COVID and Your Historical Society

A year ago, COVID-19 threw most of our lives into uncertainty. Businesses closed, remote work became almost universal, and the state of Minnesota grappled with what to do next. One year later, we’re thankful for all the progress that has been made against COVID. Vaccines are here and are already saving lives. Here at NCHS, we’re taking the most cautious approach possible. We’re heavily reliant on volunteers and our wonderful staff, many of whom are in at-risk categories for COVID-19. We feel it’s our duty to put them first and to keep them safe. We’re continually monitoring the situation and are eager to reopen the Treaty Site History Center when the time is right. In the meantime, we invite you to share in these opportunities. COVID continued on page 3

COV ID continued on page 3

Your Historical Society’s Mission

Fulfilling this mission over the course of the past year has been an exciting challenge to the organization. Developing a plan to work from home successfully allowed us to assess priorities, technology, and procedures. We have been able to shift our focus from the physical facility to disseminating history through new means. Creativity and dedication have served us well. While our visitors haven’t been through our doors, we have reached new audiences, many of whom we hope to see regularly when the History Center opens. We have also been able to effect some changes that will allow us to operate more efficiently in the future.

Discovery and preservation have been ongoing, with cataloging and archive work. The Archives department has been busy through the staff’s usual activities, upgrading our technological capabilities for the new website format and supplying historical support for our social media entries. The dissemination of our history has actually been rewarding for all of the staff and Board members. Nicollet County Then and Now, hiSTORY Hangout, Millinery Monday, Film Series from Home, all these have drawn attention to our resources from a broad audience. We have all been made more aware than ever that a museum goes beyond a physical building.
Dear members and friends,

Spring is the time for growth and new beginnings. That remark rings true at the museum these days. We’re anticipating reopening soon, so we’re readying our new protocols and practices to welcome you back. We’re also freshening up exhibits, so you’ll have something to look forward to when our doors open. We recently said goodbye to a dear coworker who retired, so now we’re embarking on new journeys with different people as we grow and change our staffing structure.

Speaking of growing, our first fundraiser of the year is coming up. The Pollinator Plant Sale starts on April 17. This online sale benefiting the native gardens at the History Center will run through May 15. Gardeners will choose from a wide variety of beautiful native pollinator plants perfect for different garden sizes and types, from shorelines to rock gardens. Visit our website to learn more and to shop.

We still have a few projects at the museum to finish before reopening. We took time during our COVID-19 closure to work on some projects that aren’t easy to complete when we’re open for business. Keep an eye out for available volunteer opportunities coming soon.

Your Society is a bit like a caterpillar these days, closed up snug in its cocoon, waiting for just the right time to emerge anew. Just like the caterpillar turning into a butterfly, the museum we closed will not be the same one we reopen. But growth and new beginnings are good things.

Cheers to a brighter future.

Jessica Becker
Executive Director
President’s Report

Kate Martens, President, NCHS Board of Directors

It’s been a year since I wrote my first Report as President of the Board of Directors, and what a year it has been! We remain closed due to Covid-19, but plans are underway for our safe re-opening. Throughout the challenges to our state and community as well as the NCHS organization, we have still fulfilled our mission. Adapting to Zoom meetings for the Board and the Committees has been a process, but it has worked. Our Annual Meeting format was changed in the By-Laws, and we accomplished a large response from membership to elect three new Board members. Our Social Media presence is through the roof, and people from beyond our county who would never have seen our content are “liking and sharing”!

HISTORY chat events with Bob Sandeen have begun, with topics scheduled for every month. The Film Series has continued to offer documentary viewing options to the public, the archives and research continue to be available. The website (nchsmn.org) has been updated and is easy to use and comprehensive. We have a scheduled fundraising native plant sale scheduled for the next month with an informative session online with Genevieve Brand (Seed to Site, LLC). For a museum that has been closed for a year, we certainly have been busy! We look forward to seeing you in the not-too-distant future and stay tuned for exciting exhibits, programs, and information. Thanks for being there with us on this journey.

COVID continued from page 1

Films on First Thursdays: You can view our monthly film series documentaries from the comfort of your own home. Links to stream the films are provided on our website at nchsmn.org/events. These documentaries are designed to inform, challenge ideas, and create conversation. After each film, viewers are encouraged to provide comments on our Facebook page.

Two episodes of Off 90 (30 min. each)


hISTORY hangout: If you love talking about history and looking at old photos and maps, please join us for hISTORY hangout, a free discussion group about local history topics. Each hangout will take place on the second Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. May’s topic is Nicollet County military history. For more information and a link to join, please visit our website at nchsmn.org/events.

Pollinator Plant Sale: Are you a gardener? Native plant enthusiast? Are you interested in attracting butterflies and other pollinators to your yard? The Nicollet County Historical Society’s Pollinator Plant Sale fundraiser is for you! Choose from an array of beautiful native pollinator plants perfect for different garden sizes and types, from shorelines to rock gardens. Sales start April 17. Genevieve Brand of Seed to Site will hold an informational session on April 15 at 7:00 p.m. Details and order forms will be available on our website soon. See more details on page 6.

Visit the NCHS Online Catalog: Researchers can explore some of the Nicollet County Historical Society’s cataloged collection online. Don’t see what you’re looking for? Contact the Research Coordinator at research@nchsmn.org or 507-934-2160.

Find us on Facebook: Our history is full of little tidbits that haven’t made it into our exhibits yet. What are they? Check out our Facebook pages to find out!

Shop at our Online Gift Store: We are now offering curbside pickup! Shop from the comfort of home and bring history home with you when you pick up your order. Visit our website and click “Shop” in the upper right corner.

We appreciate everyone who helps keep Nicollet county’s history alive, and we look forward to seeing you explore our heritage again soon.
The Omaha Depot Story

While researching the funeral cortège of St. Peter native Governor John A. Johnson for a series of ‘Then and Now’ Facebook posts, I was surprised to discover that the exact location of the Omaha railroad depot at which the crowds awaited the funeral train could not be verified beyond a shadow of a doubt. Bob Sandeen, my go-to historian for all things Nicollet County, strongly suspected that the old wooden depot shown in the 1909 photograph was the same spot across the Broadway bridge as the brick depot he remembered, but he couldn’t prove it. We can prove it now. What information came to light through our research?

A railroad depot can be seen on one of my favorite resources, the 1870 Bird’s Eye view drawing of St. Peter. This can be found among the 1500-plus images NCHS has uploaded to the Minnesota Reflections website (mndigital.org, search for Bird’s Eye view, St. Peter), where you can zoom in to see details. Follow Broadway across the turnstile bridge to the depot. The tracks split and curve to the east, and the depot is situated in between them. Is this drawing accurate?

A page from the 1899 Nicollet County plat map, which along with the 1885 plat map can also be found on Minnesota Reflections, shows the depot between the tracks, but the location is seemingly to the south of the extension of Broadway, rather than to the north, as shown on the 1870 drawing.

The photo showing the crowds awaiting the train coming from St. Paul with Johnson’s remains clearly indicates that additional north-south track was laid down sometime between 1899 and 1909. Was the depot to the east or west of those tracks?

Postcard images from the flood of 1908 offer conclusive evidence that the depot was to the south of 99, but was it to the west of the tracks? Yes! It was! How do we know for sure? Bob remembers that the brick depot was west of the tracks, but was it built at the location of the old wooden depot?

An article in the February 1, 1929, edition of the *St. Peter Herald* tells the story: “St. Peter is to have a fine, new depot to replace the old one destroyed by fire late in December. Agent J. A. Axt of the Omaha railroad this week received the floor plan for the new structure and it has been forwarded with his approval. It is expected that bids will be called for in the near future...It will be a modern brick building, one story in height, and 24x67 feet in size, located on the foundations of the old.”

The brick depot can be seen in upper center of the aerial photo taken during the devastating 1965 flood. The depot was demolished in the 1970s.

The types of documentation and research tools we consulted are those available to anyone interested in the history of St. Peter or genealogy. As always, I am available to help you with your research questions. You can contact me at research@nchsmn.org.
Extending a warm welcome to our new Directors & Site Manager!

The Society gained three new board members after the ballots were counted for the special 2020 Annual Meeting. We are lucky and honored to have Loren Files, Dana Melius, and Ken Rossow join us.

Loren Files, North Mankato
Loren is originally from Surrey, North Dakota. He served in the North Dakota Army National Guard from 1995-2001. He returned to college in 2008 and completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in History and Sociology from Minot State University in 2013. In the fall of 2013, he and his wife Kym moved to the area, and he began working on a Master of Science degree in History from MSU-Mankato; and in 2014, he completed an internship at NCHS. Loren currently works as personal lines underwriter for American Family Insurance and lives in North Mankato with his wife and dogs. He has also recently been appointed an ambassador for Mission 22, a non-profit organization dedicated to healing America’s veterans when they need it most.

Dana Melius, St. Peter
Dana grew up in the Winthrop community as part of a then-vibrant small town. Little did he know that he would return to that Sibley County town of 1,400 people to raise six kids with his late wife, Kim, who died in 2015. From 1980 through 1986, Dana owned and served as editor-publisher of the Winthrop News and founded Marketing Unlimited of Winthrop. After a failed run for Minnesota State Senate in 1986, he ventured into business, owning Lyle’s Cafe, home of The Pie Lady, from 1987 through 1996.

During the mid-to-late ’90s, Dana ventured into non-profit work and management, working on job training, affordable housing, and poverty and homelessness issues. After his son’s beating in December 1997, Dana became involved in restorative justice movements and served as director of the Sibley County Community Justice Project, a youth-guided program. After a couple of years as executive director of the Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action (MAPA) in St. Paul, he went back into the restaurant industry as a cook for several years.

After helping launch the Mankato-based regional magazine, River Valley Woman, in 2012, Dana journeyed back into the journalism world, eventually serving six years with the St. Peter Herald, Le Sueur County News, and Waseca County News. After a semi-retirement and two-year stint as part-time executive director at Prairie Oaks Institute in Belle Plaine, Dana is looking for the next challenge or two, including some freelance writing for the Free Press and Gustavus Adolphus College.

Dana recently completed four years on the board of the Arts Center of Saint Peter. He’s remarried now and living in St. Peter.

Ken Rossow, St. Peter
Ken Rossow grew up on a family farm near Windom, Minnesota. He is a retired banker (35 years at the Nicollet County Bank). In addition, he has been active in many local and area organizations (past and present), including the St. Peter Area Chamber of Commerce, St. Peter Planning and Zoning Commission, St. Peter School Board, Nicollet County Extension Committee, SCTC Farm Business Advisory Committee, St. Peter Lions Club Board and Nicollet County Holstein Association Board. Furthermore, he has a B.A. and M.A.T. (Augustana), B.S. (U. of MN), and an M.B.A. (St. Thomas).

Ken has been a member of the Nicollet County Historical Society (NCHS) for many years. He has a strong life-long interest in history and believes that Nicollet County has an important and fascinating heritage to protect and share. He is looking forward to contributing to the outstanding work of the NCHS.

Welcome to the Cox House, Kate Roberts...

Kate Roberts, Cox House Site Manager
My name is Kate Roberts, and I will start by saying that I think I was born loving history. I am a native of Alabama and lived in Colorado for some years before moving to Minnesota twenty-four years ago, and yes, I still have my Southern accent. I have two grown children, a boy and girl, and three precocious and wonderful grandchildren.

I first started re-enacting while living in Colorado at mountain men rendezvous. I began doing living history interpreting after moving to Minnesota. In a short time, it became a side profession with my company, Past Presentations. I have portrayed women from the fur trade, colonial, pioneer, Old West, and Victorian eras. It has become a passion for me, and I love it when I see the spark in a young person’s eye that they got it.

I am incredibly excited at the opportunity to manage the E. St. Julien Cox house. Making it a destination for those interested in the house, the family, and their accomplishments, and the St. Peter area’s local history will be great.
We remember…

with honor the following members whom we lost since our last newsletter.

• Eunice Amos
• Marian Anderson
• Marian Babcock
• Paul Baumgartner
• Marie Benson
• Charles Hendrickson
• Paul Lindfors
• Luella Monke
• Dr. Vern Olmanson
• Earl Renneke
• Joan Zambino
• Larry Zambino

Memorials received by NCHS for the 4th quarter of 2020.

In Memory of
Pearl Morrison
Given by
Douglas & Judy Schultz

In Memory of
ReVae Nygard
Given by
Melanie Covell
Eleanore Depuydt
Harriet Mason
Minnehaha Chapter Questers
Judy Scholl

In Memory of
Marilyn Robertz
Given by
David & Aleda Harrington
Eileen Holz
Eunice Holz
Mary Krugerud
Harriet Mason
Minnehaha Chapter Questers
Douglas & Judy Schultz
Barbara Wilkinson

Memorials received by NCHS for the 1st quarter of 2021.

In Memory of
Charles Hendrickson
Given by
Donald & Christine Wersel

In Memory of
ReVae Nygard
Given by
Mollie Ehlenfeldt
Stuart & MaryAnn Hanson
C & B Harris
Helga Headt
William & Cheryl Kaukt
Sharon Litynski
Kristen Loken
R & M Sheehy
John & Barbara Westman
Thomas & Jeanne Witty

In Memory of
Marilyn Robertz
Given by
Marshall & Janet Anthony
Judy Scholl
Ed & Bev Wetherill

Given by
Elaine Deschaine

NCHS Fundraiser…

Mark your calendars for the Pollinator Plant Sale

Are you a gardener? Native plant enthusiast? Are you interested in attracting butterflies and other pollinators to your yard? Then mark your calendar for the NCHS Pollinator Plant Sale April 17 – May 15.

Garden enthusiasts can choose from an array of beautiful native pollinator plants perfect for different garden sizes and types, from shorelines to rock gardens. Many of these are excellent plants for attracting butterflies, hummingbirds, and other wildlife to a backyard.

Seed to Site, LLC is propagating a wide variety of plants that will be available to order online only until May 15. Images of the various native plants can be seen on the website nchsmn.org as well as a link for purchasing. Plant orders will be picked up on June 12 at the Treaty Site History Center parking lot.

All proceeds from the Pollinator Plant Sale will be used to support the upkeep of the native plant gardens and landscaping of the Treaty Site History Center.

For more information visit nchsmn.org or contact us at 507-380-2558 or info@nchsmn.org.

History Center Bits…

Goodbye, Elaine!

The Nicollet County Historical Society would like to thank Elaine Deschaine for her guidance and the knowledge and skills she brought as our Office Manager over the last nearly six years. Elaine is retiring from NCHS to travel and spend more time with her grandchildren. She will be greatly missed! If you see Elaine around town, be sure to wish her a happy retirement.

Annual Report

View the digital NCHS 2020 Annual Report on our website in the About Us section. Would you prefer a paper copy? Black and white print copies are available upon request by contacting Jessica at 507-380-2558 or director@nchsmn.org.

Amazon Charity List

AmazonSmile Charity Lists is a meaningful and easy way for you to shop and donate items directly to NCHS. Simply find charities you’d like to support, add items from their lists to your cart, and check out – it’s that easy.

How to shop Charity Lists

• Visit smile.amazon.com/charitylists.
• Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
• Customers who are not already signed up for AmazonSmile will receive a prompt to do so.
• Shop the Nicollet County Historical Society’s Charity Lists.
• Select and donate items from the list.
• Ship to the charity. At Checkout, check the box for the organization’s shipping address for the item(s) to be delivered to the respective charity.

When customers shop at smile.amazon.com, AmazonSmile donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible items to their charity of choice, including but not limited to AmazonSmile Charity Lists purchases.
2020 Members, Monetary Donations & Memorials...

Members
Thank you to the following renewing and new members of NCHS for 4th quarter 2020.

Renewed Benefactor
Business Member: Gustavus Adolphus College

Renewed Advocate
Business Member: eholz graphix
New Sweden Mutual Insurance

Renewed Patron Members:
Mike & Pam Bidelman
Eileen Holz
William & Durene Pedersen
Evelyn & Harry Solo
Roland & Edi Thorstensson

Renewed Supporting Member:
Deanne Lee Clendenning
Joy Lutzi

Renewed Family Members:
Mark & Laura Boomgaarden
Thomas & Carol Brown
Julie Johnson
Terry & Martha Morrow
Trudi Olmanson
Kris Sack

Monetary Donations
received by NCHS for the 4th quarter of 2020.

Give to the Max Day
Anonymous
Anonymous
Alyssa Auten
for General Fund
Tim Bartelt
Karl Carlson
for General Fund in memory of
ReVae Nygard
Marie Dranttel
for General Fund
Raymond Jacobson
Judy Malmberg
Kate Martens
Carol Peterson
Marlin Peterson
Doug & Judy Schultz
Roland & Edi Thorstensson

End of Year Donations
Mildred Anderson
Anonymous
Larry & Judith Biederman
Thomas Hagen
Grace Hanson
Eileen Holz
Emilie Lokensgard
Kate Martens
Elizabeth Peters
Judy Scholl

End of Year Donations
Riley-Tanis & Associates PLLC

New Champion
Business Member:

New Senior Members:
Keith Johnson

2021 Calendar of Events: All events are subject to public health recommendation

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

continuing to March 2022 Educational Excellence: Saint Peter School District 508
an exhibit celebrating the history of Saint Peter schools

Anytime Documentary Film Series from Home, (see details page 3, Free
Two episodes of Off 90 (30 min. each)

April 15: Introducing Native Plants to Your Home Landscape 7 p.m. Zoom

April 17: Pollinator Plant Sale fundraiser kicks off (see pages 3 & 6 and https://www.nchsmn.org/pollinator-plant-sale/)

May 10: hiSTORY Hangout, military story of Nicollet County. 10 a.m. (see page 3)

May 15: Pollinator Plant Sale ends

June 14: hiSTORY Hangout: Conducting genealogy. 10 a.m. (see page 3)

June 17: Pollinator Plant Sale purchase pickup, time TBD

July 14: hiSTORY Hangout: The Five Governors from St. Peter. 10 a.m. (see page 3)

August 9: hiSTORY Hangout: The U.S. Dakota War. 10 a.m. (see page 3)

September 13: hiSTORY Hangout: Schools in Nicollet County. 10 a.m. (see page 3)

Please watch the NCHS website, Facebook & Twitter and MNHS website for further events and details for additional programming.
Your membership dollars at work…

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 2021 at the following level (please check one).

- Senior (65+) $30
- Individual $40
- Family $50
- Sustaining $75
- Patron $100
- Supporter $200
- Benefactor $500
- 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/membership for details.