

Steele County HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



A History Worth Preserving

Christmas in the Village
Valentine Dinner Lecture Series
CHUCKWAGON SUPPER
Vintage Sale PRESERVATION AWARDS
Extravaganza History Center
Steele County Free Fair
Harvest Fest & Cemetery Walk
Village of Yesteryear

The **MISSION** of the Steele County Historical Society is to **PRESERVE ARTIFACTS** and **INTERPRET** the **HISTORY** of the land, peoples, and events of **STEELE COUNTY**, relating them to the history of the state and nation, and making these **RECORDS** and **MATERIALS** available to **ALL** who wish to study or examine them.

President's Message



When I became an employee of the "private" sector I naively imagined that going to meetings would be the epitome of success. Well, if that is truly the case, this past year as president of the Steele County Historical Society Board of Directors has taken me

through the glass ceiling of that success! Some days I met myself going out of the door from one meeting to coming right back in for another. And yet, how in the world would we be where we are without these sessions?

Our new History Center "created" meetings for many. I believe our contractor (Bob) has weekly (maybe more often) meetings with his own workers, the subcontractors, and maybe even further down the line. Then there were monthly meetings with those of us on the board that could attend. We, as a board of directors, needed to be abreast of things happening and to make sure we were all on the same page. The board itself has 15 people so we chose our area of interest and had our own meetings! It has worked wonderfully. We are so fortunate the people working with us are so understanding and accommodating to our questions and suggestions. I probably should have used the word "patient" first and in upper case letters.

Then we had our monthly board meetings where the board members take charge of events happening at the Village. The Chuckwagon Supper, Extravaganza, Fair, and Christmas in the Village take up a lot of time and energy. We are not the best "ticket sellers" in the world, but some of our members can bake, repair, sing Christmas Carols, portray past Steele County residents, paint, dust and sweep with the best of them. The list could go on and on but I think you get the idea. The saying "it takes a Village" is so true – we are the Village and it takes all of us working together.

This would not be complete without Laura, Dodie, and Dan. Talk about dedication and enthusiasm. Most of us have no idea how many hours each of these three put in and still smile at the end of the day. Okay, maybe some days the smiles are forced. Really, though, they can run circles around me with no trouble. I also can't forget the volunteers "in the basement" who so faithfully go down the steep steps to their appointed jobs. Hang in there – you'll be on ground floor in the new building.

Thank you so much each and every one for a wonderful two years as president of the Society and best of luck to our incoming officers.

SINCERELY,

Charlene Ost | SCHS Board President



Director's Report



The year 2011 will long be remembered as the "Year of the History Center". Due to the incredible generosity and foresight of many, a dream has come true! There are no words to express my gratitude to everyone that has helped to make this incredible accomplishment happen! From the SCHS Board of Directors, to the many volunteers that have served on committees, my fellow staff, donors, our contractors, architects, and many, many, others, we have arrived!

The Center will create so many new opportunities for us. Already we have scheduled two traveling exhibits for 2012. These exhibits, along with our own programming, will be just a hint of what is to come in the future. New classes are being developed, the gift shop will feature local artisans and products, and for those of you that love to research your roots, a comfortable spot will be ready for you in the genealogy and research area, and the multi-purpose room will be available to rent for your special occasion and business needs.

This past year we hosted many of your "old favorite" events, and thanks to Marie Larson and her friends, we added a "Vintage and Plant Sale" in April which was a huge success! The sale featured many unique treasures and a great assortment of plants. In June, in cooperation with Owatonna Community Education and the Friends of Wasioja, we hosted President Lincoln and his wife for a luncheon and evening performance. We promise you even more fun in the future!

In planning ahead, and to keep our commitment for more educational offerings, we added a new part-time staff person this year when we hired Daniel Moeckly. Dan had previously been working for us as a contract employee the past four years. He will be our Programming and Archives Manager. Dan's face may be familiar to many of you, but please welcome him in his new role.

Our beloved Village will continue as a centerpiece to our mission of making Steele County history available and accessible to all, and now, with the History Center we will be able to tell the "rest of the story." Our past is a window to the future and if we are wise we will learn from it, glory in our triumphs, and not repeat our mistakes. All of us at SCHS are committed to helping to tell those stories that are part of each of our lives, and we thank you for all you have done to help us accomplish this!

As we embrace the future and all it holds in store for this wonderful organization, I promise you our best efforts, and I thank you for your continued help and support as we make more Steele County history!

MOST SINCERELY,

Laura Resler | SCHS Director



Today is Tomorrow's History

Education The Society provides educational opportunities throughout the year. Many events are designed with historical content in mind. In 2011, we again hosted our Spring Lecture Series. Topics included; Speaker Jan Stevens, "Women in White: Edwardian Fashions from the SCHS Collection", Author & Speaker, Wayne Quist "God's Angry Man: The Incredible Journey of Private Joe Haan", Author Mike Wolesky "The Czech Settlement of Owatonna", and Speaker Barry Adams, "The Sesquicentennial of Steele County's Involvement in the Civil War". Our Fall Series featured; Speaker & Author John Koblas, "Let them Eat Grass: Smoke, Fire, & Ashes", A trilogy of the 1862 Sioux uprising, Speaker Barry Adams, "The Civil War: Steele County Gears Up For a Long War", and Speaker John Gross "Ben Darby and the Legacy of the Owatonna People's Press". We are grateful to these historians that dedicate themselves to bringing both our local and state history to our members.

In October we hosted, and helped to plan, the "Quality of Life Day" for the Leadership Owatonna participants. Other educational opportunities included Community Ed classes and day trips to historic venues. Our trips this year included the George Washington and King Tut exhibits and a fall trip to Wabasha. Hands on History Camp featured Civil War life and the participants assumed the personalities of actual Steele County soldiers. In November we welcomed children and their parents to the ever popular Children's Victorian Tea hosted by Alayna Mensink. With the History Center soon opening, and the addition of Dan Moeckly to our staff, we are committed to expanding our educational programming and we encourage you to check our website and with Community Ed for upcoming classes.

Technology & Website This is a growth area for SCHS as we continue to digitize our archives. This year there have been 1,323 new catalog entries into the PastPerfect museum software, along with updating 3,307 additional entries. Over 3,125 pages have been put through the OCR software. Currently, there are 6,655 records on PastPerfect. Dan Moeckly oversees our technology and does all our training on PastPerfect. We continue our partnership with *Experience Works*, a federally funded program for training senior citizens. These workers are provided to us at no cost and this has enabled us to expedite the archiving process. Once we are in the History Center there will be more opportunities for research. Our files are regularly "backed up" on a remote hard drive to ensure that they won't be lost in case of computer failure or an act of nature. The process of digitization will be on-going for many years to come, and it is a wonderful volunteer opportunity for anyone who enjoys working on computers and research.

Our website is host to our Photo Collection and much more information about SCHS. The events calendar keeps our members and visitors up-to-date on activities at the Village, and newsletter articles are updated and included.

Genealogy The surname file now contains 37,302 names. Digitized obituaries now number 26,933. The obituary files are maintained and digitized by Joan Nordquist and Bernie Hanson, along with the very dedicated help of Betty Lou Gladen. Due to advances in our technology at SCHS, we are now able to access and print the obits from any computer station.

Oral Histories This active committee has added 15 new interviews in 2011. We've also added 6 new lectures and seven events to the archives. The collection process includes more than just taping the history. Once the interview is done it is then edited and a copy made. An abstract that outlines the interview, and a biography, is also completed as part of the process. Currently, the project's coordinator, Margaret Michaletz, is gathering histories that relate to the Village buildings and a special emphasis has been on collecting military experiences from the World War II era. Oral histories capture not only the Narrator's story, but there is also something extra special about being able to see the Narrator as the story is told.

School Visits This year the Village hosted almost 1,000 students for tours of the Village. These tours are free to any student in Steele County when they come as part of an organized school visit. The Willow Creek students joined us again this year, and we also hosted another day for the other county schools and home school students. We welcome any school in the County to visit and enjoy not only the Village, but also our dedicated interpretive volunteers as they bring the past to life.

Maintenance Almost daily during Tour Season we receive compliments from guests about how nice the Village looks. This is a direct result of the dedication of our Board of Directors in maintaining the property in the best way possible. The buildings that comprise the Village are all artifacts themselves, each with unique characteristics and preservation issues. As stewards of the Village we take seriously the responsibilities that are part of maintaining its beauty.

We continue to partner with the Steele County Detention Center, and many day to day needs are met with their help. This summer the Print Shop was painted, as was the south side and trim of the Carriage House, the trim on the Fire Hall, and the flat areas of the porches. Many of the benches were restored and two new benches were purchased as a memorial. A new (old) door replaced a damaged back door on the Schoolhouse. More boards were engraved and added to Beaver Lake Pop Stand area. A special thank you to Lloyd Kaplan, Jerry Lewison, Jerry Ganfield, and Ken Henricksen for their continued dedication and help!

Our gardens and flower containers are lovingly tended by Pete & Marie Larson, Renee Hyland, Joanne Hollinger (celebrating 30 years of volunteering!), and Joanne Giga.

Tours The Tour Season begins May 1st and ends September 30th. From Tuesday through Sunday, at 1:30pm each day, dedicated guides share their love and knowledge of the Village with visitors from all over the United States, and occasionally other countries. This past year we've hosted bus groups, fair-goers, and many others to our beautiful Village. We welcome anyone who would like to volunteer as a Tour Guide. Training is typically done in mid April. If you're interested in being a guide, please call our office. We are also happy to arrange group tours by appointment. Check our website for History Center exhibits, events and activities beginning in January of 2012.

Preservation & Acquisitions Many new acquisitions came to SCHS this year. All new artifacts are recorded in the Past Perfect software. The condition is assessed and after they are photographed and added to the database they are appropriately stored for use in future displays, exhibits, or programs. Many artifacts were donated this past year, each adding to the story of Steele County.

We are always appreciative when we are remembered by a potential donor. We do have a policy on how and what we accept into the Society's collections. In order to accept new acquisitions the artifact needs to relate to our local history, be in good condition, and clean. The "story" of the artifact, how it was used, and by whom, add to the historical significance. If you'd like to consider a donation, or have questions, we will be happy to visit with you. Artifacts that are presented are brought before an Acquisitions Committee for acceptance into the collection.

Preservation Awards Each year we recognize two properties for Preservation Awards. We gladly accept nominations from the public for a home, business, or rural property that has historic significance and has been preserved as closely to its original construction as possible. This year's winners were Barbara Jacobson for her restoration of the Travel Headquarters Building, and the farm site owned by Mark & Sheri Cameron. The awards are presented in May during National Preservation Month.



The History Center Spring of 2011 marked the beginning of construction for the History Center, and as you read this, the Center should be almost completed. Designed by Kane and Johnson Architects, and under the capable guidance of Bob Seykora of Rocon, Inc. along with site manager, Jim Soukup, our beautiful Center has come to life right before our eyes. Our sincere thanks to the private investors that helped us to fund the last \$400,000 of the construction costs. Our fundraising efforts will continue as we work to re-pay them. To everyone that has so graciously given—our sincere thanks and appreciation, and if you haven't yet given, please consider a gift to help us "burn the mortgage" as we see this long time dream come true!

Volunteers No matter what we do at SCHS, it just wouldn't happen without the many dedicated volunteers that so selflessly contribute their time and talents to us! They provide hundreds of hours of help to events, do maintenance, baking, tour guiding, digitization, and are the power behind our mission. With limited staff, the volunteers are the lifeblood of SCHS and all we accomplish. Administrative Assistant, Dodie Ellingson is the friendly face and voice that coordinates all these fine folks. The SCHS Board and Staff want to thank all of you from the bottom of hearts for your continued help and support! If you're not already a volunteer, we welcome you share your time and talents with us!

Steele County HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2010 AND 2011 BOARD MEMBERS

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MARGARET MICHALETZ
Vice President

LLOYD KAPLAN
Secretary

JERRY LEWISON
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County Board Liaison

LAURA RESLER
Director

DODIE ELLINGSON
Administrative Assistant

DANIEL MOECKLY
Programming & Archives Manager

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

See our website for dates and times, newsletters, photo collection, and general membership information.

Christmas in the Village

Christmas House Tour

Valentine Dinner

Lecture Series

Preservation Awards

Vintage Sale

Chuckwagon Supper

Extravaganza

Steele County Fair

Harvest Fest

Cemetery Walk

SCHS Annual Meeting

The Degner Trust and Opportunities for Making Gifts In 2005 the Historical Society became the income beneficiary of the Degner Trust. Glenn's enormous generosity dramatically affected the finances of SCHS. Income from the Trust makes up about half our annual budget. As the Trust grows, so will the income it generates. Only 5% of the interest income is available for our use, and the Trust will be held until 100 years from the date that we received it. The Trust has enabled us to move forward with the History Center Project, providing some of the income that will be necessary to handle the increased operating costs once the Center is completed. Other sources of our annual income are membership dues, grants, events, community ed classes, memorials, and other donations.

If you'd like to make a gift to the Historical Society, please contact us at 507-451-1420. We are able to accept stocks, bonds, insurance proceeds, or cash. All discussions are held in the strictest of confidence. There are also Legacy opportunities for those wishing to make larger gifts, and estate planning options are available, too.

Artifact Donations Each year many artifacts are presented to us, and we are always appreciative when we are remembered. We do have a policy on how and what we accept into the Society's collections. In order to accept new acquisitions the artifact needs to relate to our local history, be in good condition, and clean. The "story" of the artifact, how it was used, and by whom, add to the historical significance. If you'd like to consider a donation, or have questions, we will be happy to visit with you. Artifacts that are presented are brought before a Acquisitions Committee for acceptance into the collection.

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:

SCHS Executive Director Laura Resler

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Visit our website www.steelecohistoricalsociety.org

The Dunnell House office is open year round, Tuesday through Friday from 1-5pm or by appointment. Closed holidays. Check our website for History Center hours of operation beginning January 2012.

Please check out our website for general information, a calendar of upcoming events, to search the photo collection, and to access articles from our quarterly newsletter.

Today, the Steele County Historical Society is widely recognized as one of the most active and valuable programs of its kind in the Upper Midwest.

Relive the history of Steele County

