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The Hilltop

News from the Dodge County Historical Society

Spring 2020

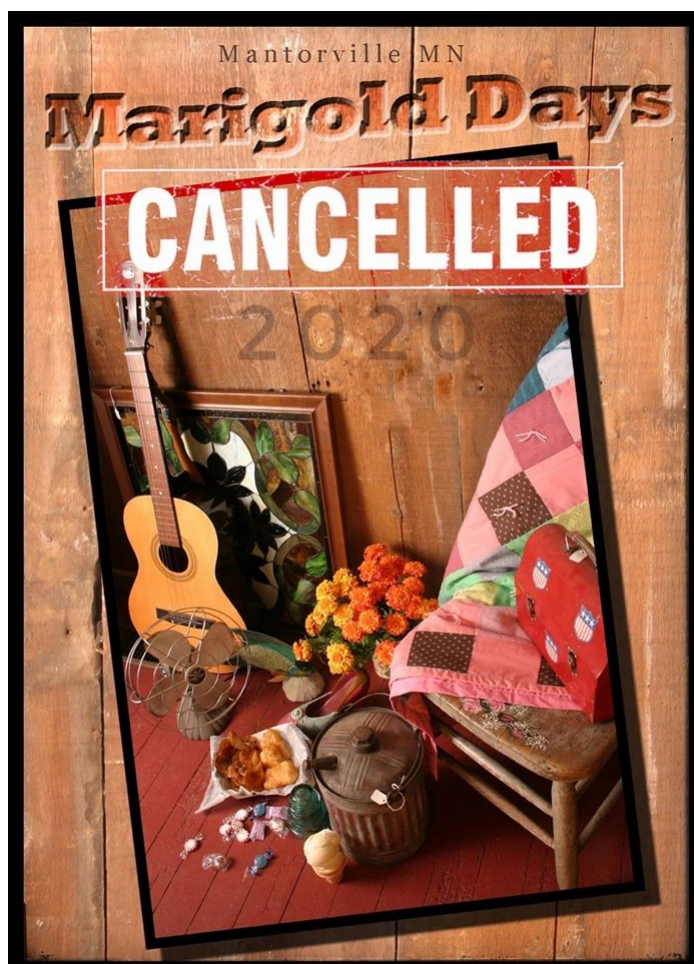
COVID-19 CONTINUES TO CANCEL ACTIVITIES

As reported in the previous issue of the newsletter, the museum is closed to the general public in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. An earlier decision of the Dodge County Historical Society Board of Directors to follow the lead of Minnesota Historical Society historic sites and museums on when to reopen is still in force. MNHS originally announced June 30 as the soonest that any of their facilities would return to regular public hours.

A determination on when and how to proceed will be on the agenda at the next regular monthly board meeting. This will be held on June 18. MNHS has recommended that organizations such as DCHS have in place a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan approved by the board before opening with social distancing procedures. In all likelihood, this will also be a matter for consideration at the meeting.

The fate of the annual Membership Meeting has not yet been decided. It was originally set for April 18 at the Old School Café (Mantorville). In a prior move also based on the pandemic, the board voted to postpone this event for the time being. DCHS members will be notified when a new date is selected.

Members and other patrons are welcome to contact DCHS via telephone at (507) 635-5508 or email at dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. The staff will assist you as much as possible with requests for research or answers to other questions.



One by one, popular events that are an annual tradition to Dodge County residents have been canceled due to coronavirus. In at least four instances, they were events that DCHS has participated in previously or planned to participate in this year: Dodge County Expo (March 21), Stagecoach Days (June 27-28), Dodge County Fair (July 15-19) and Marigold Days (September 12-13). DCHS looks forward to the return of these festivities in 2021.

TEMPORARILY

CLOSED

DUE TO COVID-19

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Board Members

David Hanson, President
Linda Jerviss, Vice President
Lois Hancock, Secretary
Thomas Monson, Treasurer
James Checkel
David Chicos
Scott French
Janet Kubat-Willette
Mark Packard
Executive Director
Donald Westfall

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The mission of the Dodge County Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and disseminate knowledge of the history of Dodge County and its relation to the history of the state of Minnesota.



As noted in the last issue of the newsletter, COVID-19 has not halted progress on some important projects at DCHS. Wasioja School (Phase I) is underway with preparation of a condition assessment and treatment plan by MacDonald & Mack Architects (Minneapolis). The work is being funded through the Historical and Cultural Heritage grant category of the Legacy Amendment.

Finishing this part of the project will allow DCHS to submit a grant proposal on Wasioja School (Phase II) construction documents to the Grants Office at the Minnesota Historical Society by the October 9 deadline. A future Wasioja School (Phase III) would be the actual restoration of the building, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 as part of the Wasioja Historic District.



One aspect of Wasioja School restoration that has gone forward already is the cupola (before and after seen above), courtesy of Bruce Bordelon (Mantorville).

WHITEOUT



DCHS Vice President Linda Jerviss, who also serves as chair of the Collections Committee, has taken advantage of the museum being closed to go through vintage clothing in storage. As seen here, there is a flurry of white garments for women that needed care. Everything from blouses and camisoles to collars and day caps. They will eventually go into an improved storage situation.



However, the plan is also to incorporate several items into a special exhibit for the public to see—once museum operation returns to normal.

DCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE



We wish him well, but greatly regret the resignation of Thomas Monson from the DCHS Board of Directors and as treasurer of the organization. The monthly meeting on June 18 will be his last. At the May 21 monthly meeting, the board considered Jean Bartel (above) to serve as his replacement for the remainder of the term (which expires this year). Also at that meeting, the board voted to accept the bid of Rebecca Johnson for the lawn care contract at the three DCHS sites in Wasioja (church, school, and recruiting station).



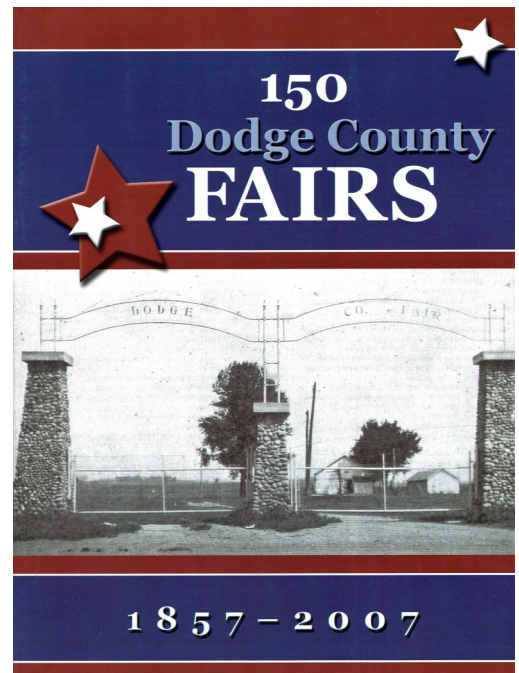
Starting in January 2020, the DCHS Board of Directors was to have met on the third Tuesday of every month, rather than the traditional third Thursday. This had been adopted at the regular monthly board meeting in September. However, that decision was subsequently reversed and the third Thursday will remain for monthly meetings. The 1869 Saint John's Episcopal Church in Mantorville (which houses the Dodge County Museum) is set to stay as the meeting location.

MUSE NEWS

Another casualty of COVID-19 is the 2020 Dodge County Fair (July 15-19). This marks the first time since the polio epidemic of 1946 that what is perhaps the oldest county fair in Minnesota has been called off. Shortly before



the Dodge County announcement, the Minnesota State Fair made the same decision. Coincidentally, it was also last canceled in 1946 and for the same reason. Those who feel nostalgic for the county fair can recall some fond memories with the booklet *150 Dodge County Fairs: 1857-2007* (2007) by Idella Conwell, Melisa Ferris, and Marlene Glaus. This paperback is on sale in the museum store for. It was published by DCHS in cooperation with the Dodge County Fair Board.



HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

DCHS TALKIN' IN DODGE TALKIN'

DCHS once more tips the hat to the *Dodge County Independent* for adding our organization to the monthly lineup of "Dodge Talkin'" columns. DCHS Board Member Janet Kubat-Willette is now a contributor to the column. She was featured in the April 9 issue (below) with a timely story on a previous health crisis.

'Spanish Influenza' had Minnesota's attention in 1918

Minnesota citizens in 1918 were busy going about their lives, selling and buying war bonds, planting and harvesting crops and reading newspapers for the latest World War I news when the "Spanish influenza" emerged.

The 1918 flu epidemic was first identified in the United States in spring 1918, according to the Centers for Disease Control. It spread worldwide during 1918-19 and it is estimated that about 500 million people, or about a third of the world's population



Dodge Talkin'
Janet
Kubat-Willette

at the time, became infected with the disease. At least 50 million people worldwide succumbed to the H1N1 virus of avian origin.

In the Oct. 3, 1918, issue of the Dodge County Republican, the surgeon general issued rules to the public to protect themselves from the spread of the Spanish influenza. The recom-

mendations included:
Avoid needless crowding;
Smother your coughs and sneezes;
Breathe through your nose;

Try to keep cool when you walk and warm when you sleep and ride;

Open the windows;
Chew your food well;
Drink a glass or two of water on getting up; and
Avoid tight clothes, tight shoes, and tight gloves.

Nasal sprays or "douches" of Dobell's solution or other mild antiseptics were said to be the best measures for disease prevention.

In the Oct. 10, 1918, issue, it was reported that the influenza, which was "ravaging" the east coast, had "invaded" Minnesota, with many cases reported in the

western part of the state. Closing the schools was being considered and had already occurred in some areas, including Dodge Center, where six cases were reported.

The disease reportedly had a sudden onset and caused dizziness, weakness, body pains, temperature spikes to 103 or 104, headache, back pain and sore throat. The disease sometimes resulted in death from acute bronchiolitis, heart failure or pneumonia.

It was spread through nose or mouth discharges, similar to COVID-19, with a little pen-and-ink drawing reminding readers

that "Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases: As Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells."

People who caught the disease were instructed to "go home at once and go to bed," according to an article in the Oct. 24, 1918, issue. The advice came from an official bulletin from the U.S. Public Health Service. It was recommended to isolate the patient with only a nurse entering the room.

People were advised to avoid the disease by being strong and by "having a proper proportion of work, play and rest."

SEE DODGE TALKIN, A6

DODGE TALKIN'

FROM A5

People were also asking about reinfection. The bulletin said people could suffer from the illness more than once.

Today's Mayo Clinic was also influential in 1918. Dr. Will Mayo advised the University of Minnesota Board of Regents to keep the university closed to civilian students in fall 1918, according to the Oct. 17, 1918, issue.

Mayo staffers, then as now, were

busy trying to provide medical aid. Mayo told the regents that a serum treatment at the Rochester hospital had prevented influenza cases from developing pneumonia.

Local residents were being injected with the serum in real-time clinical trials.

For more on the current pandemic check out the Centers for Disease Control website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>.

DCHS Board Member Janet Kubat-Willette and Treasurer Thomas Monson partnered to develop the COVID-19 survey form on the opposite page. Please feel free to fill out and return. One such response to the call for Dodge Countians to share their pandemic experiences is the image below of 78 American flags placed on the road to Triton High School by the Lions Club of Dodge Center to honor each of the 2020 graduates.

Coughs and Sneezes Spread Diseases



As Dangerous as Poison Gas Shells

Dodge County Republican (October 1918).





Dodge County Historical Society

615 N. Main Street
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The well-known quote reads something like "yesterday is history, today is a gift and tomorrow is a mystery." That certainly applies these days as we live with the presence of COVID-19.

As the Dodge County Historical Society, we exist to collect, preserve and disseminate information about Dodge County and its history and we're asking for your help. We're asking residents to share their stories of how their life has changed during the pandemic. Please take a few moments to share your COVID-19 experience.

Don't know where to start? Consider what you really miss, how you are communicating with friends and family and how you feel. How are you staying informed? How has your daily routine changed? What are you most thankful for? What is missing from the grocery shelves? What acts of kindness have you seen?

Email your responses to dodgemn.history@gmail.com or mail them to us at the address above.

Name _____

Age _____

City or township where you live _____

Where do you attend school or what is your occupation?

May we contact you for additional information? If so, please provide a contact number or email address.

Please note all information submitted may be shared as part of the county's historical record.

“SCHINDLER” OF THE KOREAN WAR WAS A MINISTER FROM HAYFIELD

A heroic humanitarian act of the Korean War (1950-1953) happened largely due to an individual from Dodge County. Russell Lloyd Blaisdell was a Presbyterian minister and a United States Air Force chaplain who organized the “Operation Kiddy Car” airlift rescue of 964 orphans and 80 orphanage staff from the war zone on December 20, 1950.

Born in Hayfield, Dodge County, Minnesota, on September 4, 1910, he was son of John T.—a harness maker/implement dealer—and Jennie A. (Goutermont) Blaisdell. After graduation from Hayfield High School in 1927, Blaisdell attended Macalester College (Saint Paul) and received a bachelor of arts degree in 1934. Next, he received a master of divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary (Chicago) in 1937. Ordained a Presbyterian minister that same year, he held civilian pastorates in Iowa before joining the United States Army Air Corps as a chaplain in 1940.



Colonel Russell L. Blaisdell, USAF.

During World War II and for five years thereafter, Blaisdell served as a chaplain at several military installations. He was stationed at Carswell Air Force Base (Fort Worth, Texas) in 1950, but with the outbreak of the Korean War that year was transferred to Fifth Air Force Headquarters in Seoul, South Korea. By then, Blaisdell was a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force (which in 1947 had been made a separate branch of service from the United States Army).

In addition to the other duties of his new assignment, Blaisdell began to minister to war orphans who had been placed in overcrowded orphanages. With the threat of Seoul being captured by Chinese and North Korean forces, he devised a plan of escape for the children. Assisted by Staff Sergeant Merle Y. Strang, USAF, Blaisdell and others drove the orphans to Inchon Harbor on December 19, 1950, for evacuation via United States Navy vessels. When those ships failed to arrive, he arranged for 16 Douglas C-54 *Skymaster* transport aircraft from the Fifth Air Force to fly everyone the following morning from Kimpo Air Force Base (Seoul) to the safety of Cheju Island, South Korea. This came to be called “Operation Kiddy Car.”

Most memorably for much of the general public, the incident was publicized through a 1956 book and a 1957 movie—both with the title *Battle Hymn* (right). This autobiographical account by Colonel Dean E. Hess, USAF, cast himself as the catalyst of the drama, even though his role was actually more limited. Blaisdell rejected pleas to



New arrivals at the Fifth Air Force processing center for orphans at Seoul, South Korea, before evacuation. Colonel Wallace I. Wolverton (left) and Lieutenant Colonel Russell L. Blaisdell, USAF, are pictured.

2019-2020 ANNUAL APPEAL THANK YOU!

Sue Alberts, Ashland Township, Quentin Kleinwort, Patricia Krier, Glen/Sue Papenfuss, Ripley Township, and Westfield Township.

challenge the Hess version of the story, later stating in a letter, “. . . well-doing has its own reward, which is not measured in dollars, prestige, or goodwill” In the book, Hess did at least acknowledge Blaisdell. However, he was totally ignored in the movie. It was as if Hollywood consolidated the two characters into one with Hess, as author of the book and played by Rock Hudson, the one who got all of the credit. Blaisdell continued to serve as a military chaplain after the Korean War, retiring in 1964 with the rank of full colonel.

Regardless of what took place elsewhere, South Korea remembered and honored the courageous chaplain from Hayfield. In January 2001, Blaisdell returned to the country for a reunion with many of the people for whom he was a savior in “Operation Kiddy Car.” The *Korea Herald* declared him the “Korean Schindler”—a reference to Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who saved more 1,000 Jews from the Holocaust in World War II. First Lady of South Korea Lee Hee-ho said on the occasion, “Koreans consider you a true hero for what you did. The orphans you saved are now productive members of our society, and nothing could be more precious than that.”

Blaisdell married Dorothy L. Ginney (1912-1994) on April 20, 1947. They had a daughter and two sons, one of whom is retired Major General Franklin J. Blaisdell, USAF (1949-). Blaisdell remarried on November 1, 1995, to Sandra J. Hoskins (1944-). He died on May 1, 2007, in Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada, at the age of 96. Burial was at Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City, Clark County, Nevada.



USAF Lieutenant Colonels Russell L. Blaisdell (left) and Dean E. Hess distributing candy to children on Cheju Island after evacuation.

DCHS is grateful to Larry Rouhoff (Rochester) for suggesting this story.

STAY SAFE AND BE WELL!

From the Board, Staff, and Volunteers
at the Dodge County Historical Society

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