plate, a promotional item of Farmers Elevator Company of Traverse, 1958.

Schelli McCabe: License certificate issued to Dr. Ann G. Rotramel by the Minnesota State Board of Chiropractic, 1948.

John McGraw: Book, "Look What They Asked of Us: Alone, a Vietnam Veteran Memoir," by John McGraw.

Robyn Menk: Holiday House newsletter in memory of Ben J. Martell, Fall 1984.

Robert Meyer: Richard Willaert's memoir of his experiences during the Vietnam War, 1968-1969.

Minnesota Department of Revenue: Nicollet County auditor correspondence, 1914-1945.

Dawn Molitor: Cobbler shoe stand and lasts from Heidemann's Harness Shop, Nicollet.

Gail Norland, in memory of Roger Norland: Postcard addressed to H. C. Miller, editor of the St. Peter Free Press, 1897; A. K. Skaro Post 37 Grand Army of the Republic reunion ribbon.

Gloria Otto: Genealogical materials relating to the Otto family.

Brian Oviatt: Order pad, St. Peter Sweet Shop.

Charles Sandeen: Aerial Cook telephone terminal removed from the St. Peter business district, unauthorized (by Western Electric) desk telephone.

Sibley County Historical Society: Confirmation photo of Arthur T. Bruns, 1901-1962.

Thank-you to Our Research Center Volunteers!

Nita Aasen, Eileen Holz, Jared Mlaker, Bobb Menk, Jennifer Monke, Margo O'Brien, Brian Oviatt, Marlin Peterson, Bob Sandeen, and Victoria Steinhuis.

COLLECTIONS: Crazy Quilts

by Anna Simmons

Collections Assistant

Of the quilts found in our collections, examples of the crazy quilt are probably the most abundant. These ostentatious expressions of creativity exploded onto the scene during the last decades of the 19th century.

Prior to the crazy quilt, quiltmaking was an unambiguous and calculated craft, guided by precision and inevitability. Not the crazy quilt, which seems to have no rules or logic but rather jolts the beholder into an explosion of random shapes, sizes, textures, and colors.



One of the crazy quilts on rotation at the Cox House.

The humble patchwork quilt frugally combined scraps salvaged from old, worn garments and other textiles in order to bring new life to them and extend their utility. The crazy quilt, on the other hand, was the latest passion of "ladies of leisure," who were looking for fresh, creative ways to fill their time. The inspiration for these quilts came from a newfound interest in Asian arts during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, sparked by the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876, where the Japanese Pavilion had

pride of place. Visitors to these exhibits were struck by the asymmetry and use of color in the designs on pottery and other artifacts. The term "crazy quilt" itself is a reference to the crackled or "crazed" pattern that occurs in the glaze on pottery.

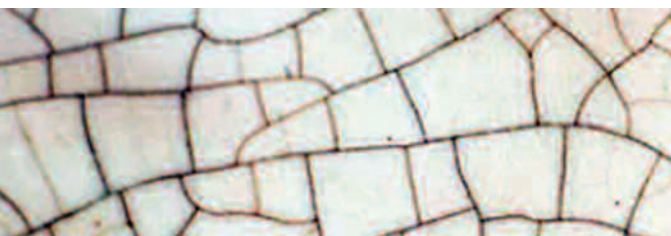
Crazy quilts were meant to be showpieces. In the early years, they were constructed mostly from luxury fabrics such as silk taffetas and velvets and highly embroidered with visible, bright threads. It must have been a particularly exciting craft for these quilters, unlimited by the rules of traditional quiltmaking and free to be as creative and experimental as they wished. Hours of time and care went into these labors of love, and they were prominently displayed for all to see and appreciate.

The heyday of the crazy quilt lasted into the first decades of the twentieth century. Over the years they became a little less flamboyant, when makers returned to using simpler fabrics such as cottons and wools, but the opportunity for freeform creativity remained. Today, these quilts offer us a glimpse into the many hours of quiet contemplation and creativity that their creators put into their construction.



This crazy quilt design dressing gown is handmade with red silk and maroon wool. It has maroon wool lapels and a collar made by Amy Turner and her sister.

Patchwork quilt made by Mrs. Frank S. Wolfe in a crazy quilt pattern with velvet, brocade, and satin, with edging done in green cotton and backed in blue brocade.



COX HOUSE OPENS FOR SUMMER



The Cox House opens its doors once again this summer for self-guided tours.

Leisurely explore the beautifully preserved 1871 home at your own pace—no reservations required and no admission fee, though free-will donations are always appreciated.

Tour Hours

- 1 to 4 p.m.

Tour Dates

- June 7 & 21
- July 5 & 19
- August 2, 16 & 30

This summer, don't miss our new temporary textile display, featuring historical garments from the Society's collection. Experience the Cox House through fashion, fabric, and finely stitched details.



We have a list of items that would help the Society, and we welcome new and gently used donations. Your support will help us preserve history and better serve our visitors.

- Cake stands, various sizes and materials
- White cotton sheets to cover large artifacts in storage
- Small tablecloths in good condition, square or rectangular, preferred
- Command picture (not poster) hanging strips
- White cardstock
- Taper candles for the Cox House

NCHS EVENTS



Community Affairs on KNUJ Radio

April 22 @ 9:15 AM - 9:35 AM on KNUJ Radio AM 860 or FM 107.3

Get the latest updates from NCHS on Community Affairs. Listen to KNUJ Radio every fourth Tuesday at 9:15 am to stay informed.



Documentary Film Series

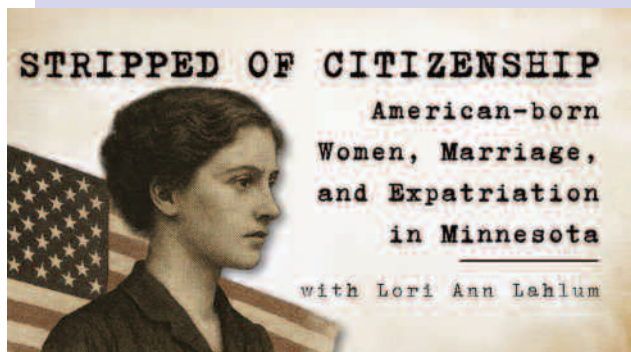
The Nicollet County Historical Society and Saint Peter Community and Family Education present our seventeenth season of documentary films! The public is welcome to join us for these free films at the Treaty Site History Center.

Film Series | *I am DB Cooper*

May 1 @ 2 p.m. | Treaty Site History Center | Free

In 1971, an unsuspecting criminal by the name of DB Cooper boarded a plane, stole \$190,000, and jumped out. The legend of DB Cooper only continued to grow over the years, and the case was largely considered closed until a man came out of the woodwork to confess his crime.

Two bounty hunter brothers encounter an ailing old man named Rodney Bonnifield while coordinating his bail after a violent encounter on a dairy farm involving a machete. Close to his sentencing, he reveals to the bondsmen not only was he responsible for the notorious DB Cooper plane hijacking, but the ransom cash is still buried, and he needs their help digging it up. Up against the clock with Rodney's prison sentence looming, the group set out on a modern-day treasure hunt to recover the money he buried on the Columbia River 50 years ago, uncovering bizarre truths about Rodney Bonnifield and his connection to the only unsolved hijacking in US history. Rated TV-14. 1h 40 min.



Stripped of Citizenship: American-born Women, Marriage, and Expatriation in Minnesota

May 8 @ 2 p.m. | Treaty Site History Center | \$5 for non-members and free for NCHS members.

As a result of federal legislation in 1907, American-born women lost their citizenship when they married alien men. Derivative citizenship resulted in thousands of Minnesota women becoming aliens in their own country. Digital tools and databases make learning who these women were easier. Scholars to date have focused on American women who married German nationals because all enemy aliens—including American-born women married to alien men from Germany and some of its allies—had to register with the federal government. Thus, there is a clear paper trail for some states. Such a trail exists in Minnesota, too, because of a unique 1918 order that required all aliens (and not just enemy aliens) to register in the state.

In this presentation, Lori Ann Lahlum explores the expatriation of American-born women in Minnesota who married aliens and the ways in which we can reclaim their stories.



hiSTORY hangout

Monthly on the third Thursday at 10:00 a.m., | History Center | Free
Upcoming dates: May 15, June 19, and July 17

Join us for our free monthly history chat, where we'll engage in lively conversation, share stories, and enjoy light refreshments.

MEMORIALS

received by NCHS since the last *Crossing* of 11-14-2024.

In Memory of **Fred Hanson Jr.**

Given by Willis and Rachel Anthony

In Memory of **Wallace Larson**

Given by Evie Swenson

In Memory of **Dick Muesing**

Given by Bob Sandeen

In Memory of **Narve Nelson**

Given by Lorraine Olson

In Memory of **Herb Poncin**

Given by Richard & Kathleen Peterson
Steven Poncin

We remember...

with honor the following friends and members whom we lost since the last *Crossing* of 11-14-2024.

- ◆ Elaine Brostrom
- ◆ Fred Hanson
- ◆ Helen Schauer

MONETARY DONATIONS

received by NCHS since the last *Crossing* of 11-14-2024.

Nita & Paul Aasen

Michael Annexsted

Anonymous

Nancy Beck

Brad Becker

Pam Bidelman

Peg Bindner

Howard Bode

Steven & Becky Briggs

Shari & James Brostrom

Nancy Bruch

Verlin Carlson

Katha & John Chamberlain

A. Nannette Chambers

Mel Craig

Lois Currier

Duane & Brenda DeBlick

Arden & Marilyn DeBoer

Elizabeth DiLauro

Cindy Dogan

Marie Dranttel

Andrea Fish

Julie & Sam Gault

Lisa Gault

Govenaires

Jane Haala

Greg Hanson

Scott Hermanson

Eileen Holz

Andy Hopp

Mary Lou Ihrke

Carol E. Jackson

Ellis Jones

Kathleen Keller

Gretchen Koehler

Peggy Kreber &

Warren Wagner

Robert & Sally Lambert

Margaret Lambert

Bill & Meg Lindberg

Loren Lindsay

Diane Lochner & Ole Karstad

Emilie Lokensgard

Maria Lokensgard

Adam Malamen

Margaret Marschel

Harriet Mason

Warren & Terri Michels

Tuff & Ginny Miller

Margaret Muchow

Debra Nelson

Michael Newton

Brian Oviatt

Elizabeth A Peters

Marlin Peterson

Marshall Peterson

Janet Prehn

Harold Rodning

Bob Sandeen

Gary & Vicky Schmidt

JoAnn & Dennis Schmidt

Gloria Schnorenberg

Tacie Schwartz

Jennifer Spradling

Jane Stark

Loren & Roxane Sundboom

Joanna Swanson

Betty Thompson

Jerry Weldy

Jeff Wettergren &

Melanie Lynard

Brad Wilmes

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Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub

Last August, it was announced at the Minnesota Historical Society's Summer Social that an anonymous donor is funding a newspaper digitization project for NCHS for \$70,000. MNHS initiated the project in early 2025 and is expected to be completed by January 2026. We're excited to say the MNHS team has made significant progress, and the following Nicollet County newspapers are available for online viewing through the Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub.

- *Lafayette Nicollet Ledger*, 1973-current
- *Lafayette Ledger*, 1904-1972
- *Minnesota Free Press*, 1857-1858
- *Minnesota Statesman*, 1858-1865
- *Nicollet County Independent*, 1894-1896
- *St. Peter Free Press*, 1859; 1896-1925
- *St. Peter Hustler*, 1888
- *St. Peter Journal*, 1883-1903
- *St. Peter Tribune*, 1860-1920



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE MINNESOTA DIGITAL LIBRARY



Over two decades ago, a group of archivists, librarians, and historians envisioned a new approach to preserving Minnesota's cultural heritage by digitizing important materials and making them freely accessible to all. That dream became the Minnesota Digital Library (MDL).

Since its launch in 2005, MDL has grown into a nationally recognized collection comprising over 60,000 items from more than 200 organizations across the state. Photos, documents, audiovisual materials, and more are now available online thanks to this ongoing collaboration.

The Nicollet County Historical Society is proud to be a founding contributor, sharing more than 1,500 historic images from early Nicollet County, all of which are available to browse online.

To explore these collections, visit mndigital.org and search for contributor Nicollet County Historical Society.



About Us

The Minnesota Digital Library (MDL) supports discovery and education through access to unique digital collections shared by cultural heritage organizations from across the state of Minnesota. Our contributors include libraries, historical societies, museums, and archives. The Minnesota Digital Library also provides education and training opportunities concerning digitization best practices, metadata for digital collections, and digital preservation.



Klossner Creamery circa 1935. Men left to right are Verne Johnson, Roman Kosek, Keith Johnson, and William Hoffmann.



Lafayette Municipal Band circa 1934



Flooding at the Marigold Dairy at 216 to 220 Belgrade Avenue in North Mankato in 1951

ON EXHIBIT

Nicollet County Townships

Explore the Nicollet County Room, which features displays filled with artifacts and stories from each of Nicollet County's 13 townships.



Traverse Township case featuring items from the Cullen Trading Post.

Seasons of Nicollet County

See seasonal vignettes from early Nicollet County. Each display features different modes of transportation, textiles, and artifacts, offering a seasonal glimpse into our past.

Sketches of Frank Blackwell Mayer

In 1851, 23-year-old Baltimore native Frank Blackwell Mayer embarked on a 5,903-mile journey to document the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, recording the lives of Indigenous Minnesotans through detailed sketches. Despite not securing a government role in the treaty negotiations, Mayer's commitment to capturing these historical moments left a lasting legacy, rivaling Seth Eastman's work and surpassing George Catlin's contributions in Minnesota. Though he intended to finish all 63 sketches in watercolor, Mayer completed only 31 before he died in 1899, preserving a unique visual record of this pivotal moment in history.



1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux exhibit

1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux

The History Center's permanent exhibit interprets the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux as a watershed moment in Minnesota history for the Dakota people and Euro-Americans through large graphic panels, hands-on activities, artifacts, and a portion of Twin City Public Television's documentary, Dakota Conflict.

Annual Meeting Recap

Thank you to all who attended the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Nicollet County Historical Society on April 7. Members approved several updates that help strengthen the organization as we look ahead.

A **bylaws amendment** was passed clarifying that a **simple majority** of Board members now constitutes a quorum, rather than a fixed number. This change gives the Board greater flexibility in conducting business throughout the year.

Members also approved a new **business membership structure** with three clear levels:

- **Friend** \$125
(for nonprofits and service organizations)
- **Partner:** \$200
- **Leader:** \$400

These updated tiers are designed to improve recognition, access, and engagement with local businesses while reflecting the Society's evolving needs.

The Board of Directors welcomed **Mark Fiemeyer** (1st term) and confirmed **Eric Annexstad**, **Alma Forst**, and **Dennis Schmidt** for second terms. The 2025 officers are:

Dennis Schmidt, President
Tami Skinner, Vice President
Alma Forst, Treasurer
Scott Hermanson, Secretary

We extend our sincere thanks to outgoing Board members **John Chamberlain**, **Dana Melius**, **Kate Martens**, and **Joe Metzen** for their dedicated service to the Society. Their time, leadership, and commitment helped guide NCHS through meaningful milestones.



Annual Meeting map presentation by Bob Sandeen

2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Event/Program information:

TSHC: Treaty Site History Center events are free for NCHS members unless stated otherwise.

continuing on display

Nicollet County Townships | details on page 14

Seasons of Nicollet County | details on page 14

Sketches of Frank Blackwell Mayer | details on page 14

1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux | details on page 14

History Center

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May 1 Documentary Film Series | *I am DB Cooper*, 2 p.m., FREE | details on page 11

History Center

May 8 Stripped of Citizenship: American-born Women, Marriage, and Expatriation in Minnesota, 2 p.m. \$5.00 for non-members and free for NCHS members | details on page 11

History Center

May 15 hiSTORY hangout, 10–11 a.m., FREE | details on page 11

History Center

June 7 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 7

Cox House

June 19 hiSTORY hangout, 10–11 a.m., FREE | details on page 11

History Center

June 21 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 7

Cox House

July 5 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 7

Cox House

July 17 hiSTORY hangout, 10–11 a.m., FREE | details on page 11

History Center

July 19 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 10

Cox House

August 2 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 10

Cox House

August 16 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 10

Cox House

August 30 Cox House Self-Guided Tours, 1–4 p.m., FREE/donations accepted | details on page 10

Cox House

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



*...coming soon to a prairie near you,
come visit!*



NICOLLET COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

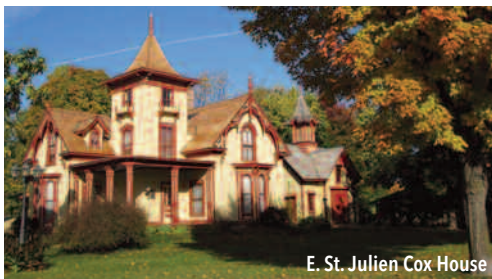
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HISTORY DISCOVERY PRESERVATION KNOWLEDGE

E. St. Julien Cox House • Traverse des Sioux • Treaty Site History Center



E. St. Julien Cox House



Traverse des Sioux Townsite



Treaty Site History Center

NCHS Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (_____) _____

E-mail _____

My check is enclosed ☐ Please debit my credit card ☐

Acct. Number _____

CVV Code _____ Expiration Date _____
3 #s on rev-VISA®, MC®, Disc®, 4 #s on rev-AE®

Authorized Signature _____

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

Yes! I would like to support my Nicollet County Historical Society in 2025 at the following level (please check one).

<input type="checkbox"/> Senior (65+)	\$ 30
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$ 40
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$ 50
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$ 75
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$ 100
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$ 200
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$ 500
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member	\$ 1,000
Business Memberships	

call or
e-mail
for info

Please make checks payable to:

Nicollet County Historical Society

Membership applications should be mailed to:

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

PAPERLESS?? Now you can purchase or renew your membership online! Visit nchsmn.org/support/membership for details.