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The Hilltop

News from the Dodge County Historical Society

Summer 2018

ORIGINAL ARNOLD BLANCH OIL PAINTING DONATED

“A prophet is without honor only in his hometown.” That variously translated biblical passage from the New Testament may apply to some extent to artist Arnold Blanch in his hometown of Mantorville. He was born and raised here, but is not readily recognized today. Granted, there is a Blanch Street and a Blanch House that was his boyhood home. However, there is otherwise little or no reference to the artist who was widely acknowledged as being on the forefront of the Social Realism movement in America. Arnold Blanch is not even mentioned at the Dodge County Museum in Mantorville. That will soon change, thanks to a generous Saint Paul art collector who has donated the oil painting *Key West Beach* (1942) to the Dodge County Historical Society. Blanch was a winter resident of the Florida Keys for 50 years, beginning in 1916. The donor of the painting has asked to remain anonymous.

In the course of his prolific career, Arnold Blanch received many awards and honors with work as a painter, etcher, illustrator, lithographer, muralist, and printmaker. Not only was he a noted artist, he was also a respected art teacher and an author of art books.



Arnold Blanch and wife Doris Lee (1936).

Arnold Blanch was born in Mantorville, Dodge County, Minnesota, on June 4, 1896. After high school, Blanch attended the Minneapolis College of Art & Design (formerly Minneapolis School of Art) within the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. During World War I, he served as a mapmaker in the United States Army as part of the AEF (American Expeditionary Forces). After the war, Blanch moved to New York City and was active in the Art Students League of New York. He died in Kingston, Ulster County, New York, on October 3, 1968, at the age of 72.



Arnold Blanch and Friends (1925).

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The DCHS annual meeting was held on April 7 at the Old School Café (Mantorville). Guest speaker was Dustin Heckman, coordinator of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM). He explained to the group that MALHM is developing a software program that is compatible with PastPerfect, a powerful software program specifically designed for museums to catalog their holdings. Each item has a specific location designated and a picture of that item to be attached to the outside of the storage container. There is speculation that the PastPerfect program will not be supported by its developer in the near future. The MALHM software will be able to take the place seamlessly should that occur.

Also at the meeting, Coy Borgstrom stepped down from his role of president of the Board of Directors, leaving an open seat on the board that needed filling. The membership voted David Hanson to the vacancy. Dave, a former county commissioner, resides in Wasioja and is very well known throughout Dodge County. He currently is serving as chair of the Dodge County Parks and Trails Commission. Scott French and Linda Jerviss were successful in their reelection bids for the other two seats up year.

Then, on April 19, DCHS held its first board meeting with the change of personnel. Officers for the board were elected: Michael Haugen as president, James Checkel vice president, Lois Hancock as secretary, and David Dubbels as treasurer. All except Lois are new to their positions.



Vice President James Checkel and Secretary Lois Hancock (right).

FIELD TRIP

Eight classes of Kasson-Mantorville first graders enjoyed a field trip to the Dodge County Historical Society on May 23. A tip of the hat to all who volunteered to make the day a memorable one.

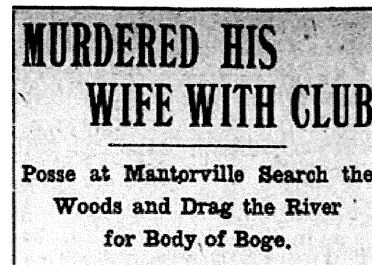
- Mary Ann Bucher (volunteer coordinator)
- Dodge County Sheriff Scott Rose (law enforcement)
- Sandy Gochnauer (butter making)
- Barb Loquai (clothes washing)
- Mitch Miller (storytelling)
- Char Schrage (Little Red House on the Hill)
- Carla Webster (country school)
- Warren Schwenke (set up and take down)



APRIL 27: A DAY OF DEATH IN MANTORVILLE

KILLED WIFE WITH A CLUB ... VIOLENT BLOWS WITH A LONG HANDLED INSTRUMENT.

The article was buried several pages deep within the April 28, 1905, edition of the *Minneapolis Journal*. No details were spared: “a laborer returned home drunken and vicious screaming. The blows ... delivered against the upper part of the forehead ... left side of face... crushed.” The location was Mantorville. The “vicious murderer”... Henry Boge.



Minneapolis Journal

The May 5, 1905, edition of the *Mantorville Express* also covered the story. Below, from the first page, is the summary of the tragic event as stated by Henry Smith, publisher of the *Express*. An interesting note is that immediately in the first paragraph, the *Express* placed part of the blame for the tragedy on alcohol. Regarding the murder, it stated that “under no other conditions than those engendered by the legalized saloon, licensed and maintained by its citizens, could ... the double burden of sorrow and shame have been heaped upon our village.”¹



Boge Family (source unknown)

Henry Boge, 47, born in Germany, a laborer in Mantorville, was known for his thoroughness and reliability. His wife, Sophia, was

born and raised in Grand Rapids, Wisconsin. Together they had one child, Julia, who turned 17 only a few days after her mother's death.

At first things went well for the family who resided on Clay Street, located across from the office of the *Express*. However, it seemed that Henry developed a serious drinking problem that progressively became so severe that he “practically became insane with a desire to kill his wife and daughter” and more than once threatened the two and made public hints of that desire. According to the *Owatonna People's Press* (May 5, 1905), “it seems that Boge and his wife had differences regarding the discipline of their only daughter, a girl of 17. The mother always took the daughter's part and the father became irate at being crossed in his plans to govern his daughter. The result was that he made threats to do away with both his wife and daughter.” The two became so frightened of him they tried to stay together when Henry was present. Both had “posted” him at the two local saloons. Unfortunately, Boge still could obtain liquor from other sources.

**BEAT THE LIFE
OUT OF HIS WIFE**
HENRY BOGE BRUTALLY MUR-
DERS HIS WIFE AT
MANTORVILLE.

People's Press

1. Since its inception, the *Express* has been decidedly anti-alcohol.

On Thursday, the 27th, Boge had been away all day, which typically meant he had been drinking. Julia, Boge's 16 year old daughter, went for a buggy ride with friends, promising her mother she would be home early. According to the editor of the *Express*, its office closed at 9:30 pm to a typically quiet Mantorville evening. Close to 10:00 pm that evening Mr. and Mrs. L. Spurbeck were startled and awakened to the anguishing screams of Sophia Boge. As next door neighbors they had experienced in the past the troubled relationship from their neighbors. Mr. Spurbeck quickly dressed and ran down town to call the village marshal (A. A. Austin). Mrs. Spurbeck could see into Boge's lamp lit house from her chamber window. She witnessed Boge carrying something "limp" in range of the window, throw it down and strike violent blows, apparently with a long handled implement, using both hands.



Old Mill Pond (circa 1900)²

In the meantime, Julia had just come home from her ride to find the house doors locked. Her father called to her to wait and he would unlock the doors. Hearing that from her chamber window, Mrs. Spurbeck screamed to Julia to run for her life, which she did by running to her uncle, George Smith (former village marshal), who lived two blocks away. Mr. Spurbeck, having returned from calling the marshal, saw Henry Boge, not wearing shoes or shirt, running as fast as he could toward the Zumbro River. Mrs. Boge was found lying on the floor with terrible wounds to her head. Julia rushed to her only to hear her last breaths as she held her mother in her arms.

A desperate search to find the murderer fell short. Using a lantern, Boge was tracked as far as the Chicago & Great Western stockyards. The search resumed Friday morning with some searching as far as Wasioja. Around 10:00 am that morning the search was called off. Boge's body was found in the mill pond near what was known as "the old swimming hole." Now suicide was added to Mantorville's day of death.

Sophia Boge was interred at Evergreen Cemetery in Mantorville on Saturday, April 29, 1905. A formal funeral service was held Sunday afternoon at Saint John's Episcopal Church, also in Mantorville. According to the *Express*, the sermon was impressive, but it was criticized by many as it "stopped short of the real cause of the tragedy, indicated at the outset of this article." (See footnote 1). Both bodies, the perpetrator and victim, are now buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

2. Old Mill Pond picture from "Reminiscences Pertaining to Mantorville" (Dodge County Old Settlers Association Commemorative Meeting Material). Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

WASIOJA

Oh Wasioja, dear little town,
How we remember thee,
Historical lore all around
And the folks that used to be!

Your meadows and woods
Where we roamed long ago,
The old neighborhoods
With their pleasures and woe!

Your church small and dear
Welcoming wise man and fool,
There we learned love and fear
And God's Golden Rule!

Your old lime rock school,
Strong, stern and yearning,
Where the rod and the rule
Were our introduction to learning!

The natural rock slide
Where we slid on our feet
And sat there astride
Our noon lunches to eat!

The recruiting station of the Civil War,
Yates, Weeks and Fleener abodes,
Henry Cook's old general store,
Sentinel at the two crossroads!

Ruins of your old seminary
Hidden by whispering pine,
Lonely and oh so scary,
When you were only nine!

Your beloved Wildwood Cemetery,
The Zumbro flowing near by
Where the Devil's mystic stairway
Is missed by the stranger's eye!

Oh, the many dear faces and scenes
Your name brings to our mind
The woods, hills and ravines
Bring tears that nearly blind!

So we pray when all breath is taken
By our creator and loving God,
That when on Resurrection Day we awaken,
May we walk again on Wasioja's green sod!

- Susan E. (Boyd) Johnson

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Board Members

Michael Haugen, President

James Checkel, Vice President

Lois Hancock, Secretary

David Dubbels, Treasurer

Greg Nelson

Scott French

David Hanson

Philip Haukom

Linda Jerviss

Executive Director

Donald Westfall

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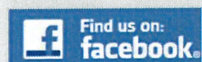
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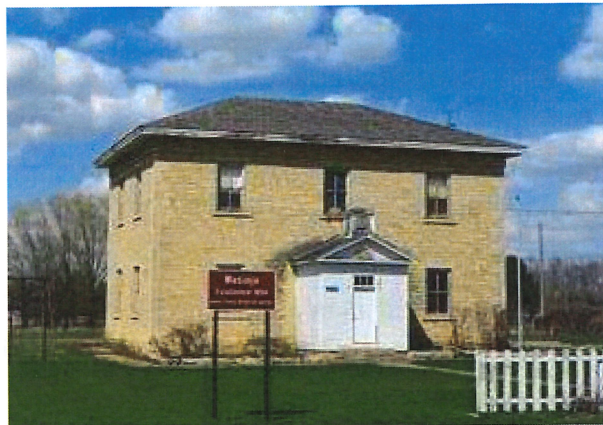
Website

www.dodgecountyhistorical.org



1885 Ashland Township School.

The Minnesota Historical Society formally notified the Dodge County Historical Society on May 25 that a Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Partnership Program grant in the amount of \$24,500 has been awarded. This will result in the development of an interpretive plan for the Wasioja Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. DCHS is set to partner with Dodge County on the project. The pursuit of the proposal was unanimously approved earlier this year by the Dodge County Commission and the DCHS Board of Directors. I will be working with Dodge County Engineer Guy Kohlnhofer and a contract consulting firm to produce the plan. Of the six properties in the historic district, three are owned by DCHS, one is a county park, and two are privately owned.



1860 Wasioja Township School.

SMIF GRANT AWARDED TO PAINT ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

On June 1, the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation formally approved a DCHS grant application in the SMIF Paint the Town program. Paint will be provided through Ace Hardware in Rochester for repainting the 1885 Ashland Township School (Henslin). The historic one-room schoolhouse served grades 1 through 8 until 1956. It was moved to its present location on the grounds of DCHS in 1964. The terms of the grant require a sponsor partner, so the Lions Club of Kasson-Mantorville kindly agreed to serve in that capacity. Club members will also contribute most of the labor and many of the supplies necessary for the project. "We are most grateful to SMIF for generously approving our application," said DCHS Executive Director Donald Westfall. "Having been a Lion myself," he noted, "I am especially pleased that one of our area clubs will be partnering with us as an example of Lionism in action."

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS LUNCHEON

On October 9, the DCHS Board of Directors once again hosted a luncheon at the museum for members of the Dodge County Commission. Those in attendance were John Allen, David Kenworthy, Rodney Peterson, and Rhonda Toquam. Also on hand was County Administrator James Elmquist.



Elton-Johnson wedding at 1858 Free Will Baptist Church in Wasioja.

CONTRACTOR ON THE CASE

Restoration Services (Faribault) was selected on April 30 as the contractor for the Wasioja Civil War Recruiting Station (right) restoration project. A representative from the firm met with DCHS staff and MacDonald & Mack Architects (Minneapolis) on May 23 to move forward with mortar testing. Through the Legacy Amendment of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the Minnesota Historical Society granted DCHS \$103,825 for the work that will consist mainly of repointing and reroofing.

