

DCHS bringing history to county schools

Hello everybody! I am pleased to announce Dodge County Historical Society is now in the classroom. After discussing details with Kasson-Mantorville Schools, we will be giving a presentation to the sixth graders about Dodge County's involvement and impact in the Civil War. Sixth grade is when students take Minnesota history and learn about our state. They are in the middle of learning about the Civil War. Our relationship with the schools is not just in the classroom. We are beginning preparations to have the first graders and sixth graders from Kasson-Mantorville visit the museum at the end of their school year in May. We are also setting up a trip to Dodge County Historical Society for the seventh graders from Triton as well.

-Consulting Director Annie Buresh

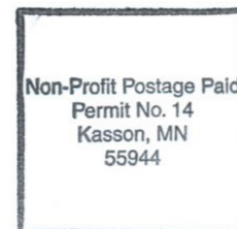


DODGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOX 456

MANTORVILLE, MN 55955

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The Hilltop

News from the Dodge County Historical Society

February 2024

Got a skill? Share it with DCHS

We're making some important accomplishments here at the Historical Society, including preservation of artifacts, exhibits, events, and fundraising.

None of these things could have been accomplished without our generous volunteers, who contribute so much time and energy in addition to financial giving. We are benefitting from the employment of our consulting director, Annie Buresh, and she

is with us for a year. We have ongoing projects that will have to be continued by volunteer workers.

Please consider spending some hours volunteering with us. Three projects that are available for interested individuals:

- Photographer of our special events;
- Social media manager; and
- Web page manager.

We have ongoing needs for vol-

unteers with:

- data entry;
- collection management;
- research;
- museum hosting; and
- special events - planning through cleanup.

If you'd like to give a few hours or several hours a month, contact a board member or email us at dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Volunteer Profile: Patti Krier

Patti Krier is one of our most active volunteers, and her energy and positive attitude are a great asset to us.

A lifetime member since 1994, Patti has done everything from sweeping up flies and scrubbing floor tiles to hosting visitors at the museum and assisting with genealogy research.

"I enjoy helping them search for their grandparents and great-grandparents that lived in Dodge County," she said.

Patti has enjoyed history since her high school years at West Concord, but a more personal interest developed in 1992 when she got involved with cleaning out her grandparents homestead in Wasioja Township. "That was over 80 years worth of stuff to be sorted for auction," she recalls.

Along with her time spent here at DCHS, Patti also volunteers at the West Concord Historical Society, and helps out with research and cleaning. At both historical societies, she enjoys being on teams



Patti Krier assists with genealogy research, helps with cleaning and hosts museum visitors.

of volunteers. "They make me laugh and enjoy life every time we're together."

Board Members

Jean Bartel, President
 Nan Babcock, Vice President
 Lois Hancock, Secretary
 Tom Gall, Treasurer
 Linda Jerviss
 Lori Kryzer
 Dallas Ness
 Annie Buresh, Consulting Director

Hours

By appointment only through May. Please contact us 48 hours in advance if you want to make an appointment to come in. We will do our best to accommodate you.

Contact Information

Dodge County Historical Society
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 Mantorville, MN 55955
 Phone: 507.635.5508
 Email: dodgecountyhistorical.society@gmail.com

Website

<https://dodgecountyhistorical.mn/>

Moving?

Please contact the society if your address or email has changed.



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.

Election coming this spring

The election for our Board of Directors will be held in March and April with two positions open. We seek candidates that bring a positive attitude and a good work ethic to our organization. The Board meets monthly, and attendance at monthly meetings is important. Board members need to bring an availability to work on our projects as well as expertise in areas like research, finance, and event planning. Historical Society members are welcome to nominate candidates for the director positions. Candidates must be members of the Historical Society. Nominations should be received by Feb. 20. Mail-in ballots will be mailed to members March 11 and must be mailed returned by April 8. Election results will be announced at our Annual Meeting on April 12. Contact us at our email, dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com with nominations or questions.

DCHS annual meeting is April 12

Watch for more information on our Annual Meeting, set for April 12. This event is for members only, and we'll be taking reservations for a great meal and an entertaining and informative program by Ben Scott, a local expert on Bishop Whipple, an influential early settler in southeast Minnesota. This event includes a chance to spend time with others who are fascinated with our history. We are sending out letters to remind people their membership is due.

Display case sponsors needed

Would you like to make a difference at our Museum by sponsoring a display case?

We have two cases in need of repairs and refurbishment. The generosity of the sponsor will be commemorated in a permanent plaque on the case.



This case needs to be refinished and restored at an estimated cost of \$1,600.

One case needs extensive repairs and refinishing at a cost of \$1,600. If you would like to contribute in this way, contact us at dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Memberships & Donations

Members David Aakre; Barbra Alberts; Gloria Alberts; John Allen; Gerald Andrist; Keith Applequist; Nan Babcock; William Babcock; Bruce Bachman; Gordon Bailey; Josephine Bailey; Ben Baker; Charlene Baker; Dawn Bartel; Jean Bartel; Joy Beaver; Wallace Bigelow; Dan Blaisdell; Bruce Bordelon; Janice Borgstrom-Durst; Myrna Bowie; Kim Boyum; Mary Ann Bucher; Annie Buresh; Folmer Carlsen; Jane Carlsen; Cindi Carter; Shirley Chapin; James Checkel; David Chicos; Dawn Conwell; Lillian Crawford; Darrol Davis; Randy Demmer; John Donovan; David Dubbels; Walter Dunlap; Kenneth Durst; Ron Durst; Joseph Duschek; Catherine Eayrs; Sue Edge; David Eide; Kevin Eipers; Stephen Elliot; Nancy Ellison; David Erickson; Timothy Erickson; Audrey Erwin; Neil Farnham; Scott French; Samuel Fudenberg; Thomas Gall; Gerald Giese; Virginia Giese; Barbara Gilliland; William Gilliland; George Gilman; Thelma Givan; Glenn Glaus; Douglas Gochnauer; Sandra Gochnauer; Don Gray; Steven Gray; Diann Greene; Doris Greene; Karl Griffith; Erik Hahn; Kenneth Halverson; Lois Hancock; Susan Hansen; David Hanson; Lori Hanson; Timothy Hanson; Denise Hassenstab; Phillip Haukom; Colleen Hayne; Don Hodgman; Don Hofstad; Brian Houston; Donald Hrtanek; Nicole Hrtanek; Timothy Hyland; Eva Mairine Iverson; Phillip Iverson; Jan Jech; Tom Jensch; Linda Jerviss; Harold Johnson; Lois Johnson; Janet Kelling; Judith Kinsey; Quentin & Marion Kleinwort; Julie Kline; Alice Knox; Lynn Knutson; Gary Kramer; Patricia Krier; Mary Jane Kroulik; Lori Kryzer; Bernice Kubat; Janet Kubat Willette; Bonita Kundert; Skip Lacaze; Paul Larsen; Mary Larson; Robert Law; Dick Leonard; Mary Leonard; James Lermon; Barbara Lewis; Stewart Lewis; Brian Lohrbach; Barbara Loquai; Karen Madsen; Shawn Mantor; Barbara Maplethorpe; Robyn McAtee; Mary Lou McClamroch; Brian McCool; Dudley Miller; Jacqueline Moore; Jeffery Morris; Karen Morris; Kevin Morris; Steve Morris; John Mosher; My Moua; Harry Naatz; Sue Naegeli; Dallas Ness; Donald Ness; Dorene Ness; Diane O'Brien; Jane Olive; John Olive; Mark Packard; Kathy Parke; Dan Paukert; April Paulson; Everett Paulson; Robert Perry; Joe Peterson; Vicki Peterson; Boyd Ratchye; Janis Ray; Joy Reber; Vicki Rhodes; Marjorie Rosendahl; Larry Rouhoff; Jacob Roy; Jerry Roy; Pamela Sander; Michael Schletty; Evelyn Schlichting; Doug & Linda Schmidt; Tammy Schneider; Warren Schwenke; Daniel Senjem; David Senjem; Donald Senjem; Norman Senjem; Robert Senjem; Sara Senjem-Johnson; Judy Severson; Neil Simonson; Chris Snow; Janet Staed; Diane Stark; Glen Stark; Frances Still; Jerry Suhr; Jeff Sullivan; Dick Swenke; Katherine-Fleener Techam; Rebel Temple; Charles Test; Sharon Thiemann; Nancy Thornton; Dee Tollefson; Donna Tollefson; Kaye Toquam; Orlo Toquam; Gary Trelstad; Janet Tripp; Stanley Tvedt; John Walbruch; Virginia Watterson; Rick Welsh; Roger Welsh; Thomas Wentworth Jr; Connie Wobig; Clinette Wolf.

2023 Donors 1 Stop Realty; Barbra Alberts; Gerald Andrist; Noel Austin; Nan Babcock; Barb Bachman; Roxayn Ball; Rod and Nancy Bakken; Virginia Basseen; Joy Beaver; Nancy Becker-Peterson; Julie Bergwn; Wallace Bigelow; Kathleen Blanchard; Janice Borgstrom-Durst; Kim Boyum; Monica Brossard; Mary Ann Bucher; Folmer Carlsen; Cindi Carter; Nancy Clancy; Con Tech Manufacturing Inc.; Jerry Dallmann; Phyllis Deer; Kathy Demmer; Randy Demmer; Arlen Dirks; John Donovan; Walter Dunlap; Ron Durst; Catherine Eayrs; Sue Edge; Vernice Engelken; Eleanor Engesser; David Erickson; Timothy Erickson; Gerry Fahning; Don Fuller; Lois Fure; Thomas Gall; Darleen Gillard; Barbara Gilliland; Sandra Gochnauer; Nancy Grabau; Diann Greene; Karl Griffith; Lois Hancock; Mary Hansen; Susan Hansen; David Hanson; Mary Beth Harmon; Harolds Club; Joan Harris Meyer; Colleen Hayne; Heritage Bank; Sheila Hisdahl; Brian Houston; Daryl Houston; Karl Huppler; Linda Jerviss; Lois Johnson; Kathleen Simpson; Linda Klassen; KMTelecom; Lynn Knutson; Gary Kramer; Patricia Krier; MaryLee Lambert; Paul Larsen; Mary Larson; Lois Law; Robert Law; Joanne Lerud-Heck; Lions Club of Kasson-Mantorville; Dave Livingston; Barbara Loquai; Marilyn Luck; Barbara Maplethorpe; Kathleen Matthees; Mary Lou McClamroch; Beth Mccool; Karen Morris; Kevin Morris; John Mosher; Nancy Naatz; Sue Naegeli; Virginia Narveson; Lynnette Nash; Carla Nelson; Dan & Tammy Neseth; Donald Ness; John Olive; Larry Pedersen; Ruth Pedersen; Robert Perry; Delores Potter; Merrie Powell; Janis Ray; Ripley Township; Rochester Area Foundation; Marilyn Sally; Pamela Sander; Robert Scherger; Michael Schletty; Evelyn Schlichting; Tammy Schneider; Dale Schroeder; Warren Schwenke; David Senjem; Donald Senjem; Norman Senjem; Robert Senjem; Judy Severson; Lance Sorensen; Cheryl Stowers; Jerry Suhr; Michael Suhr; Jeff Sullivan; Dick Swenke; Rebel Temple; Sharon Thiemann; Thrivent Communication; Dee Tollefson; Stanley Tvedt; Valane Tyler; Wasioja Township; Doris Weber; Ida Weber; Deborah Wells; West St Olaf Lutheran Church

Dodge Center's musical doctor: W.E. Belt

Dr. Wallace E. Belt was an early physician in Dodge Center and he had a musical skill as well. He is one of the fascinating characters in our county's past. Part of our mission is to share these characters with you. A person interested in Dodge County history found this information about Dr. Belt.

Dr. Belt was born in Wisconsin and grew up in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. He was an 1889 graduate of the medical school, University of Minnesota, and then was appointed to Red Lake Indian Reservation as a physician. He then practiced medicine in Wisconsin before coming to Dodge Center in 1904 with his wife Mildred and his daughter Hazel.

Dr. Belt enjoyed a "large and rapidly growing practice" in the early 1900's. He ran the Belt Pharmacy from 1914-1936 in Dodge Center.

Dr. Belt is thought to be the doctor referred to in the popular book "Sybil," a 1973 book that most people in Dodge Center have read. The book mentions violins that the town doctor had.

The doctor stopped practicing medicine in 1936 and began to de-

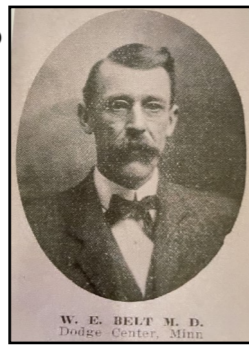
vote himself to his hobby of making violins. He made them for 40 years and produced 131 in all. He built an elaborate workshop around his hobby, and for many years he was a serious student of the violin. There are advertisements from violin publication (1921-1924) that tell us about his expertise in violin making. His violin was simply called The Belt Violin and he advertised them as being of "good tone and volume." Not only did he make them, he "reconstructed and turned an ordinary violin into a high-grade instrument. He would take a violin made by an amateur and rebuild it. He made and sold his own varnish called Succinum Violin Varnish.

An article in the Dodge Center newspaper of 1924 says that "Dr. Belt took two of his violins to

New York with him." He attended the first convention of the American Violin Makers, along with some of the world's most noted violinists. His violins were noted as made from very pretty wood and beautifully stained with a wonderful tone. It was also noted that his violins were not made without great work. At the time one of his violins sold for \$175.



Dr. Belt's story escaped us until a person interested in Dodge County history found his story. How many other people are there in Dodge County's history that we don't know about? Do you have a story of a person from Dodge County whose story we don't know?



VIOLINS OF GOOD TONE AND VOLUME

I can furnish at prices ranging from \$50.00 to \$100.00. Also several more of very high grade will be ready by December 1st. I am having a booklet printed giving information about them; in the mean time address me for description, prices, etc.

W. E. BELT, Maker and Repairer

Dodge Center MINNESOTA

THE BELT VIOLIN

I now have two violins on hand of my own make, which I will send express paid to any one giving satisfactory bank references, C. O. D. \$100.00 express prepaid, subject to six days trial. The tone value of either of them was set at \$200.00 by good violinists. Correspondence solicited.

DR. W. E. BELT, Dodge Center, Minn.

SUCCINUM VIOLIN VARNISH

will give you satisfaction, and is easy to apply. Write a post card and ask for information.

THE BELT VIOLIN

I have some Violins of fine tone from \$50.00 to \$200.00. Prices and description given for the asking.

W. E. BELT Dodge Center, Minn.

Advertisements from "The Violinist" (1921 -1924) from Google Books

Christmas in Wasioja

Christmas in Wasioja 2023 was a festive interlude for those who visited the Creamery and the Church on Dec. 10. Visitors enjoyed the Creamery, decorated on two floors with multiple Christmas trees, and this year the upper floor was filled with songs provided by musicians Tammy Schneider on accordion and acoustic guitar, and Wendy Larson on the fiddle.

Christmas cookies, candy and coffee were available to the guests, and a bake sale featured homemade treats in boxes and bags, along with the



Musicians Tammy Schneider and Wendy Larson entertained visitors. Schneider played the accordion and acoustic guitar and Larson played the fiddle.

kransekake - Norwegian wedding cakes, which had to be pre-ordered.

The Wasioja Church, festooned for the season, was the site of the annual Christmas service, with piano and Christmas carols by Levi Livingood, and

an inspiring message from Pastor Karen Larson of Zwingli United Church of Christ in Berne. Pastor Karen played the role of Santa Lucia and shared her life story. Refreshments were served after the service.

These enjoyable activities wouldn't have been possible without the talented and energetic volunteers who helped with decorating our buildings, baking all the tasty delicacies, and serving our guests.

Work continues on digitizing birth and death records

One of our winter projects that we work on while the Museum is closed is digitizing our county birth and death records. Jean Bartel and Annie Buresh are putting in many hours on their computers to get this task completed.

Last fall at the Museum, the fragile old paper records were scanned with the help of Susan Hansen, a retired Rochester reference librarian. Susan scanned each record and used her specialized equipment to splice the digital pages because they were so large. The original pages were stored chronologically by village or township in archival file folders and archival banker's boxes. Each record will be indexed on a spreadsheet so people researching their family history can find the information digitally, and the fragile rec-

Return of Deaths in the County of _____ State of Minnesota for the year ending December 31, 19__													
No.	DATE OF DEATH		FULL NAME OF DECEASED	SEX	COLOR	MARRIAGE	AGE	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF ARRIVAL IN MINN.		DISEASE, OR CAUSE OF DEATH	OCCUPATION	MARRIAGE AND BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS
	Month	Day							Year	Month			
1	Mar	13	1873	Mrs. Gyrenley	Female	White	Married 28	New York State					
2	June	20	1873	Olga Christoff	Female	White	Married	England					
3	July	11	1873	John World	Male	White	Married	Minnesota					
4	Nov	11	1873	Augusta Nyström	Female	White	Married 66	Sweden					
5	Nov	22	1873	John J. J. J.	Male	White	Married 69	Canada					
6	July	22	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 1	Minnesota					
7	July	10	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 11	Minnesota					
8	July	11	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 11	Minnesota					
9	Oct	19	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Married 51	Minnesota					
10	Dec	14	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Married 53	Minnesota					
11	Nov	27	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 17	Minnesota					
12	May	4	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 17	Minnesota					
13	June	14	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 17	Minnesota					
14	June	23	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Married 53	Minnesota					
15	June	14	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Married 71	Minnesota					
16	Jan	31	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 10	Minnesota					
17	Oct	30	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 5	Minnesota					
18	Dec	10	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Married 28	Minnesota					
19	Dec	30	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 27	Minnesota					
20	Apr	25	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 115	Minnesota					
21	May	13	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 1	Minnesota					
22	July	13	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 15	Minnesota					
23	July	13	1873	John J. J.	Male	White	Single 15	Minnesota					

ord sheets won't need to be handled to find the information. The digital records are the original documents in handwritten ledgers, and the current task is to decipher the handwriting, spell names cor-

rectly and record the relevant dates onto a spreadsheet that can be searched. This part of the task is done entirely on computer, working remotely while the Museum is closed for the winter. Jean is working on Ashland Township

births and Susan is working on Wasioja Township births. Annie is working on Kasson deaths. Patti Krier is double checking and investigating hard to decipher or missing information.

Rockton Flour

By Tim Gangl

Rockton Flour began its life at the Old Rockton Mill that was once along the Zumbro River east of Mantorville. I communicated with the Dodge County Historical Society, and I spent much time looking through public records at Dodge County Public Research. It was super interesting, but sometimes confusing because at one time there were three different mills in Mantorville township. I have focused on the Rockton Mill and the succeeding mill, and believe I came up with a great history.

John Row moved to Mantorville from Iowa in 1854 and located himself on a farm in Canisteo Township. Around 1860 he purchased the property along the Zumbro River east of town that would eventually be where the Rockton Mill would stand. There he built a steam sawmill just northeast of that site with Henry Couse. The sawmill burned down sometime in early 1864 and was then rebuilt by a firm with the name of Samuel Adams & Sons, they added a dam at the site and had a set of buhr millstones sent over from France. These stones were installed for grinding the grain and it was believed they made a superior wheat product because of the stone's hardness and its ability to grind much whiter flour.

Mr. Row took on Mr. Adams as a partner and two years later, sold out his interest to Samuel Adams and his son John. Interesting fact: John Adams was born in 1839 in Rockton, IL. Consequently, that is how the mill



got its name. They eventually became proprietors of both the Mantorville Mill and the Rockton Mill. The Rockton Mill during this time became entirely a gristmill (which grinds cereal grain into flour and middlings), and the sawmill was decommissioned.

In 1867 Samuel Adams & Son's sold the Rockton Mill to Silas I. Pettit but kept their interest in the Mantorville Mill. In December of 1873 Mr. Pettit sold the Rockton Mill to Newell Dustin who then partnered with George Dustin who managed the mill. George and Newell sold the mill to George Clark in January of 1875 who then sold to John W. Bradford in April of 1875.

Oscar C.F. Sorenson purchased Rockton Mill from Mr. Bradford in 1877. Born in Denmark in 1850, he began at the age of 15 to learn the milling business. He came to America in 1872 and first located in Granville Michigan. He moved to

Dodge County, Minnesota in 1875 and operated the wind powered mill at Claremont for 2 years before purchasing Rockton. The Rockton Mill made buckwheat, rye, and graham flour, as well as corn meal. It was the first mill of this type to manufacture and successfully make a self-rising buckwheat pancake flour. The large buhr millstone with added corrugated steel rolls enabled him to manufacture "fancy patent" (Gold Lace) white flour. Sorenson operated the mill at Rockton until February 1894 when he built the Kasson Roller Mill where the Kasson Fire Department is currently located along the railroad tracks. Operations in Kasson began in August of 1894 and the Rockton location was abandoned. The large Kasson building rose 44 feet above the foundation. The power generated for making the flour was a 50-horsepower steam engine and then was later powered by electricity.

Burt P. Sorenson started working for his father (Oscar) while quite young at the "Old Rockton Mill" and was quoted as saying "A miller should grow-up in a mill". The examples of both he and his father would prove it. The product of their combined years of experience was "The Original" Rockton self-rising buckwheat flour along with Sorenson's Gold Lace white flour, giving Kasson Minnesota recognition throughout the milling world. Sacks with the slogan "There's Nothing Like It" would begin to fill up the warehouse every fall and would nearly empty every summer. Rockton pancake flour was shipped all over the United States and used at such places as a Sun Valley Idaho resort and exclusively by many railroads including the Union Pacific.

Burt Sorenson took over management of Kasson Roller Mill in 1919. In July of 1931 after retiring in California, Oscar Sorenson turned over ownership of the mill to his son Burt. Burt continued to operate the Kasson Mill which was one of the last mills operating in the area. In 1959 Burt and his helper shipped out 331,000 pounds of buckwheat flour and had been in operation in Kasson for 66 years. Combined with the years at the Rockton Mill, Oscar and Burt Sorenson were milling flour in the area for 82 years.

In November of 1959 Burt shut down the Sorenson Milling Company and sold the Kasson Roller Mills building to Styline Corporation of Huntingburg Indiana, and then sold the milling equipment to the Kasson Elevator.

Rockton Flour



tor. Styline Corporation manufactured occasional tables, desks, contract bedroom furniture, and office furniture during that time. I was not able to find any evidence that they ever used the building.

On the afternoon of March 23, 1962, at the age of 85, Burt Sorenson died at his home of a cerebral brain hemorrhage. In May of 1966 it was decided that the Kasson Roller Mills building would be torn down and in fact was shortly after. In 1972 the Kasson City Council tried to reach an agreement to purchase the site from Styline Corp. without success. A few years later they were somehow able to, and in 1975 the Kasson Fire Hall was built at the location. The Sorenson family retained ownership of the Rockton Mill site until late May of 1989 when it was sold to the current owners. With permission from the current landowner, I was able to visit the Old Rockton Mill site some weeks back. Searching out the site and seeing what was left, mostly limestone foundation and mortar with anchor bolts in

it, I couldn't help but feel the spirit of the time back during the areas beginnings when the mill was in operation. As I walked out what was still a very visible drive, though many trees had fallen over it, I could imagine the sound of horse hooves and the rattling of a buckboard wagon coming in to deliver a load of wheat.

I found an old tire back there and wondered if it came off the old 1950 Willys pickup that rumor has a couple of young bucks got stuck down there with a broken axle sometime in the early 60's.

What an opportunity and privilege this has been, I am so appreciative of all who have helped me with my research and hope you've enjoyed.

Credits and Sources:

*Dodge County Historical Society
Dodge County Records Office
Dodge County Independent Archives
Smalltownnewspapers.com
Kasson Public Library
Dubois County Bicentennial
Genealogytrails.com*