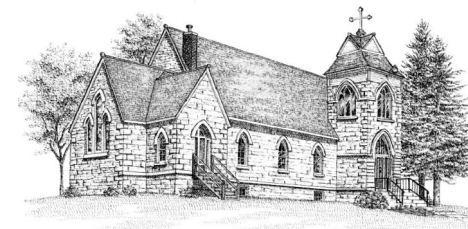
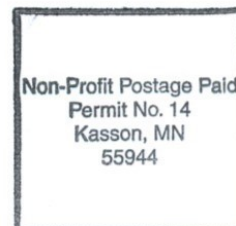


HAPPY 2020!

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

DODGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 456
MANTORVILLE, MN 55955



**DC
HS**

The Hilltop

News from the Dodge County Historical Society

Fall 2019

CHRISTMAS CAROLING AT WASIOJA



The church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 as part of the Wasioja Historic District, the only wooden structure among the six that comprise the district. The building has been owned and operated by the Dodge County Historical Society since 2001. Free Will Baptists, who utilized the church, were instrumental in starting the nearby seminary. Construction began in 1858 was completed in 1860.

On December 14, DCHS once again held *Christmas in Wasioja* at the 1858 Wasioja Baptist Church. A total of 41 attended. The gathering sang Christmas carols and sampled seasonal snacks from Barbara Gilliland. Clinton Patterson (above), a retired Presbyterian pastor from Kasson, debuted as president. He delivered an informative and inspiring talk on the origin of the song *Silent Night*. Levi Livingood again amazed with his musical talents at the piano.



Other volunteers involved in putting on the special program were James Checkel, David Chicos, Eleanor Engesser, Scott French, Lois Hancock, David Hanson, Philip Haukom, Linda Jerviss, John Olive, Mark Packard, and Warren Schwenke.



Beautifully decorated Christmas tree (above) at the 1858 Wasioja Baptist Church for the December 14 special program. Thanks to Linda Jerviss and her volunteer team. Warren Schwenke installed the banner and frame (left) to direct traffic.

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
- Mark Packard
- Janet Kubat Willette
- 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.



Happily, DCHS received notice on December 13 from the Minnesota Historical Society that a grant proposal for the Wasioja School had been approved by their Executive Committee. This is in the Historical and Cultural category of the Legacy Amendment and is made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.



Georgann Mantor Jordan (Lincoln, Nebraska) sent a Christmas card to DCHS that was addressed "To Mantorville Residents." She is the last living great grandchild of Riley Mantor, who was a co-founder of Mantorville. Her message: "Wishing you moments that comfort you, make you happy, and bring you peace and joy. Happy 2020."

OLDE FASHIONED CHRISTMAS



On December 7, DCHS volunteers decorated and staffed the museum for *Olde Fashioned Christmas* in Mantorville. A total of 51 attended to taste holiday treats and enjoy a White House Historical Society ornament collection, courtesy of Barbara Gilliland of Dodge Center. The 2019 edition of the ornaments (left) commemorates President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) with a helicopter. In 1957 he became the first president to fly in a helicopter. The collection is still on display at the museum.

Almost all of those receiving this newsletter will have already received the 2019-2020 Annual Appeal letter. Nonetheless, we at DCHS want to extend our heartfelt thanks to those who have thus far responded with a generous donation. To date, they are as follows:

Robert Beaver, Minor Buckingham, Robert/Phyllis Buehler, John/Shirley Chapin, James Checkel, Darrol Davis, Donovan Body Works, Sue Edge, Kevin Eipers, Energy Economics, Douglas/Sandra Gochnauer, Karl Griffith, David/Ruth Hanson, Jerald Harris, Philip Haukom, Daryl Houston, Karla Huse, Eva Mairine Iverson, Larry Johnson, Terry Jorgenson, Lynn Knutson, Ivan/Mary Jane Kroulik, Mary Larson, Lions Club of Kasson-Mantorville, Barbara Loquai, McMartin Electric, John Mosher, Larry/Kathy O'Malley, Mark/Audrey Packard, Everett Paulson, Robert Perry, Boyd Ratchye/Susan Light, Nancy Thornton, and Janet Tripp.

WPA WALL MAY COME TUMBLING DOWN

Perhaps not as storied as the biblical walls of Jericho, the 1938 WPA wall at Veterans Memorial Park in Kasson may face a similar fate. It is what remains of a Works Progress Administration project from the New Deal of the Roosevelt Administration. WPA was a public works agency created to counteract the Great Depression. Originally, the structures included a swimming a fireplace, and attached walls. All were built of native limestone. The pool was replaced with the new Kasson Aquatic Center. The city demolished the fireplace in 2007. A modern Kasson Aquatic Center replaced the pool in 2013. Perhaps surprisingly, many pools were built by the WPA for community recreation. The pool in Kasson was one of 805 installed between 1935 and 1943.

WPA projects are historically significant. Several such examples located in Minnesota State Parks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. The remnant WPA wall that lines the front of the park in Kasson requires repair. The city council has announced that these costs would amount to \$229,000. Thus far, the city has not approved paying for the repairs. Demolition in the spring of 2020 has been proposed. However, if interested citizens can raise the funds by April 1, the wall could be saved. To contribute, send checks to KARE (Kasson Alliance for REstoration) with FOR THE WALL AT PARK in the memo. The address is 96 Post Office Road, Kasson, MN 55944. A GoFundMe page has also been established under the title "Save the Pillars at Veterans Park." Two Rochester television stations have covered the story: KIMT-TV (CBS/Channel 3) and KAAL-TV (ABC/Channel 6).



A SICK MAN IS NEVER SO MUCH OUT OF PLACE AS IN THE ARMY

EXTRACTS FROM CAPT. CILLEY'S LETTER

On June 8, 1906, the *Mantorville Express* published the following from a Civil War letter of Captain Clinton A. Cilley, Company C, Second Minnesota Infantry:

Capt. Cilley's letter is dated, "Right Wing of the Army of the Tennessee, camp just inside the state line, Mississippi, May 14, 1862," and from it we make the following extracts:

Tooke is our cook and is one of the best men, every way, in the regiment. I have a very great regard for him. He manages our company rations so they go as far as possible and saves a great deal in company food. Corporal Wood behaves nicely, does his duty faithfully and endures hardship. He stays with me a good share of the time. He is well. Little Rob Hutchinson is a corporal now. He is a grand, good fellow and soldier. He, Bonser, Capon and I are the only ones in the company who have never been off duty for sickness. He is in good health, of course. Castle is a disagreeable fellow, too lazy and too selfish to make a good soldier. But he is improving. He was absent, sick, a great while and got intolerably lazy there. Ben Wood is at McBeoler's yet, so far as I know. His discharge papers have been forwarded twice, but he has never received them. Ed. Garrison is just the same as ever, cool, strong and good. Dick Shedd is very much the same as in Wasioja, save that he grows careless of his personal habits and doesn't look as clean and tidy as he might. Alex. Doig is a good man, given a little to complaining and murmuring, but does his duty and keeps well.

Some say that Theodore Orcutt is at home again. I hope so—his health will not allow him to serve and a sick man is never so much out of place as in the army. Cartwright is back in hospital again; his constitution seems broken down. Russ does very well nowadays, is quite well and carries his regular load without grumbling. Corporal Townsend has improved of late and is a very good soldier and tough man, though he is a little troubled with a rheumatic arm. Dike is improving, too, and since he failed to get a discharge is getting well very fast—he never will make a soldier, though. The celebrated Kline is—the Lord knows where! The last I heard of him he was hospital nurse at Lebanon. He is not sick at all himself.



There is a row out ahead here, somewhere, I guess, as several regiments have just gone along with fixed bayonets. I've heard no firing, but there may be something on foot. At any rate I'll stop and write again shortly.



CLINTON A. CILLEY (1837-1900). Although referred to as a captain in the article, he finished the Civil War as a major and brevet colonel. Cilley received the Medal of Honor for bravery at the 1863 Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia. A professor of languages and mathematics at the Wasioja seminary when the war started, he was instrumental in getting several students to enlist.

DCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE



At the regular monthly meeting in December, the DCHS Board of Directors appointed Janet Kubat Willette (above) to the vacancy created by the resignation of Board Member Greg Nelson in September. In other action, the board voted to hold the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting on April 18, the exact time and place to be announced at a later date



Starting in January 2020, the DCHS Board of Directors will meet on the third Tuesday of every month, rather than the traditional third Thursday. This will continue until further notice. The change had been adopted at the regular monthly board meeting in September. Curiously enough, that places the first such meeting on January 21 instead of January 16 because the third Tuesday is later than the third Thursday this coming January. 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

At the regular monthly meeting in November, the DCHS Board of Directors voted unanimously to loan our Rice Lake Dugout Canoe (below right) to the Legacy of the Lakes Museum (Alexandria). This would be for a special exhibit on canoes that is slated to debut in 2020.

The object was donated to DCHS by Gerald and Judith Sowieja of Dodge Center in 1990. Dakota (Sioux) people constructed the canoe of cotton-

wood, circa 1790-1850.

See *Minnesota Dugout Canoe Project Report* (2014) by Ann Merriman and Christopher Olson of Maritime Heritage Minnesota for more information.



A FUNNY WOMAN LEAVES THEM LAUGHING

STAR SHINES AGAIN IN HER HOME COUNTY

The audience almost packed the house on November 9 for the one night only presentation of *A Funny Woman* at the Mantorville Opera House. This was a review of the life of Peg Lynch (1916-2015) from Kasson and a revival of the *Ethel and Albert* radio/TV sitcom that she created. Astrid King, daughter of Peg Lynch, played the Ethel role of her mother. James Lileks, *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist, took the part of Albert. Volunteers provided refreshments and DCHS Vice President Linda

Jerviss developed a display in the lobby (upper right) for visitors to view. Half of the proceeds of the show went to DCHS. The other half will go to the Mantorville Theatre Company. Kudos to MTC Director Patrick Quint and his team for their excellent work to make the evening a success for all involved in the partnership of the two organizations.



AFTERGLOW. Astrid King, along with cast and crew, greeted guests at the Mantorville Opera House during a reception that followed the show.



STARRING PEG LYNCH. Astrid King visited the special exhibit about her mother at the museum. Much of the storyline concerns the years when Peg was growing up in Kasson.

Remembering Peg Lynch at Opera House

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN
DCI COUNTY WRITER

Peg Lynch may have left Kasson more than 75 years before her death in 2015 but she never forgot the town she left.

In 1944, the girl who grew up in Kasson was in New York City and with Richard Widmark as her co-star debuted a network radio show called "Ethel and Albert," a 15-minute comedy about a married couple. The radio program played on the ABC radio network until 1949 when it expanded to 30 minutes. Several 15 minute episodes appeared on a local television station in 1945 and in 1950 "Ethel and Albert," by now with another actor playing Albert, made the move to NBC television. It was shown on CBS in 1955 and back to ABC for the 1955-56 season.

The show returned to radio for a time after its television run and Lynch continued to write and appear in comedies for the rest of her life.

Lynch is often called the "woman who invented comedy" and was the first woman ever to create, write, star in and own, both her own radio and television sitcom series.

Lynch's daughter, Astrid King, returned to south-eastern Minnesota earlier this month to present "A Funny Woman," a program profiling her mother with skits, anecdotes, stories and film clips with the assistance of Star Tribune columnist James Lileks. She said that the two performances, one in Rochester and the second at the Mantorville Opera



STAFF PHOTO BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

James Lileks and Astrid King performed a show recalling King's mother, Peg Lynch, who grew up in Kasson and went on to write and perform her own radio and television shows nationally beginning in 1944.

House, where being done in her mother's memory but she hopes for more shows in the future.

"When my mother died in 2015, at age 98," King said, "she had been performing until three years before death."

She had retained ownership of her shows and saved everything, King said. It fell to her, Lynch's only child, to go through all her mother's things which included a lot of archival items, King said. There were more than 450 boxes of material, including original kinescopes of live TV shows.

Her mother, King said, was born in Nebraska but after her father died in the 1918 flu epidemic they moved to her mother's family in Kasson where she grew up.

Always an independent child, King recounted a story of her mother

"pestering" her mother when Lynch was about 5 years old. King said her probably frustrated grandmother made an off-hand comment to her daughter about being adopted.

Five-year-old Peg took the comment seriously, King said, and promptly took the train from Kasson to Dodge Center and on to St. Paul where she took the street car to her Aunt Helen's house where she announced she was adopted and no one loved her.

Her mother was always curious and an exceptionally bright child, King said, and had "worked her way through the Kasson library by the time she was 10."

Her personality, she said, was also "quite the Auntie Mame."

Lileks explained he had his own Peg Lynch story. "I like to listen to old radio

show," he said. He listened to another one of Lynch's series "The Couple Next Door" online and began to wonder "who is Peg Lynch."

He actually found her phone number, he said, and called her and they talked for hours. Lileks said he visited her at her home on the east coast and they continued to talk now and again until her death.

King now lives in England, she said, and has performed a version of the show there that was well received. She wanted to see, she said, how the show would be received here.

Before her death, King said, her mother kept wanting to return to Minnesota for a visit but it never worked out. After her death, King said she brought her mother's ashes to Kasson where they are buried in Maple Grove cemetery.