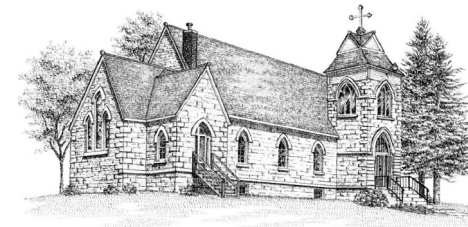
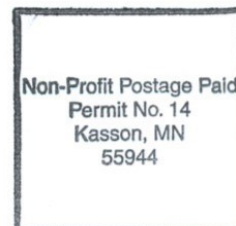


HAPPY 2020!

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

Winter 2020

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 presider. 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.

2019-2020 ANNUAL APPEAL THANK YOU!

Jean Bartel, Robert Beaver, Myrna Bowie, Bromley Repair, Minor Buckingham, Robert/Phyllis Buehler, Canisteo Township, John/Shirley Chapin, James Checkel, Darrol Davis, Randy/Kathy Demmer, Larry/Melanie Dobson, Donovan Body Works, Walter Dunlap, Sue Edge (in memory of Dale Morris), Kevin Eipers, Energy Economics, Eleanor Engesser, Samuel Fudenberg, Douglas/Sandra Gochner, Karl Griffith, Steven/Susan Hansen, David/Ruth Hanson, Jerald Harris, Philip Haukom, Lloyd Henslin, Hodgman Drainage, Daryl Houston, Karla Huse, Eva Mairine Iverson, Linda Jerviss, Larry Johnson, Lowell/Lois Johnson, Terry Jorgenson, KM Telecom, Lynn Knutson, Ivan/Mary Jane Kroulik, Milton Kuball, William/MaryLee Lambert, Mary Larson, Lions Club of Kasson-Mantorville, Barbara Loquai, Anne McGuire, McMartin Electric, Thomas/Samantha Monson, Jacqueline Moore, John Mosher, Royce/Beatrice Naylor, Larry/Kathy O'Malley, Mark/Audrey Packard, Everett Paulson, Robert Perry, Boyd Ratchye/Susan Light, Janis Ray, Robert Scherger, Daniel Senjem, S&L Transport, Sharon Thiemann, Nancy Thornton, Glenda (Dee) Tollefson, Orlo Toquam, Janet Tripp, Terry Vatland, and John Wees.

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 pool, a fireplace, and attached walls. Native limestone was the building material. The city demolished the fireplace in 2007. A modern Kasson Aquatic Center replaced the pool in 2013. Perhaps surprisingly, WPA built many pools 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).



FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



Happily, DCHS received notice on December 13 from the Minnesota Historical Society that a grant proposal for a collections management system conversion had been awarded by their Executive Committee. This is in the Historical and Cultural Heritage grant 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. The amount of \$7,900 will cover data transfer and staff training for conversion from PastPerfect to CollectiveAccess. The latter is a more user friendly system recommended by MALHM (Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums).



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.

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.

Dodge County Historical Society

2019 year in review



The 1885 country school received its final coat of white paint this year, thanks to the Kasson-Mantorville Lions Club.

Inside, volunteers restored it to an 1880s school with the furnishings portraying that time period.



Third Minnesota Infantry reenactors demonstrated their recruiting skills at a celebration marking the completion of the restoration of the Wasioja Civil War Recruiting Station.



At the regular monthly meeting in December, the DCHS Board of Directors unanimously 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 Jerome and Judith Sowieja of Dodge Center in 1990. Dakota (Sioux) people constructed the canoe of cottonwood, circa 1790-1850.

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



We partnered with Dodge County and used Legacy Amendment grant funds to study how to highlight and promote the Wasioja Historic District.



The ramp at the historical society was repaired and restained.

At left, the Peg Lynch special display at the Dodge County Government Services building in Mantorville.

A FUNNY WOMAN LEAVES THEM LAUGHING

STAR SHINES AGAIN IN HER HOME COUNTY

The audience practically 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.

George artifacts donated to historical museum

Museums are always happy to have objects donated to them that are relevant to their collections mission. Once in a while such a donation falls into the category of the Holy Grail for that particular museum.

This took place recently at the Dodge County Historical Society, when Neil Farnham of Rochester graciously gave us the James George collection. Anyone aware of early Dodge County history and its Civil War connection will instantly recognize the name of



Dodge Talkin' Donald Westfall

James George (1819-1882).

He was the Wasioja attorney, who in 1861 turned his law office into a recruiting station. From that 1855 limestone structure, George encouraged many young men from the local seminary to enlist in Company C of the Second Minnesota Infantry. Himself a veteran of the Mexican War (1846-1848), George returned to service and eventually rose to command the regiment as

SEE DODGE TALKIN, A8

DODGE TALKIN

FROM A3

colonel. He compiled a remarkable record in the Civil War. In Georgia, at the 1863 Battle of Chickamauga, George gallantly led his troops when they blocked the Confederate advance with a terrible toll of casualties. He was forced to resign his commission in 1864 for health reasons.

So how is a Farnham related to a George? Neil Farnham is a great-great grandson of James George. His great grandmother Edith George, daughter of James George, married Albert Farnham in 1867.

The family collection donated to DCHS is a treasure trove, especially where military matters are concerned.

It includes James George uniforms from both the Mexican War and the Civil War, two swords, and a McClellan saddle. There is also a desk and a chair from the period. In addition, two large charcoal portraits of James George and his son Edward (Ned) George are part of the donation.

Upon close inspection, DCHS Collections Committee Chair Linda Jerviss was able to identify a signature on both portraits as that of the artist Frances

(Fannie) George, daughter-in-law of James and wife of Ned.

Needless to say, a special exhibit is being planned for the museum that will feature these and other objects when curation is completed.

As many DCI readers are already aware, the law office of James George in Wasioja that was transformed into a recruiting station is now owned and operated by the Dodge County Historical Society.

On June 8 of last year a *Restoration Celebration* was held to commemorate the recently completed exterior repointing and reroofing of the historic structure. This was made possible with a Legacy Amendment grant through the Minnesota Historical Society. Interior replastering and repainting, utilizing surplus funds from the grant, finished the project.

The recruiting station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 as part of the Wasioja Historic District.

Donald Westfall is executive director of the Dodge County Historical Society. Dodge Talkin' is a regular column featuring authors representing various organizations throughout Dodge County.