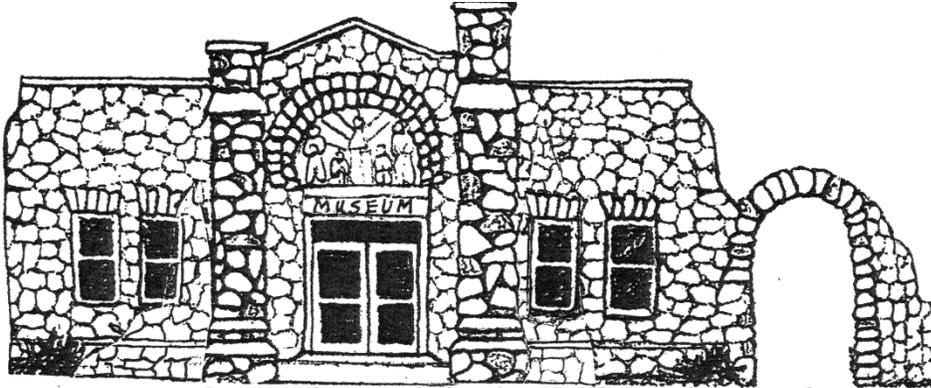


Milaca Area Historical Society News



Preserving and sharing Milaca's history for over 30 years

Summer 2016 – Volume 18, Number 2

From the President

By Tom Sauer, President

We have had an interesting start to the year. I was able to spend two days at a conference in Willmar put on by the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums. I attended seven sessions on various topics and heard a wonderful speaker, Clyde Doepner, the only full time curator in professional baseball, who curates the Minnesota Twins' collection.

These sessions either gave new insights to and/or reinforced areas of concern to small local museums like ours. A few of the topics covered were copyright concerns; succession of museum staff; preserving still, film and sound recordings; and collections inventory. As usual, many more ideas were presented and discussed than our small group of volunteers can accomplish. We are doing well in many areas and compare favorably with many small museums in Minnesota on many facets. We have a good inventory of our collection, written procedures for many functions, adequate displays, and good outreach programs with the Milaca school system and Mille Lacs County Fair.

We need more volunteers or/and perhaps a part time paid office manager/coordinator. The aspect of hiring someone, even part time, is daunting. When we look into having *even one* employee there are many new concerns and obstacles that an organization must deal with before and after engaging such a person.

As you may know our organization has taken on many projects over the last 30+ years. We have: acquired microfilm of newspapers and local records; repaired the Museum building; put all of our records on computer and organized tens of thousands of items in our collection and files. Besides these major projects we have had over 100 other projects completed by volunteers. We have accomplished a lot, and still have plenty to do!

Local History – It's Where You Live!

Learning About Writing History

By Jere Day, Ann Johnson
and Karen Schlenker

On 12 May 2016 Ann Johnson, Jere Day and Karen Schlenker attended the “Writing the Record: Expressing History Through Writing” workshop at Moose Lake Area Historical Society. David Grabitske from the Minnesota Historical Society offered opening remarks detailing 100 years that the state society has offered services to local organizations for the preservation of history. True to its title, the workshop included information and guidance on writing grant applications, writing for the web, and writing exhibit content. Keeping current with tips for writing grant applications makes the process less challenging as our organization undertakes expensive projects. The session on “Writing Exhibit Content” was especially valuable as we are beginning preparations for our Mille Lacs County Fair displays. Presenter Kate Roberts helped us to understand “how less can be more” and can also be a hook into a conversation. The conversation might be with the exhibit piece, the curator, or a person next to you, but good words open up dialogue with the display. This encouraged us to think of how we could write brief catchy display language to describe the content and encourage interaction. It was very useful for general work in the museum and for planning updates and changes in our museum displays.

Another session was “Writing for the Web,” which as it happens is quite different from the way we write for other purposes. Web users tend to skim content and hop from page to page, so information has to be concise and catchy. Presenter Linda Cameron is Minnesota Historical Society’s program manager for MNopedia, which is the online encyclopedia about Minnesota history. This is a wonderful resource found at <http://www.mnopedia.org/>. Unlike Wikipedia, MNopedia is curated and fact-checked by Minnesota Historical Society staff. As an outcome of this session we have received writer’s guidelines, templates, and detailed information about how to submit articles to MNopedia. We have also received an invitation to contribute articles – there’s very little connected to our area currently on the site.

Once again, a MHS workshop has provided many great connections and helpful ideas.

Who's Who at MAHS: Jere Day

Jere is starting his 4th year as Vice-President and works on membership, museum scheduling, and our outreach programs, especially serving our schools.

I’m Jere Day, Vice-President of the MAHS. I was born, raised, and educated in Milaca and taught in Milaca public schools. My parents farmed and worked in the area all their lives and owned Ray’s Northside Grocery for 10 years in the city of Milaca. I have two children, Leslie and Shawn, and four grandchildren (two boys and two girls). I enjoy attending their school sports and other activities that they are involved in at Princeton Public schools. I have written several articles published in the *Mille Lacs County Times* and MAHS newsletters on the WPA, band shell, the flu outbreak of 1918, and other topics. I enjoy trying to get young and old excited about our past and how we need to keep it alive in our schools and communities. Our “History in a Box” helps us reach out to schools and organizations to promote the museum and our programs. Drop in and visit our collection or come do some research on your family – you’ll love it!



Fun Times with Milaca Students

This spring we once again had a great time sharing local history with Milaca students. We took History in a Box to all of the second grade classes at Milaca Elementary school on 18 April, showing them changes over time in how we power and heat things, how we do household tasks (laundry) and how we communicate (telephones). The students and teachers were all so engaged, and their interest and questions spurred us to set up a “hands-on” table for their visit to the museum on 3 May. Here they were able to lift heavy sad irons, turn the dial on a telephone, and button a shoe. It was a very exciting day!

Mr. Kragt’s 7th grade history class connected with our museum exhibits on 4 May by doing a scavenger hunt. As with any young people, it’s so interesting to see how different their points of reference are from ours. They live in a different world from the one we lived in at their age, and it’s important that they come visit us so we can learn from each other.

We also hosted the third grade as they walked around town and found out what they could learn about their community by looking at old buildings and community spaces. They learned about two old buildings rolled into one (the Museum), about the importance of the Depot and the railroad, and about the whole neighborhood surrounding Trimble Park, the first downtown. They then walked through the old lumbermill sites to get back to school. This is always a highlight of our year.

Thanks to volunteers Leslie Anfinson, Ardy Becklin, Janet Burklund, Ruth Ann Christianson, Jere Day, Ann Johnson, Karen Schlenker, and Frank Vetsch. We can always use more volunteers for these fun and educational (for us as much as the students) days. Please let us know if you want to be on the roster of helpers – we know these are activities you’ll love!



Leslie, Karen and Jere visit the 2nd grade

125th County Fair – Be There!

By Leslie Anfinson
County Fair Committee Chair

The 2016 Mille Lacs County Fair is just around the corner – August 11 through 14! Plans for the 125th fair began the week after the 2015 fair exhibit was taken down. The MAHS Board is excited and we hope you will be as well. The 2016 theme is the history of the fair. There will be a timeline indicating highlights of the fair throughout the 125 years, dotted with historical events in Minnesota and the world. The reasons fairs began are unique to each region but in short, fairs were opportunities to learn survival skills – how do we make a living and prosper in this place? For much of Mille Lacs County the answer was farming. Another reason to have a fair was to learn about new technology, and also to trade with other regions. There are so many things that have gone on at the fair, from agricultural and commercial displays to youth activities, from racing to the midway, that it’s hard to know where to start! To focus our energies, the MAHS has decided to focus on dairy farms and the dairy industries, concentrating on the development of creameries. Isle will focus on technology, with an exhibit on the history of telephones in the county. Princeton has many historic photos and stories of fair activities to contribute.

At this point it is important to remind readers that the MAHS is staffed entirely by volunteers. All that we do is done with volunteer labor. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves of that fact so we

don't spread ourselves too thin and so we can keep integrity in the work we do. In other words we need all our readers to help us out! The ways are endless:

- ✓ **Share your knowledge**— and any items you could loan us for the exhibit on
 - Creameries in the area
 - 4-H
 - FFA
 - Animal diseases such as Bangs, vascular exanthema and Newcastle
 - Red Cross
 - Balloon ascensions in the 1900's
 - Early aeroplanes
 - History of horse racing in the area
- ✓ If you enjoy **writing and doing research**, we encourage you to write up a page on any related history involving state and world events in the past 125 years for binders at the reading table.
- ✓ **Volunteer your time.**
 - Volunteer to help at the fair
 - Volunteer to help make butter Friday, August 12.

At the next two monthly meetings, we will have sign-up sheets, but don't wait until then to let us know how you would like to help with this wonderful exhibit of history in our area and our county. Contact Karen or Leslie at the museum or at home (contact info on page 5) and let us know how you would like to help.

See you at the next MAHS meeting June 28th, and see you at the fair!

A Bit of History

By Tom Sauer

The Early History of Milaca - now 130+ years old

For thousands of years Native Americans lived in close harmony with nature along the rivers and lakes and in the forests of what came to be known as Mille Lacs County. The Rum River (Spirit River) served as a walking and canoe route and as a source of useful plants and animals. The pines and oaks and other plants also provided materials and some foodstuffs for these early people.

The first Europeans in the area may have been Vikings in the 1300's or French explorers in the 1600's. During the 1800's trappers and lumber surveyors arrived. Most of Milaca now sits on land once owned by James J. Hill's railroad or lumber companies.

One of Hill's railroads (the Minneapolis and St Cloud) completed its east-west line in late 1882. Soon a stopping place was established near the site of the current Trimble Park and Armory/Discovery building. Within the year the Mille Lacs Lumber Company store, saw mill, and planing mill were built along with other stores and homes. The local post office was established with the name "Oak City, Minn." on 15 Mar 1883 (the name was changed to "Milaca, Minn." post office on 13 Nov 1883).

In 1886 Hill had a four block area platted out into blocks, streets and lots. The Centennial Committee of 1986 likely chose the platting of the town as an indication that the "village" of Milaca officially existed. This "original" Town of Milaca is the four square blocks now anchored by the Milaca Building Center, the First National Bank, the Discovery Store, and the block west of the Armory. After many additions the city limits are as we know them in 2016.

Many of the town's original wood buildings burned in a number of fires over the years. The present downtown buildings of brick were much more fire resistant and all date from the teens or later: Hobnetti's (1909), Copy Fast (1910), Ethan Allen building (1915), the Phoenix Apartments/MHS (1916), and the "old" Times building (1919) are some of the oldest commercial buildings remaining. Perhaps two dozen private homes from the late 1800's and early 1900's still stand. Some of the oldest homes in town are the "lumber company homes" built for the mill workers by Hill's Mille Lacs Lumber Company in the 1890's.

From the Collection

By Karen Schlenker
Volunteer Curator

This is a somewhat different curator's report, because this curator has been tackling somewhat different tasks this spring, thereby getting way behind in the usual tasks of taking in and cataloguing items into the collection. What I *have* been doing is focusing on the *use* of the collection, and trying to improve our ability to use it to engage with our visitors and engage with our history. I spent quite a bit of time creating a spreadsheet of objects and photos appropriate for use in outreach programs, particularly the "History in a Box" we've taken to Milaca Elementary School the last few years. It's so much easier to deliver a coherent message when you have more pieces of the story available – and we can think more clearly about our audience, too. Can a seven-year-old relate to a washboard? To a candlestick telephone? How? This volunteer curator has been documenting and cataloguing acquisitions for so long, she was losing track of what it's all *for*!

Now I'm turning my attention to those things in our collection which tell us about the history of agriculture in the Milaca area. We have nothing on display about this important aspect of the local culture and economy! It will take some time to design and mount such a display, but in the meantime we want to put together a small display on the dairy industry for this year's county fair. And to fill in this part of our local history, we need *your* help. Can you shed any light on any of these questions? Anecdotes and family stories are great. Stories with dates, names, and specifics of how things worked are better. And objects, photos and documents to illustrate the stories can engage our visitors on many levels!

- Was cream separated on farm and only cream hauled to town? Did this vary among the local creameries?
- There appear to have been non-cooperative, private creameries in the area. Why did some milk producers deal with the co-ops and some with the private businesses?
- Farmers originally brought their milk or cream to the creamery. Later, milk was trucked to the creamery. When did trucking begin? Was the trucker an independent contractor or creamery employee?
- It's my understanding that a lot of rural places first got electricity in the 1930's and 1940's. Is this so? What were the first priorities for electrification? I assume a pump for the well was first! What's next?
- The Milaca co-op's 20th anniversary booklet (1927) says that the use of silage gave dairy farming a big boost – better feed throughout the year made for more and better milk. Does anybody know when silos first came into use? When did they become commonplace?
- When did pipeline/bulk tank systems come into use in this area?

We will be talking about the county fair and the agriculture exhibit at the next MAHS meeting, and welcome your input at any time! Contact us via phone, email or at the museum (contact info below).

MAHS Officers 2016

Tom Sauer, President 982-6603, tysauer@milaca.net
 Jere Day, Vice-Pres, 983-3325, jlazyday@frontiernet.net
 Lynn Kent, Treasurer 983-3155, lynnkent@frontiernet.net
 Ann Johnson, Secretary, 983-6391, johnson.ann.louise@gmail.com
 Leslie Anfinson, Vice Secretary, 983-3749, cairoleslie@gmail.com
 Karen Schlenker, Newsletter, Curator 983-3586, jkarschlen@gmail.com

Museum phone – 320-982-1212

Museum email - museum@milaca.net

Website <http://milacamuseum.org>

MAHS News and Notes

New display in Military Exhibit

Lola Vedders has created a new display about the Last Man's Club of Company C, 194th Tank Battalion, 47th Infantry. Though not everyone in the outfit saw combat in Korea, many did, and Lola has documented their service with many photos and some personal narratives. Many thanks to Lola for putting this display together, and to the men of Company C for their service.

Microfilm Project Nears Completion!

The winter issue of the MAHS Newsletter reported on our plan to have missing issues of the *Mille Lacs County Times* microfilmed. At that time the process was in its beginning stages. MAHS is happy to report that the project is well on its way.

An application was submitted to the Minnesota Historical Society for a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in early January. By mid-April MAHS had been notified that the grant in the amount of \$2,660 was approved and the project could begin. Early issues of the *Mille Lacs County Times* along with other issues which had not already been microfilmed were collected from ECM Publishers in Princeton. Those issues were delivered to Northern Micrographics in La Crosse, WI, on May 4.

We are now awaiting word on the completion of the microfilming at which time the original issues of the *Times* and the microfilm reels of those issues will be picked up by MAHS volunteers. The newspapers themselves will be returned to ECM Publishers, the master set of the reels will be delivered to the Minnesota Historical Society, and a second set of the reels will be placed in the Milaca Museum's microfilm file. This will complete the museum's collection of the *Mille Lacs County Times* from the first issue published on August 20, 1892 through the last issue published in 2008. The project will be completed later this summer.

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.

Public Funding for History

Funding of historical organizations with public monies has been recognized – philosophically and in law – as a good and useful policy throughout Minnesota's history. MAHS benefits from this on all levels.

Our **Minnesota Historical Society**, partially funded by the state legislature and one of the granting agencies for Arts and Cultural Heritage grant funds, is a source of technical and professional advice, training, and support well above and beyond the distribution of grant funding.

The **City of Milaca** supports us by allowing us to use our wonderful historic building to house the Milaca Museum, and by providing electricity, heat and air conditioning for the building.

Area townships have once again in March 2016 chosen to support their local historical society. We have received funds from all of the townships in the central part of Mille Lacs County – **Milo, Page, Hayland, Bogus Brook, Borgholm** and **Milaca Townships**.

Mille Lacs County funding for historical organizations, split evenly between MAHS, the Mille Lacs County Historical Society in Princeton, and the Mille Lacs Lake Historical Society in Isle, has been increasing in recent years, but at \$4,600 in total is still little more than half the allocation budgeted in 2008. This is far less than average for Minnesota counties, even taking into consideration population and tax base. We believe all of the county's residents benefit from the presence of our historical societies. We hope the commissioners will be able to increase funding for this important service.

And we ask our members and friends to thank their township supervisors, city councilors, county commissioners and state legislators for supporting historical organizations and their services here and across the state.

Places To Go, Things To Do

Mille Lacs History Festival and Rendezvous, June 24-26. This annual event celebrates the history of the fur trade with a period camp, storytelling, black powder shooting, folk arts, demonstrations, entertainment, food and drink. Admission is only \$3 at the gate; camping is available for \$30, and a vending/demonstration site is \$30. Located south of Isle. Email millelacs.vous@gmail.com or call and leave a message at (763)757-4118.

Gateway to the Northland Parade kicks off at 6 p.m. on June 16. Watch for another historic Boggs vehicle representing the Milaca Area Historical Society, driven by Mark Boggs. Thanks again to John, Ruth and Mark Boggs for giving us a presence in the parade!

Mille Lacs County Fair celebrates its 125th year this year August 11-14. Visit the Heritage Building to see the history of the fair, agriculture, youth activities, and commerce and technology.

Recfest Bluegrass Festival will be held in Milaca's Rec Park July 28-31. Performances, jam sessions, workshops, children's events, food vendors and Art Fair. More info at www.milacarecfest.com.

Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum in Walnut Grove, MN is open April through October. In addition to the museum in town, the Wilder Pageant will be performed in the amphitheater west of town. Dates for 2016 are July 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, and 23. For more information call 888.859.3102 or visit the website at www.walnutgrove.org

Note: Laura's uncle Peter Ingalls (Little House in the Big Woods) is buried in Milaca's Forest Hill Cemetery, third grave from the entrance on the east side of the road.

The Minnesota Historical Society runs over two dozen sites around the state, and there are many activities and events at these sites throughout the year. Site and event admissions are free or reduced for MHS members. Check the website for activities, events and site open hours: www.mnhs.org. (Also on the site are indexed Minnesota birth and death records and a catalogue for the MHS library.)

For great day trip ideas, see our collection of brochures from local and Minnesota Historical Society sites, in the Museum entryway.

Milaca Museum Open Hours

Open April through October

Wednesday through Friday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Call if you need an appointment outside our regular hours

Admission is free!

We appreciate your donations

MAHS
PO Box 144
Milaca, MN 56353

Join us at our regular MAHS meetings!

4th Tuesday each month
January through October

Note The Time! **6:30 p.m.** *Note The Time!*

Next meeting 28 June

Meetings are usually held at
the Milaca City Center Council Chambers
255 First Street E.

Participate in fun and fellowship with
the Milaca Area Historical Society!