
Newsletter

Christmas in Wasioja is Dec. 14

Preparations are underway for Christmas at the Creamery and the Candlelight Christmas Service at the Wasioja Church on Sunday, Dec. 14.

Come to the Creamery, 20865 602nd St., Dodge Center, MN 55927, from 1 to 5 p.m. to enjoy the festive seasonal ambience, refreshments and live music.

We will have a few select vendors with their wares for sale, and we will sell boxes of homemade cookies for you to enjoy later.

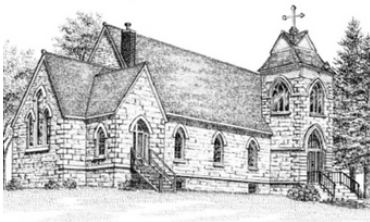
The service at the historic Wasioja Church, 59956 212th Ave., Dodge Center MN 55927, begins at 6 p.m. with live music by Levi Livingood starting at 5:30 p.m. Pastor John Todor of Kasson will provide an inspirational message.

Make plans to celebrate the season with us in Wasioja.

Free-will donations are greatly appreciated to defray event costs.



Volunteers Ann Marie Asprey Erdmann and Lori Kryzer decorate at the Creamery in Wasioja in preparation for Christmas in Wasioja on Dec. 14. Come out to Wasioja from 1 to 5 p.m. to enjoy music, festive seasonal ambience and refreshments. Free-will donations will be taken to offset the costs of the event and fund operations of the Dodge County Historical Society. Please remember the historical society as you plan your year-end tax-deductible contributions.



Board members

Jean Bartel, President
Nan Babcock, Vice President
Lois Hancock, Secretary
Tom Gall, Treasurer
Mary Sue Sandeno
Dale Rood

Hours

By appointment only through May. Please contact us via email 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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P.O. Box 456
Mantorville, MN 55955
Phone: 507.635.5508
Email:
dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Website

<https://dodgecountyhistorical.mn/>

Moving?

Please contact the historical society if your address, phone number 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.

Member updates

Submit a name for the DCHS newsletter

We are in the process of re-designing our newsletter, and we're brainstorming for a new name.

We would like your imaginative ideas to add to our list of possibilities. Please email your suggestions to us at dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com by Jan. 10.

The contest winner will receive the T-shirt of their choice, either University of Minnesota or Man's Beer.

Volunteers honored at DCHS open house

Our last day for regular open hours at the museum was Saturday, Oct. 25, and we made it a celebration by honoring our many volunteers with an open house featuring coffee, cider and homemade cookies.

You are welcome to visit the museum by making an appointment, and our volunteers will be happy to meet you there.

Members: Update your information

Many of the DCHS membership records are out of date and need to be updated. If you've ditched your landline, updated your email address or moved, please let us know so we can keep in touch. Email your updated information to dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

thrivent[®]

Your donations power the work of Dodge County Historical Society

DCHS is a nonprofit organization that relies heavily on your generosity. One example of a giving opportunity is through Thrivent. IBM employees can do matching grants.

As you consider your end of year giving, please keep the Dodge County Historical Society in mind.

The purpose of the historical society is to preserve and promote the history of Dodge County, Minnesota.



A much needed clean-up of the landscaping around the DCHS Museum was completed in October by Myles Hall, who is a Boy Scout that needed to do volunteering in the community. Myles happens to be our board member Lois Hancock's grandson. Lois and Myles accomplished a lot of improvements on a warm October day.

Veterans honored in latest display

We completed a new exhibit honoring a local veteran that is now on display at the Dodge County Court House Annex in Mantorville.

This year we feature Henry Christenson, a World War I soldier who died of Spanish flu. (See the article on page 7 in this newsletter.)

We have an exhibit featuring World War II veteran Richard Staub and a display featuring Sergeant Amos Austin, who also served in World War II. Both are on display in Kasson. One is on display at the Kasson Public Library and the other is on display at Prairie Meadows Senior Living.

If you have an idea for a future exhibit, please email the museum at dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.



Dennis and Diana Vang are valued volunteers, and Dennis is a talented woodcarver. The Vangs donated several Civil War figures that Dennis created, and they now reside in a glass case at the museum. Many thanks to the Vangs for this amazing collection.

A family was going through their photographs and came across this image from the 1920s. It's from downtown Dodge Center.

We speculate that it's a Fourth of July parade.

Do you have any details about this photograph to share? Email dodgecountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.



Railroads were critical to U.S. development

By Dale Rood

In our modern age, it may not be realized how important the railroads were in the development of our country.

Transportation was by horseback or buggy, and freight was hauled by wagon. The only form of transportation capable of hauling many passengers or large quantities of freight were the riverboats. Winona, MN was one of the locations where riverboats could dock and load or unload. The problem was getting the goods to Winona, and that is where the railroads come in.

The first railroad in the United States was built in New Jersey in 1825. It soon became evident that this was a solution to the transportation of large quantities of goods and people over land, and railroads began to be built across our country.

The Minnesota territorial legislature passed the Land Grant Act in 1857, chartering 4 railroad companies. Actual railroad construction began the next year.

The city fathers in Winona could see the railroad would be a way to get goods to Winona to be



This a CGW train on the north south line that used to run through Dodge Center, taken by Phil Rood in 1969. The six unit diesel lash up was characteristic of the CGW and was a distinctive for which they were known.

shipped out by riverboat. They incorporated the Transit Railroad Company in 1854. However it went bankrupt in 1860. The state seized the Transit's assets and turned them over to other railroad-minded people. They formed the Winona & St. Peter Railroad, and began to build west toward Rochester in 1862. In 1865 it was built from Rochester to Kasson, and in 1866 was built from Kasson to Owatonna.

At the time the railroad was built in Dodge County, Mantorville and Wasioja were the two primary communities in the county. However for various reasons the railroad bypassed them and built further to the

south. Along the railroad route several towns were platted. Kasson was platted in 1865 with the arrival of the railroad. Dodge Center was platted in 1869, and Claremont village was built by the railroad and incorporated in 1878.

Several relocations took place because of the railroad. D.L. Tyler moved from Ashland to Dodge Center in 1867 and opened a general store. The Seventh Day Baptist Church moved their church building from Ashland to Dodge Center in 1873. The Congregational Church relocated from Wasioja to Dodge Center in 1875.

In 1867 The Winona & St. Peter was purchased by

the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (C&NW), causing the Winona investors to lose control of their railroad and placing control of the line in the hands of investors based in Chicago. The railroad was no longer focused on the local area of southeast Minnesota, and soon was collecting greatly inflated fares for shipping grain, lumber, or other goods.

Particularly distressing for the businessmen hoping to build up Winona was the fact the railroad charged the same fare for shipping to Chicago as it did to Winona. Also fares were



This train is on the bridge over Highway 14 (now County 34) near McNeilus Truck and Manufacturing, taken in December 1990. It actually is a Dakota, Minnesota, and Eastern local serving Greenway Co-op, but it is running on the old Chicago Great Western (CGW) main track.

considerably more where there was no competition. It was cheaper to ship from Owatonna, which was served by both the C&NW and the Milwaukee Railroad, than from Dodge County.

Into this situation, a businessman in the Twin Cities by the name of A.B. Stickney set about to build a railroad controlled by Minnesota businessmen. His focus was to build a line that ran as directly as possible from the Twin Cities to Chicago. He was not concerned about going through all the major metropolises he could along the way. Thus what became the Chicago Great Western Railroad (CGW) was formed in the 1880's and ran through southern Minnesota small towns as directly as possible to Chicago. The CGW's route took it through Dodge County in a north

south route, passing through West Concord, Dodge Center, where it crossed the C&NW, and through Hayfield on to Oelwein, Iowa, and to Chicago. Again the railroad had a role in establishing these towns along its route. I suspect this is why we have West Concord growing up

where the railroad went, bypassing Concord. The first train along this route passed through Hayfield in 1885. Hayfield became a significant location on this route, as it was there the main line to Kansas City through Des Moines, Iowa, and the main line to Chicago through the Oelwein split. A small but

significant yard was established in Hayfield because of this.

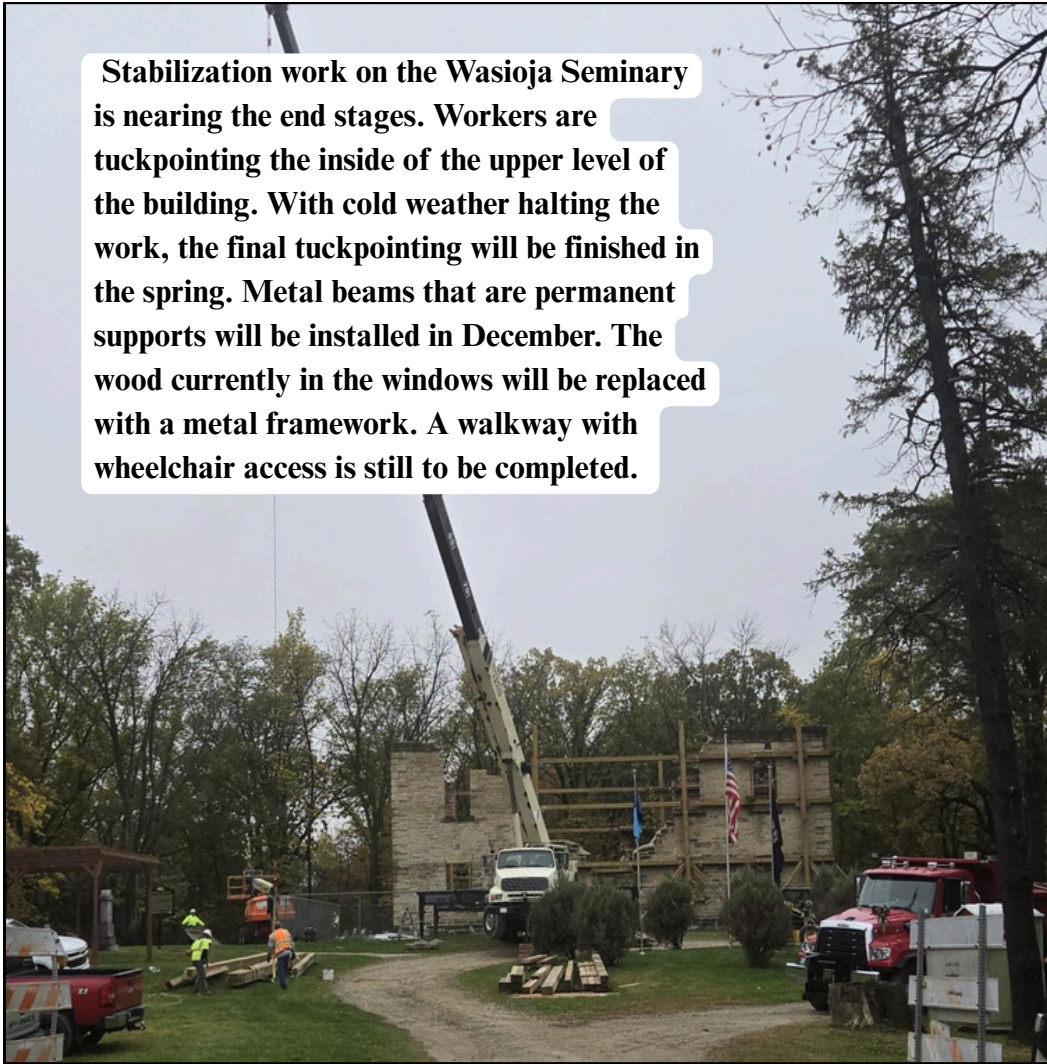
Today the CGW is gone. The C&NW bought it and, after a short time running its trains on that route, closed it when a preferred route to Kansas City became available using the old Rock Island Railroad tracks through Owatonna. The C&NW in Dodge County became the Dakota, Minnesota, and Eastern Railroad (DME) in the 1980's, which subsequently became Canadian Pacific. It remains a major east-west railroad route in southern Minnesota and into South Dakota. Why did the railroad pass Mantorville and Wasioja? Were there ever railroads into Mantorville or Wasioja? I will be writing about these things in the future.



Taken by Phil Rood in 1969, this is a Chicago and Northwestern C&NW diesel taken at the Seventh Day Baptist Church (now Anchor of Hope Church), and is a 1500 horsepower locomotive built by Alco (American Locomotive Company) designated RSD-4. The C&NW ran Alco locomotives on this line, and it therefore came to be identified as the "Alco Line."

Stabilization in progress at Wasioja Seminary

Stabilization work on the Wasioja Seminary is nearing the end stages. Workers are tuckpointing the inside of the upper level of the building. With cold weather halting the work, the final tuckpointing will be finished in the spring. Metal beams that are permanent supports will be installed in December. The wood currently in the windows will be replaced with a metal framework. A walkway with wheelchair access is still to be completed.



Restoration work continues at Wasioja School

Our historic Wasioja School has been in the renovation process this year during the construction season. The roof and soffits were completely redone earlier in the summer, and the front entry.

The windows are being removed a few at a time, and the original glass preserved while new, historically authentic wooden frames are constructed. Three windows have been rebuilt and replaced, with four in process and nine left to do.

The stone school was designed in 1858 and work completed in 1860 by the Doig Brothers, master stonemasons from Scotland. Children in first through fourth grades used the main floor and older students used the second floor.

The school was in use until the mid-1950s when country schools closed and students went to school in town.



Dodge County soldier Henry Christensen died of Spanish flu before shipping overseas to serve

Henry Christensen is a Dodge County soldier whose story was forgotten because he died of pneumonia/influenza before serving in World War I. He died at age 24.

The son of Jacob and Mary Christensen, Henry was born in Dodge County Feb. 5, 1894. He joined the army and left Dodge County from the train station in Eden (Cheney) with 48 other recruits Feb. 23, 1918 for training at Camp Dodge, Des Moines, Iowa. After a month there, he was promoted to the Engineers and transferred to Fort Grant in Rockford, Illinois.

While he was in training at Fort Grant, the initial wave of the Spanish influenza epidemic hit, and Henry contracted the flu, which turned into pneumonia. Tragically, he died April 5, 1918, two months after his initial enlistment.

Henry lived in Canisteo and Ashland townships his entire life with the exception of the years in Canada. His brother, Peter, preceded him in death. Survivors were his mother and father, and siblings Albert and Lillian of Kasson; Godfred and Mr. L.E. Poore of Rochester; Charley of Rock



Dell; and Mrs. G.F. Ahern of Minneapolis.

Uncle Henry was a favorite of his toddler niece. She remembers wrapping her hands around his fingers to help her learn to walk. As a toddler, he would play Hide and Seek with her and her two siblings, she remembers being so small she could run under the kitchen table to hide. Henry drove a Model T Ford, and the nieces and nephews would get excited when they saw him coming down the driveway. He would give them a ride to the Salem Corners store, recently built in 1918, to buy penny candy.

War and disease have been linked together throughout history. More

military personnel died from the Spanish flu than from weapons in World War I. The war effort caused thousands of men to live close together in military camps, a fertile breeding ground for the disease.

Spring 1918 was the first wave of the pandemic. About a third of the U.S. population was affected and it was the worst pandemic in history. The influenza outbreak was responsible for an estimated fifty million deaths worldwide; 675,000 of these were in the United States; over 10,000 were in Minnesota with high death rates among young children, older adults, and, more unusually, young adults, especially men.

A victim could be healthy in the morning and dying by evening. Symptoms included cough, exhaustion, general body pain, chills, fever, congestion, and bleeding from body orifices. Patients could develop devastating lung damage resulting in pneumonia.

Minnesota health officials told people to rest, use handkerchiefs, and call a doctor if symptoms

appeared. They discouraged standing in crowds, spitting on floors and sidewalks, and sharing drinking cups and towels.

Officials closed public spaces such as schools, libraries, pool halls, theaters and churches. Public events such as parties, meetings, and funerals were banned.

There was a shortage of health care workers, with a third of doctors supporting the war effort, and others in northern Minnesota caring for forest fire victims of the 1918 Cloquet-Moose Lake wildfires. Many were sick themselves, had died from the flu or were fearful of exposure. Undertakers, grave diggers, pall bearers, and clergy were also ill and dying.

**150 Cases of
Influenza in
Minneapolis**

**Soldiers First Victims of
Spanish Malady, But
Some Civilians Ill.**

Annual Membership \$20

Membership includes: Promotions, requests for research assistance, newsletters and limited number of mailings, which are sent via mail, email and text.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Ok to text? Yes / No

Email: _____

Make checks payable to Dodge County Historical Society and mail to Dodge County Historical Society, P.O. Box 456, Mantorville, MN 55955.

DODGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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