2017 Annual Report

New Ulm Battery at Harkin Store. Photo credit Ruth Klossner
We strive to make history accessible to learners of all ages by providing information and opportunities to connect our past to our present. As an organization that cares for five historic sites, we certainly encourage our members and the public to visit these sites and attend programs and special events to form a deeper connection to our shared history. We hope the 21,920 people who visited our sites in 2017 enjoyed their experience.

But we’re not just about our sites and our mission isn’t either. By definition, NCHS is a community organization. You don’t have to come to one of our buildings to be served by the Society because chances are we’ll reach you through outreach, publications, and even digitally.

We work with local governments and state agencies like MNDOT, Southern Minnesota Tourism Association, the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway, and other municipalities to advocate not just for history, but for all of us.

The Society served over 350,000 people online in 2017. Our website was visited by over 28,000 people this year with over 13,000 unique users. We have over 1,500 photographs, maps, and more available anywhere in the world for free through the Minnesota Digital Library and Digital Public Library of America that were seen by over 3,500 users, and our page on Explore Minnesota’s website had over 7,000 hits.

Our mission is to discover, preserve and disseminate the history of Nicollet County. The Society has shown that one doesn’t just have to visit our historic sites to be affected by the work we are doing, but we sure hope you do.
Director’s Report

Organizations are like organisms. They are a living thing that is always changing and growing. They must adapt to survive and thrive and they operate more efficiently when their needs are met. Our organization is no different.

In 2017, the staff, Board of Directors, and I spent a lot of time taking a close look at how and why we do things with a mind to sustainability and growth. We looked at how our money is being spent, studied and tracked attendance, and questioned where our time and talents are best allocated in order to be more effective with our resources. Now we have a tighter grasp on the overall health of the organization, and a plan to accomplish our short and long-term goals. It’s exciting for me to say at the end of 2017 we’re in a more stable and better financial position than we’ve been in many years.

We also thought long and hard about how we fulfill our mission. As you will see in the following pages, we have put your membership dollars and donations to good work. Your support provided our patrons with opportunities to explore Nicollet County history through new programs, traveling exhibits, additional research tools, and much more. We also continue to work with community partners who help the Society by offering speakers for programs, planning or sponsoring events, or by becoming business members.

As we end our eighty-ninth year, I want to thank everyone who supported NCHS this year—our members, donors, friends, volunteers, board members, and staff for their continued commitment to our mission. Your support through financial assistance and gifts of time, talents and treasures directly contribute to our success now and always. I’m pleased to be leading NCHS into 2018 and cannot wait to see what the next year will bring. For an organization whose mission is rooted in the past, I’m very excited about our future.

Onward and forward!

Jessica Becker
Executive Director

President’s Report

Happy 2018!

I hope this finds you all well.

I am really proud of the work everyone did to make 2017 successful. Our staff, board of directors, committee members and volunteers did an outstanding job of planning and executing a variety of events and activities as well as performing the routine every day work of managing and operating NCHS’s five sites.

Last we talked, NCHS was in the process of changes. We have successfully navigated our way through a lot of these changes. Among them: staffing, site contracts with the Minnesota Historical Society, and new hours for the Treaty Site.

Looking ahead to this year, we as an organization need to seriously address our never-ending challenge of properly funding our operations—both short and long-term. To get this process started, we will work with a very reasonably priced outside organization to help us do assessments of the following three areas: Organizational, Community Engagement, and Collections. Once the assessment is complete, we will be able to plan for our future and really focus on improving our financial health.

In closing, I would like to first thank Jess and her staff at all of the sites for the tireless work they are doing. Your contributions are recognized and truly appreciated. Thank you all, so much.

And finally, thank you all for your membership and support. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you throughout 2018!

Cheers!

Amanda Frie
NCHS Board President
NCHS 2017 at a Glance

NCHS welcomed visitors from around the world in 2017. They came from 45 states and 15 countries! Do you know how to say “thanks for visiting” in Chinese?

Right: The Treaty Site hosted two traveling exhibits from the Minnesota Historical Society Traveling Exhibits Program including Electrifying Minnesota from April to August.

Right: It's never too early to introduce a “potential green-thumber” to the Cox House Plant Sale!

Left: Tent full of donated plants for the 2017 Cox House Plant Sale.

Left: Site Manager Amber Bentler is seen here moving fixtures off the old carpet before installation.

Right: New carpet was installed at Fort Ridgely this summer.

21,920 onsite visitors at the five sites
28,211 website page views with 13,360 unique visitors
3,526 Minnesota Reflections collection views
Over 260,000 radio listeners for monthly radio slot
2,018 combined Facebook page likes & 306,702 people reached
10,731 Twitter impressions
30 new NCHS memberships
Over 12,000 volunteer hours
It’s been said that a board of directors can make or break an organization. A nonprofit’s board of directors is responsible for developing, defining, and reviewing the organization’s mission and for providing overall leadership and strategic direction to the organization. NCHS is lucky to have a board of directors who work together to ensure this society is doing its job and serving the public well. A huge thank you is in order for the board members who are finishing their terms, those who are just joining us, and those who are continuing to dedicate their time to NCHS.

Executive Board

Amanda Frie, Saint Peter
President, (1st term ends 2018)

JoAnn Gieseke, Brighton Township
Vice President, (2nd term ends 2019)

Marie Dranttel, Saint Peter
Treasurer, (2nd term ends 2017)

Maria Lokensgard, Norseland
Secretary, (2nd term ends 2019)

Directors

Nita Aasen, Saint Peter
(2nd term ends 2018)

Tim Bartelt, Saint Peter
(1st term ends 2018)

Tom Brown, Saint George
(2nd term ends 2020)

Tom Hagen, North Mankato
(1st term ends 2019)

Scott Hermanson, Saint Peter
(2nd term ends 2017)

Eileen Holz, Saint Peter
(2nd term ends 2019)

Ruth Klossner, Bernadotte
(1st term ends 2019)

Marcy Muchow, Lafayette
(1st term ends 2017)

Mark Ulman, North Mankato
(1st term ends 2017)

Joe Urban, Saint Peter
(Resigned, 2017)

We know exactly how lucky we are to have the staff that we do. Spread out across Nicollet County and beyond, and worth their weight in gold, they consistently give so much effort, expertise, and excitement. Through their hard work and some dedicated volunteers NCHS answered thousands of phone calls and e-mails, talked to audiences all over creation, helped genealogists find lost relatives, preserved historical treasures, and cleaned toilets more times than we care to think about. Any thank you is inadequate, but we’ll say it anyway.

Executive Director: Jessica Becker
Research Coordinator: Kristina LeClerc
Office Manager: Elaine Deschaine
TSHC Museum Assistants:
Amanda Johnson
Graham Skinner
Erica Smith
Robert Weber

TSHC Janitor:

Harkin Store Site Manager:
Harkin Store Site Guides:
Ruth Grewe
Donna Dose
Justin Grewe
Robin Grewe
Glenn Stryker

Fort Ridgely Site Manager:
Fort Ridgely Asst. Site Manager:
Fort Ridgely Site Guide:
Amber Bentler
Cory Becker
Opal Dewanz
Annaliese Endorf
Charlotte Nack

This is another of those out of the way places that you’re glad you visited.

~ Stephanie Groton
Connecticut, NCHS TripAdvisor Review

New Fort Ridgely
Assistant Site Manager
Cory Becker poses in front of their flag display.
2017 Activities & Programs

This past year NCHS collaborated and partnered with a large number of community organizations. Some of these included Gustavus Adolphus College, the Arts Center of Saint Peter, St. Peter Reads, Second Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery Reenactors, the New Ulm Battery, and many others. Visitors and audiences went back in time to experience the thrill of artillery fire at Fort Ridgely, learned about our forgotten history in a new lecture series, experienced the beauty of a night hike on Traverse des Sioux, celebrated Christmas in July at Harkin store, and many other exciting events and programs.

Volunteers took part in National Park Day on April 1, 2017 at Fort Ridgely. The event is sponsored by the Civil War Trust and is a great opportunity volunteers that want to help preserve our Civil War battlefields.

2017 Volunteers

Each year many volunteers contribute time, expertise, and energies to NCHS. In 2017 volunteers donated over 12,000 hours to the Historical Society! They researched, greeted visitors, gave dozens of tours, pulled weeds or maintained trails, built things, and so much more. All these tasks and more translate into literally hundreds of things we couldn’t have done without them. Thank you!

Research
Nita Aasen
Mike Bidelman
Marcy Muchow
Marlin Peterson
Bob Sandeen

Building & Grounds
Tim Bartelt
Brad Becker
Genevieve Brand
Steven Guse
John Mayer
Todd Melcher
Brian Oviatt
Herb Poncin
Robert Weber
The Prairie Enthusiasts—Many Rivers Chapter

Tours Guides & Docents
John Chamberlain
Cindy Freeman
Tom Freeman
Steve Hogberg

Cox House
Dan Deschaine
Elaine Deschaine
Minnehaha Questers
Richard Tostenson

Interns & Student Workers
Jack Atkins, Student Worker
Sarah Busse, Summer Intern
Michael Collins, Intern

Front Desk
Marsha Heinze
Warren Michels
Bill Pedersen
Loren Sundboom

Volunteer Museum Assistants Warren Michels (above) and Bill Pedersen (below) are often the staff who will greet you on Tuesday when you visit the Treaty Site History Center, whether it’s for research, exploring the exhibits, or to browse the gift shop.

Right: Volunteer crew assembling our new utility shed at the Treaty Site. Volunteers from left to right: Tim Bartelt, Brad Becker, Brian Oviatt, Todd Melcher, and Steve Guse.
2017 Activities & Programs continued

Clockwise from top:

Minneopa Area Naturalist Scott Kudelka leads a group on a night hike of Traverse des Sioux on May 18th.

Local historian Bob Douglas took attendees back in time for a visit to the Traverse des Sioux townsite.

We had a wonderful time talking about NCHS with people from across our region at the Nicollet County Fair.

Visitors to Harkin Store celebrated Independence Day with the New Ulm Battery demonstrating artillery fire with their 1862 cannon.

Trick-or-treaters of all ages were greeted at the E. St. Julien Cox House by Dan and Elaine Deschaine at the new Halloween event.

Last winter visitors to the Treaty Site History Center explored the people and places of Minnesota’s first global business in a new traveling exhibit from the Minnesota History Center “Fur Trade in Minnesota.”

~ Naomi Rapp Evenson, about Fort Ridgely
The Society has received very generous support in 2017 from Nicollet County, individuals, and organizations. Monetary support comes in many forms—monetary donations, in-kind donations, allocations and appropriations, grants, and memberships. NCHS would like to thank Nicollet County for its unflagging financial support of our mission. We continue to diversify our funding overall, but the taxpayers of Nicollet County provide an important and stable base. And of course our relationship with the Minnesota Historical Society and their historic sites we operate is also important to us. To all of you who supported us this year, we offer our deepest thanks.

(Please see the meeting packet for financial statements.)

The Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation awarded NCHS a $35,435 grant in July 2016 for many needed building updates at the Treaty Site History Center. These projects were completed Fall 2017. The grant funds paid for new computers for staff, museum software upgrade, new archives shelving, exterior security cameras and new security system, building sound system, roof repairs and installation of snow guards, a new drinking fountain with a bottle filling station, and a new exterior utility shed.

“

A visit to a museum is a search for beauty, truth, and meaning in our lives. Go to museums as often as you can.

~ Maira Kalman

2017 NCHS Financials & Balance Sheet
The Society is exceedingly grateful for the support we receive from our members, patrons, and supporters. We would not be able to operate our buildings, create exhibits or offer programming without it. We cannot express our gratitude enough.

Mark & Frani Anderson  
Lois Annexstad  
Anonymous  
Alyssa Auten  
Roberta Bartholdi  
Peg Bindner  
Steve & Becky Briggs  
Matthew & Betsy Byers  
Melvin Craig  
Crown Underground LLC  
Stanley Davis  
Duane & Brenda DeBlieck  
Dr. Mark Dehen  
Elaine Deschaine  
Marie Dranttel  
Lorraine Gatchell  
Samuel & Julie Gault  
Joann Gieseke  
Sue & Bruce Gray  
Fred Hanson  
Eileen Holz  
Eunice Holz  
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Emilie Lokensgard  
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Beatrice Martinson  
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Herbert Poncin  
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Arlene Sandeen  
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Non-Monetary  
Gary Gottschalk  
Gretchen Koehler  
Marilyn Robertz

2017 Support
2017 Memorials

In Memory of
Willard Bjorklund
Given by
Owen & Evi Swenson

In Memory of
Bert Bode
Given by
Owen & Evelyn Swenson

In Memory of
Roger Currier
Given by
Thorild & Ardith Nelson
Lorraine Olson

In Memory of
La Vern C. (Buddy) Giefer
Given by
Thorild & Ardith Nelson
Owen & Evelyn Swenson

In Memory of
W. M. “Bill” Gustafson
Given by
Marshall Anthony
Richard & Janet Wettergren

In Memory of
Harold Luepke
Given by
Lorraine Olson

In Memory of
Stanley Lindquist
Given by
Donna Chommie
Donald & Beverly Gustafson
Willis Lindquist
R.D. Weisgerber
Ed & Beverly Wetherill

In Memory of
Darlene Martens
Given by
Thorild & Ardith Nelson
Owen & Evelyn Swenson

In Memory of
Arden Olson
Given by
Thorild & Ardith Nelson

In Memory of
Lorraine Struck
Given by
Eileen Holz
Eunice Holz

In Memory of
Nancy Weinberger
Given by
Janet Hoffmann

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Ed & Bev Wetherill
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Marlin Peterson
Jerry Welden

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Mike & Pam Biedelman
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Jack Buser
Elsa Cornell
Andrew & Sarah Davis
Duane & Brenda DeBlieck
Arden & Marilyn DeBoer
Dwight & Geni DeBoer
Elaine Deschaine
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Alex Ek
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Robert & Leona Isenberg
Lisa Isenberg & Philip Friedlund
Ray & Lizz Jacobson
Barbara Jerabek
Amanda Johnson
Bradford & Linda Johnson
Dave Johnson
Chris Jones

Great staff! Beautiful grounds! Programming is family friendly and fun for all ages!

~ Cheyanne St. John about Fort Ridgely
Memberships continued

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Robert & Sally Lambert
Sally Lambert
Kristina LeClerc
Tim Lokensgard & Family
Jim & Judy Mans
Mike & Maryetta McCarty
Joe Metzen & Kay Cordelia
Carolyn & John Meyer
Jim & Dee Dee Michels
Warren Michels
Tuff & Ginny Miller
Cindy & Larry Mohr
Dale & Kay Mowbray
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Douglas & ReVae Nygard
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Trudi Olmanson & Eli Hoehn
Steve Ream & Elaine Hewitt
Marjorie & Earl Renneke
Harold & Louise Rodning
Mark & Gabriela Roemhildt
Ken & Patsy Rossow
Sue & Lee Schott
Doug & Judy Schultz
Stephanie Schutt
Jeff & Tami Skinner
Erica Smith
Karen & Jon Smithers
Jennifer St. Julien Powers
Emily Stark
Victoria Steinhaus
Tamara Stoffel
Glenn Stryker
Erling Sven
Owen & Evie Swensson
Jim Vavreck
Jeff Wettergren & Melanie Lynard
Barbara Wilkinson
Larry & Joan Zambino

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Eric Annexstad
James Bartels
Kathleen Bouchie
Maria Erling
Jacquelyn Feldman
Julie Ferrell
Carol Forbes
Michael Frederick
Amanda Friese
George Green III
Scott Hermanson
Julie Johnson
Gretchen Koehler
Maria Lokensgard
Kate Martens
Barbro Martensson
Linda Miller
Brian Oviatt
Ranae Peterson
Janet Prehn
Karen Robison
Sara Samuelson
Mary Ann Scharf
Marcia Sexton
Jerod Spilman
Patrick Tanis
Mark Ulman
Lois Weber
Robert Weber

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Roy Bennett
Peg Bindner
Bonnie Brandel
Ruth Brandel
James Brown
Herbert Brunner
Joseph Brunner
Nannette Chambers
Helen Christianson
Lois Carrier
Eleanor Depuydt
Opal Dewanz
William Dixon
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JoAnn Gieseke
Jane Haala
Tom Hagen
Pat Halter
Barbara Hanson
Ronald Haugen
Kay Herbst Helms
Thomas Hergert
Elaine Hermanson

As your county historical society, NCHS cares for tens of thousands of artifacts—objects, manuscripts, photographs, and more. We would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their donations to the NCHS object and archive collections.

Millicent Adams Dosh
Steven C. Anderson
Willis & Rachel Anthony
Lovona Bengston
Becky Briggs
Stephen Bruender
Dean Busse
Karen Chouanard
Cokato Historical Society
Curtis R. Dahl
Gail Dummer
Duane & Melva Eckberg
Judie Engelhart
James Erickson
Harry Foster
Jerry & Nora Goodburn
David Gratbitske
Ann Gregory Bruggerman
Charles Griebel
Marcia Gustafson
Jane Haala
Margaret Hacker Muchow
Tom Hagen
Wendy Herder
Kurt Hildebrandt, representing SPHS
Mart Janoski
Ruth Johnson
Kandiyohi County Historical Society
Steve Kley
Mary Klinkhammer
Ruth Klessner
Michael Koob
Robert Lambert
Judy Loewe
Elgene Lund
Marleen Maas
John Mayer
Warren Michels
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center
Corrine L. Monjeau-Marz
Monroe Elementary School
Wendy Nelson
Barb Olmanson
Gary Olson
Rebecca Ottemess
Brian Oviatt
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Dean Pettis
Ruth Pettis Collins
Marilyn Roberts
Betty Scheider
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Lawrence Sommer
SPHS Class of 1967
William Stallkamp
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Roxanne Sundboom
Owen Swenson
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Mary Lou Thieman
Ruth Thompson Klabunde
Lois Weber
Sally Webster
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Dale Himmelman
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Arnold & Joan Nimps
Marshall Peterson
Sharon Pinney
Jim Pitmon
Tim Pulis
Ronald Roselli
Kenneth Saffert
Bob Schabert
Helen Schauer
Gary Schult
Agnes Stensby
Judy Teigen
Bernadine Thompson
Jerry Wolfe
Nancy Zins

The Minnesota Department of Transportation rescued several pieces of the Broadway Bridge during its recent restoration work and donated them to the Nicollet County Historical Society. They donated light poles, fixtures, a pedestrian railing, and historic construction plans.