“That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach.”

~ Aldous Huxley
The m ission of the Nicollet County Historical Society shall be the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of Nicollet County and the State of Minnesota.

Serving More Than Ever

NCHS served 175,189 in 2011. That’s a pretty impressive number, and it continues to grow each year. It makes me especially proud in an era when museum attendance is declining. We feel there are several reasons we are bucking that trend.

Face it—our history matters. Local history is important, but you can’t tell the history of Minnesota, or even the U.S., without discussing what happened in Nicollet County. Whether you’re a genealogist, civil war buff, or political junkie, we have it all right here. Even the new History standards for Minnesota require students to study what happened here.

Unlike many societies, we manage four distinct sites to share our stories. And the reality is, we’re branching out from there to provide programs and services throughout the county, across Minnesota, and beyond. I believe the future of museums will be to provide content to individuals wherever they may be – on their phone, on the web, at home, or at a public place. We serve thousands of people who would never be able to step foot inside the Treaty Site History Center. That’s an exciting and powerful thing.

In 2011 we partnered with the Arts Center of Saint Peter on a traveling Smithsonian exhibit, published Dr. William Lass’s The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, and announced dual Ted Moline Scholarship winners Magdelena Morrow and Sarah Miller.

In 2012 we’re streaming lectures online, we’re displaying traveling exhibits in other communities, and will be featured on NPR. Exciting stuff for a regional museum in the heart of the Minnesota River Valley.
The past year, 2011, was a successful year but also a very challenging year. Much energy and effort was expended in Spring flood preparations. Luckily, we were spared but admissions income was lost and extra expenses were incurred (updating and enhancing flood insurance, sandbagging, etc).

Also the three-week state-wide governmental shut down did impact Harkin Store, Fort Ridgely and NCHS with actual closures and general public uncertainty about site operations. Again, the net result was lost income in our prime tourist season.

We are optimistic that 2012 will be kinder to NCHS and the five sites that we manage and operate—The Treaty Site History Center, E. St. Julien Cox House, Harkin Store, Traverse des Sioux Treaty Site, and Fort Ridgely Museum.

Our public funding sources have treated us fairly during these difficult recessionary years, but overall funding is not keeping up with growing costs. Plainly stated, we need additional revenues and donations in order to continue to deliver the level of service that the public has come to expect of NCHS.

Here are my thoughts on how members could help:

1. Promote and recruit new members to NCHS. Neighbors, relatives, friends, co-workers, past Nicollet County residents, and people with an affinity for Nicollet County all make for excellent prospects.

2. Upgrade your membership to a lifetime membership if your budget allows. Why not use this easy way to give a little extra and lock in a lifetime benefit.

3. Support NCHS with an extra donation as your budget may allow.

4. Whenever giving In Memoriam, consider designating NCHS as your donor choice.

5. When estate planning, consult with your attorney and financial planner on the many creative ways you can give and create a legacy for NCHS.

6. Give a membership as a gift.

7. If you own a business, purchase a business membership and pass along many of NCHS benefits on to your employees. See our web site for details.

8. Finally, your creative ideas and suggestions are always welcome. Please let us hear from you.

In closing, your Board of Directors has the highest of praise for our executive director, Ben Leonard, and his staff and volunteers for the outstanding effort of the past year. Their contributions are recognized and appreciated.

Please continue to participate in our ongoing events and activities throughout the year. Stay informed and up to date by utilizing our web site (www.nchsmn.org) throughout the year.

Gary Schmidt
President
Nicollet County Historical Society
It’s debatable whether the curse, “may you live in interesting times,” is actually a Chinese proverb or an English one. But I think few of us would debate that the times we live in are very interesting. Local government funding, school budgets, and family incomes have seen little growth for a long time. That doesn’t make it easy for museums like ours.

We’ve been incredibly fortunate at NCHS. County and community support remain incredibly high. Partnerships, like that with the Arts Center of St. Peter for the Smithsonian’s *New Harmonies* exhibit, continue to be strong. We served more people in 2011 than ever before. By building programs, extending outreach, forming new partnerships, and embracing technology we will increase that number in 2012.

Hosting the *New Harmonies* exhibit was just one of many 2011 highlights. The documentary film series, in its third year, has become a wonderfully eclectic monthly happening. The Society published our first book in a long time. Dr. William Lass’s history of the *Treaty of Traverse des Sioux* is a much needed addition to Minnesota history. In September the Society helped host the Northern Great Plains History Conference that welcomed scholars from across the country. I think I’m most proud of the Cox House interpretive plan. We now have a road map to increase our programming, attendance, and community presence at the site we’ve operated since 1971.

If we live in interesting times, we certainly interpret very interesting history. 2012 has just begun, but it has hit the ground running. The sesquicentennial of Gustavus Adolphus College, U.S. – Dakota War, and Civil War means a busy coming year. I’m looking forward to it. Thank you so much for being here with us.

Ben Leonard
Director
Nicollet County Historical Society

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**NCHS 2011 at a glance**

Left: The fall burning of the MSH prairie site courtesy of Scott Kudelka at MNSU-Mankato

Bottom Left: The volunteer sandbagging crew working at the front entrance of the TSHC.

Right: New Harmonies panels at the Arts Center.

Below Right: Visitors listen to the Harkin story
The Society would like to thank its employees, board of directors, and committee members for working so hard to make the Nicollet County Historical Society one of the top institutions of its kind in Minnesota. That goal would be impossible without you.

Board of Directors

Gary Schmidt, North Mankato
  President (2nd term ending 2012)

Jeremy Freeman, St. Peter
  Vice President (2nd term ending 2013)

Tami Skinner, St. Peter
  Secretary (2nd term ending 2013)

Herb Poncin, Nicollet
  Treasurer (2nd term ending 2011)

Diane Stenson, St. Peter
  Historian (2nd term ending 2011)

Bernadotte Township
  Sally Webster (2nd term ending 2013)

Courtland
  Bob Schabert (1st term ending 2013)

Lafayette
  Pamela Morson (1st term ending 2013)

Nicollet
  Thorild Nelson (2nd term ending 2011)

North Mankato
  Chris Corley (2nd term ending 2013)
  Lori Lahlum (1st term ending 2011)

St. Peter
  Steve Baxa (1st term ending 2011)
  Patti Kelly (1st term ending 2012)
  Emilie Lokensgard (2nd term ending 2013)

West Newton Township
  Alma Forst (1st term ending 2012)

Staff

Ben Leonard
  Executive Director
  ben@nchsmn.org

Bob Sandeen
  Research Coordinator
  bob@nchsmn.org

Jessica Brockberg
  Office Manager
  jessica@nchsmn.org

Allen McBride, Jessica Becker,
  Loren Sundboom
  Museum Assistants

Wayne Passon
  Maintenance Coordinator

Richard Tostenson
  Cox House Manager
  cox@nchsmn.org

Ruth Grewe
  Harkin Store Site Manager
  harkin@nchsmn.org

Ann Koch, Karen Rogotzke,
  Rose Alslleben
  Harkin Store Site Guides

Nancy Zempel
  Fort Ridgely Site Manager
  ridgely@nchsmn.org

Dorothy Polesky, Ashley Hamre,
  Char Nack, Melinda Sommer,
  Karen Rogotzke
  Fort Ridgely Site Guides
The Nicollet County Historical Society membership convened for its annual meeting at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN on Sunday, January 16, 2011 at 1 p.m.

Director Ben Leonard welcomed the group and called Herb Poncin for the Invocation. A meal was then served by the Gustavus dining staff.

I. 2:00 Call to Order
   President Gary Schmidt called the annual business meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. The president welcomed our speaker Dr. William Lass.

II. Pledge of Allegiance
   The group recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Agenda
   The President called for any additions to the agenda. Director Leonard made a motion to add the names of the board members seeking second terms to the board in section VII. M/S Eileen Holz / Janet Anthony. Motion carried.

IV. Secretary’s Report
   The 2010 annual meeting minutes were presented as printed on pages 11–12 in the Annual Report. There being no additions or corrections, the President called for a motion to approve the minutes as written. M/S Edith Thorstensson / Ed Wetherill. Motion carried.

V. Treasurer’s Report
   Treasurer Herb Poncin presented the Financial Report as printed on pages 9–10 of the Annual Report. He stated that we currently have $46,317.47 in checking account - $25,000 of that is from a CD. The Money Market amount of $10,061.76 is also a former CD. We still have a $25,000 CD that earns 5% interest and will mature this summer. The Mairs and Power investment has recovered to the 2009 amount. Our reserve fund is half the amount of one year’s budget. Poncin shared that December’s donation letter brought in $11,000. He praised the efforts of the board and Executive Director Leonard for their work on the 2011 budget. Poncin said that this budget will require increased volunteer work, soliciting donations, fundraising, and increasing membership. He also complimented and thanked Jessica Brockberg for her work.

   Executive Director Ben Leonard stated that he was grateful to the Nicollet County Board of Commissioners for continuing to fund the Society at the same level of $100,000. The State of MN also provides $50,500 for management of the Traverse des Sioux, Harkin Store, and Fort Ridgely sites. At the end of 2010, we saw the conclusion of $5,000 provided annually by the City of St. Peter and $5,000 for rent of office space in the Treaty Site. In addition, we will see a smaller amount of interest income from the Mairs and Power fund. He stated that he is excited and humbled by the county’s continued funding and support for NCHS. For each person NCHS serves, it is at a cost of .70 per tax payer. In comparison, for each person served at MHS, it is at a cost of $4 per tax payer.

   The President called for a motion to accept the treasurer’s report. M/S Roger Swenson / Marilyn Roberts. Motion carried.
VI. Director’s Report

Executive Director Ben Leonard thanked the staff and board members. He invited Bev Wetherill to speak about NCHS Quilters.

Wetherill shared that the quilters continue to meet on Wednesday afternoons. Their current project is a king size quilt that will have 200+ volunteer hours at its completion. The quilters include: Janet Hoffmann, Onie Isenberg, Dorothy Schultz, Marilyn Klinert, Dorothy Paulson, Jan Boese and Bev Wetherill. Wetherill also reported that grade school tours have been a success at the Cox House.

Executive Director Ben Leonard stated that the Cox House has received $30,000 in grant funds to update the site. He praised and thanked Richard Tostenson for his work at the site.

Leonard shared that the virtual tour of the Treaty Site is being completed. The Society received a grant for this. The next step is to prepare DVDs which can be distributed to schools all over the state.

He thanked Bob Sandeen for writing the grant to purchase better archive shelving. New shelves have been installed and the archives have better accessibility.

The handicapped lift is being constructed at the Harkins Store with funds from the state. The staircase is being remodeled and the extra cedar wood will be donated to Habitat for Humanity in St. Peter.

Fort Ridgely has a new roof. The DNR partnership did not progress, but we are still looking at making some repairs and changes.

Leonard shared that a disaster plan was developed and put into place prior to the fall flood.

He announced that the Ted Moline Scholarship will be offered for a second year. It was created to honor the memory of Ted Moline and will continue to be awarded due to funds provided by William Harvey and an anonymous donor.

VII. President’s Report

President Gary Schmidt asked members to refer to page 3 of the Annual Report. He recognized and thanked board members and employees. Schmidt encouraged people to view the newsletter as a means of acquiring information. He thanked county commissioners for their support and encouraged others to thank them as well. He recognized Janet Anthony of the Schmidt Foundation and expressed gratitude for the foundation’s continued support. Additionally, he thanked William Harvey for his donations to the scholarship fund. He encouraged attendees to view the list of memberships at the back of the Annual Report. Schmidt invited the member’s creative thoughts as to how we might increase our membership. We continue to be benefactors of the Ted Moline estate and he encouraged families to please remember the society as they plan their estates.

VIII. Nominating Committee

The following individuals were nominated for the Nicollet County Historical Society Board of Directors:

First three year term: Bob Schabert, Courtland; Pam Morson, Lafayette
Second three year term: Chris Corley, North Mankato; Jeremy Freeman, St. Peter; Emilie Lokensgard, St. Peter; Tami Skinner, St. Peter; Sally Webster, Bernadotte Township

There being no further nominations from the floor, a motion was made to accept the slate of Board of Directors as presented by the nominating committee. M/S Judy Hanson / Lavonne Craig. Motion carried.

The following people were nominated for the 2011 Nicollet County Historical Society Executive Committee for a one year term:

- President: Gary Schmidt
- Vice President: Jeremy Freeman
- Treasurer: Herb Ponicn
- Secretary: Tami Skinner
- Historian: Diane Stenson

A motion was made to accept the Executive Committee for 2011 as presented by the nominating committee. M/S Sally Webster / Evie Lokensgard. Motion carried.

IX. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the business meeting was made. M/S Bev Wetherill/ Jim Roberts. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m. and was followed by the program, Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, presented by Dr. William Lass, a Professor Emeritus of History at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Respectfully submitted,
Tami Skinner, Secretary
Treaty Site History Center Report

The Treaty Site served 8,704, up 7 percent from 2010. In fact, if you just look at those people who paid admission to see the exhibits, Treaty Site attendance is up 35% over 2010 and over 100% since 2007. In an era when museum attendance is falling, this is especially exciting.

The Treaty Site hosted a variety of programs in 2010 from those on Norwegian and Luxembourg immigration, to “A View from the West Bank During Arab Spring” and Somali musical traditions. The film series, now in its third year, has become a great success.

All of this activity is a good thing, but it has reminded us of our limitations. At the end of 2011 we embarked on a plan to renovate the research area and gift shop. The changes will be finalized in early 2012, and will provide more space for researchers, a brand new computerized microfilm reader/printer, revitalized merchandise area, and a new conference room.

“"We are not makers of history. We are made by history.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Quilters Report

The Nicollet County Historical Society Quilters had a busy year in 2011 as we completed a year-long project in March, a small project in May and a full quilt between May and November with income totaling $557.

The group has been quilting since 1993, has donated a total of $7,427, and presently has only 5 active members – Dorothy Schultz, Marolyn Kleinert, Onie Isenberg, Janet Hoffmann, and Bev Wetherill.

Cox House Report

The House has seen many changes the last few years. 2011 was no exception. A Minnesota Historical Society Legacy grant allowed the Society to complete a full-scale interpretive plan. Some changes have already been implemented thanks to the Schmidt Foundation. A functional kitchen sink, water heater, dishwasher, refrigerator, and renovated bathroom all make the house much more functional for events, facility rentals, and programs. The Cox House Victorian Séance and Mourning entered its third year. Christmas continues to be a big annual event. The House also received the gift of a beautiful 1870 square grand piano which fits wonderfully into the formal parlor.
**Harkin Store Report**

A cool and wet spring, extremly, hot summer, and three-week state shutdown led to a less-than-record year at Harkin Store in 2011. Still, 5,398 people visited the store. Many came for the weekly Sunday programs that have been a tradition for years. Those included the blue grass, snakes, Christmas in July, old schoolhouses, and the annual West Newton Day. The Minnesota Historical Society, owners of the site, continue to restore and preserve the store, house, and grounds. If you missed your 2011 trip to Harkin Store, stop by this coming season to check out the new staircase, ADA accessible lift, and the same great programming you love.

**Fort Ridgely Report**

Despite tricky weather and the three-week forced layoff, 2011 was a big year for the Fort. The site was very busy with events happening all the time throughout the season. Just under 7,000 people came for battlefield tours, civil war and flag programs, star watching, vaudeville, theater, horses and book discussions. The Minnesota Historical Society completed a complete energy audit and recommended changes like window restoration and added insulation, to be installed in 2012. A new crushed granite walking path now gives dimension to the entire site and encourages visitors to walk around the whole Fort. It’s a great addition to the interpretation and accessibility.
In many respects 2011 was a difficult year. While County funding has remained steady, we did lose some support this past year. Weird weather and the state shutdown didn’t help at sites. In fact, we did end 2011 in the red. But the sky is not falling. We finished the year with cash on hand. Attendance at the Treaty Site has increased substantially the last few years, bucking national trends. Merchandise sales at the Treaty Site increased substantially the second half of the year, and impending renovations will make us even more successful. Our 2012 budget is set and leaves us optimistic for a bounce back year. Most importantly, with the Society serving more people than ever, we are viable and strong for the future.
## 2011 Financials by Site

### Income

**NCHS as a Whole, 2011**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
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<td>MHS Operations Grants</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Society Operations, 2011**

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<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
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<td>Merchandise Sales</td>
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<td>Annual Support</td>
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<td>MHS Operations Grant</td>
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**Treaty Site, 2011**

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**Harkin Store, 2011**

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**E. St. Julien Cox House, 2011**

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<td>Other</td>
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**Fort Ridgely, 2011**

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### Expenses

**NCHS as a Whole, 2011**

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**Society Operations, 2011**

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**Treaty Site, 2011**

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**Harkin Store, 2011**

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**E. St. Julien Cox House, 2011**

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**Fort Ridgely, 2011**

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<td>Supplies</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$40,251.03</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Cox House building renovations and a portion of staff expense were paid by a grant received in 2010

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"Most importantly, with the Society serving more people than ever, we are viable and strong for the future."

~ Ben Leonard
The Society has received very generous support in 2011 from the county, individuals, organizations, and foundations. Support comes in many forms – monetary donations, volunteerism, grants, membership, and the very museum collections we rely on. To all of you who supported we offer our deepest thanks – we truly cannot do this without you.

Grants and Allocations
Nicollet County
Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation
Minnesota Historical Society
United Way
Legacy Funds

Program Funding
Smithsonian Institution
   Museum on Main Street
Minnesota Historical & Cultural Grants
National Museum
   of the American Indian
Minnesota State Arts Board
Minnesota Humanities Center
Gustavus Adolphus College

Gifts
Mildred Anderson
Al Annexstad
Lois Annexstad
Bernard & Pam Bidelman
Eric Carlson
Cox House Antique Sale
Mel & LaVonne Craig
Duane & Brenda DeBlieck
Eileen Holz
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Judy & Doug Schultz
Karen Smithers
Neil Stevermer
Loren Sundboom
Linda Swenson
Roland & Edi Thorstensson
Sally Webster
Larry & Joan Zambino
Anonymous

Gifts of Time
Each year many, many of you contribute your time, expertise, and effort. We can’t thank you enough. In 2011 you donated thousands of hours to the Historical Society. That translates into literally hundreds of things we couldn’t have done without you. Thank you.

Treaty Site History Center:
   over 50 volunteers and over 2,000 hours
Harkin Store:
   75 volunteers and 600 hours
Cox House:
   over 25 volunteers and 500 hours
History is a gallery of pictures in which there are few originals and many copies.”

– Alexis de Tocqueville

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Lavada Fredricksen
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Janet Hoffmann
Eileen Holz
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Bob & Leona Isenberg
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Herb & Louise Poncin
Bill & Marilyn Roberts
Judy Scholl
Ed & Bev Wetherill

In Memory of
Dellie Hyduke
Given by
Judy Scholl

In Memory of
Dwayne Magers
Given by
Gary & Geraldine Schmidt

In Memory of
Blanche Pergol
Given by
Donley Johnson

In Memory of
Olive Peterson
Given by
Eunice Amos
James & Ann Frederichs
Dale & Barbara Haack
Carrol & Elaine Hermanson
Donald & Beverly Gustafson
Verona & Paul Johnson
Jane & Thomas Lalim
Marion & Clarence Veith
Judy Scholl
Cora Stojstrom
Val Youngblom

In Memory of
Wayne Pettis
Given by
Carol & Martin Menk

In Memory of
Carroll Hermanson
Given by
Lorraine Olson

In Memory of
Olive Peterson
Given by
Eunice Amos
James & Ann Frederichs
Dale & Barbara Haack
Carrol & Elaine Hermanson
Donald & Beverly Gustafson
Verona & Paul Johnson
Jane & Thomas Lalim
Marion & Clarence Veith
Judy Scholl
Cora Stojstrom
Val Youngblom

In Memory of
Carroll Hermanson
Given by
Lorraine Olson
“History is full of really good stories. That’s the main reason I got into this racket: I want to make the argument that history is interesting.”

~ Sarah Vowell

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