



# DC HS

# The Hilltop

News from the Dodge County Historical Society

Summer 2019

## PEG LYNCH (OF KASSON): INVENTOR OF THE SITCOM



Come to the Mantorville Opera House on Saturday, November 9, at 7:00 pm to see performer and writer Astrid King present *A Funny Woman*—a show about her mother Peg Lynch—pioneer radio/TV star of the 1940s and 1950s. Margaret Frances (Peg) Lynch (1916-2015) was raised right here in Kasson. She was the first woman to write, star in, and have ownership of her own sitcom, notably *Ethel and Albert*. Astrid has teamed with award-winning *Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist and humorist James Lileks to entertain audiences.

*A Funny Woman* is Peg Lynch in all her shapes and forms. Clips of Peg telling hilarious stories and anecdotes, live skits to bring the original scripts back to life, plus vintage video from the Golden Age of Television which have not been seen by anybody other than family and friends for over 70 years. Audiences leave laughing and learn something about a great star in American culture.



Peg Lynch with cast regular Margaret Hamilton (left) from the *Ethel and Albert* TV version (1950-1956). Hamilton is perhaps best remembered as the "Wicked Witch of the West" in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

Astrid plans to donate all proceeds to the Dodge County Historical Society and the Mantorville Theatre Company. Please contact [www.mantorvilletheatrecompany.com](http://www.mantorvilletheatrecompany.com) for reservations. Early Bird reservations before October 15 are \$18.00 each. After that they are \$20.00 each. A reception with refreshments will follow the show. Mantorville Opera House is located at 5 West Fifth Street. Also, be sure to visit the website [www.peglynch.com](http://www.peglynch.com).



Astrid King, daughter of Peg Lynch.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

### Board Members

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Linda Jerviss, Vice President  
Lois Hancock, Secretary  
Thomas Monson, Treasurer  
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David Chicos  
Scott French  
Greg Nelson  
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.*

On August 23, DCHS received notice 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. The \$9,998 awarded will go toward the preparation of a condition assessment and treatment plan.



Built in 1860 by master stonemasons Andrew and Alexander Doig, Wasioja Township School (District 20) is owned and operated by DCHS. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 as part of the Wasioja Historic District.



*Wasioja Township School (District 20).*

## BACK TO SCHOOL

Class was in session once more at the 1885 Ashland Township School (District 38) for *Marigold Days* in Mantorville (September 7-8). The one room schoolhouse sits on the grounds of DCHS, to where it was moved in 1964. A team of volunteers diligently finished work on the building with additional exterior painting, landscaping, and interior refurbishing. In addition to cleaning, the latter category included removal of objects not relevant to the interpretive period. Volunteers included James Checkel, Virginia Giese, Patricia Guenther, Lois Hancock, David Hanson, Linda Jerviss, Michael McIntosh, Thomas Monson, Mark Packard, April Paulson, and Warren Schwenke. Over the past year, the Lions Club of Kasson-Mantorville had painted nearly all of the exterior.



## *DCHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE*



DCHS Vice President David Hanson (above) assumed the presidency of the DCHS Board of Directors on August 15 at the regular monthly meeting. He replaced Scott French, who resigned the president position (but will remain on the board for the time being). Dave is set to serve until the election of new officers in April 2020. Linda Jerviss was named vice president to fill that vacancy. On a related matter, Board Member Greg Nelson submitted his resignation at the regular monthly meeting held on September 19. No replacement has been named as yet.



*DCHS Board of Directors meets the third Thursday of every month, usually in the 1869 Saint John's Episcopal Church in Mantorville (which houses the Dodge County Museum).*

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## *MUSE NEWS*

### *History of Dodge County*



H. A. Smith

Thank you once more to the Friends of Wasioja for providing the museum store with another notable title in the book inventory. *An Historical Sketch of Dodge County, Minnesota* by Mitchell and Curtis (right) was first published in 1870 by Federal Union Book & Job Printing Office (Rochester). Additional material includes *A General View of Minnesota*. This paperback reprint sells for \$12.00. Also available is the standard text *History of Dodge County* by Henry A. Smith (left), which sells as a paperback reprint for \$25.00. It was originally printed in 1884 by H. H. Hill Publishers (Chicago).

An  
HISTORICAL SKETCH  
of  
DODGE COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
Containing Full  
Geographic & Statistic Information  
To Which Is Added A  
GENERAL VIEW OF MINNESOTA

By  
W. H. Mitchell & U. Curtis

1870

# *EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN*

## *VOLUNTEERS REJUVENATE WOODWORK*



In August and September, the DCHS Buildings & Grounds Committee hit the decks running. More specifically, this group of volunteers hit the decks with pressure washing, repairing, sanding, and staining. In this case the “decks” consisted of the access ramp and the robing room stairs at the museum building in Mantorville (1869 Saint John’s Episcopal Church). The weathered wood responded beautifully. Indeed, those unfamiliar with the previous appearance might assume that a totally new ramp and stairs were installed.

Mark Packard took first turn at pressure washing. James Checkel and Linda Jerviss relieved him to finish the job. Meanwhile, Warren Schwenke repaired the robing room railings and steps. He and others then sanded both the access ramp and the robing room stairs in preparation for staining. Warren finished that task as the final phase of the project.



*SPLISH SPLASH.* Mark Packard (feet seen above) was wet and wild as he pressure washed the access ramp.



*SAFE AND SOUND.* Warren Schwenke repaired the robing room stairs in advance of pressure washing, sanding, and staining. The lowest tread was flipped and the railings were tightened.



*The access ramp (above) and robing room stairs (below) at the museum got a new lease on life after sanding and staining.*



# 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.

The letter of Captain Cilley is a continuation from the previous issue of *The Hilltop*. The soldiers referenced were familiar in 1862, but perhaps not today. They are as follows:

Uriah Bonser (1835-1897)

Julius Capon (1828-1897)

John Cartwright (1840-1921)

George F. Castle (1843-1922)

Charles C. Dike (1843-1920)

Alexander Doig (1839-1916)

Edmond Garrison (1836-1922)

Robert R. Hutchinson (1837-1911)

Samuel S. Kline (1840-1868)

Theodore D. Orcutt (1836-1892)

Joseph M. Russ (1841-1922)

C. Richmond Shedd (1829-1864)

David Tooke (1831-1884)

Ervin D. Townsend (1836-1891)

Benjamin F. Wood (1832-1894)

Morgan L. Wood (1835-1934)

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## *DOWN AND DIRTY*

Museum work is not always glamorous. A tip of the hardhat to Dodge County Commissioner John Allen, who took time away from his weekend on August 17 to install a drainage system (below) at the bottom of the basement cellar steps as a solution to persistent water problems. Mark Packard provided assistance and subsequent inspection. So far it has been successful!

Also in August, James Checkel (right) worked the old fashioned way on the grounds. He utilized a scythe to trim the overgrown south slope.



# *A FUNNY WOMAN*

November 9

Mantorville Opera House (Mantorville)

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