



# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 42 No. 2

March – April 2012

SERVING:

- Andover
- Anoka
- Bethel
- Blaine
- Centerville
- Circle Pines
- Columbia Heights
- Columbus
- Coon Rapids
- East Bethel
- Fridley
- Ham Lake
- Hilltop
- Lexington
- Lino Lakes
- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

## Anoka's Company A of the Eighth Regiment

*"The men were mostly farmers, with some lumbermen, averaging in age from 25-30 years old, an age too old to make fancy soldiers..."*

This was the description written by William Houlton when asked to write a history of the actions of the Eighth Minnesota Infantry during the Civil War. Men from a single county were placed in the same company, many enlisting together. Company A was made up of almost entirely of Anoka County men. The regiment was being formed to answer the call for more troops issued by the Federal government that summer of 1862, troops necessary to fight the Confederacy, but before the Eighth was fully mustered in, there was another war and this one was on their doorsteps.



Nathan Curiel

The Dakota Indians had signed treaties with the US government to cede land in Minnesota in exchange for money and goods, but the federal government had a Civil War on its hands and was paying little attention to the needs of the Dakota. Crop failures and other struggles drove the Dakota people to desperation. A confrontation between Dakota hunters and some white settlers near Acton, Minnesota, drew the first blood on August 17, 1862. That night, the Dakota's council of war decided to attack settlements in an effort to drive the whites out.

In August of 1862, less than two weeks after the Eighth Minnesota was organized, what was then called the Sioux Uprising began in west central Minnesota. It was a brutal, terrifying, and bloody conflict that left more than 400 white settlers and an unknown number of Dakota people dead. The conflict was over by December, but the scars it left on the people of Minnesota—both white and Indian—are raw yet today.



Elias Pratt

Companies of the Eighth were immediately sent to patrol the western counties of Minnesota to protect and defend settlers. Many settlers fled, seeking safety in the bigger towns. Anoka's hotels overflowed, so residents took in the refugees while

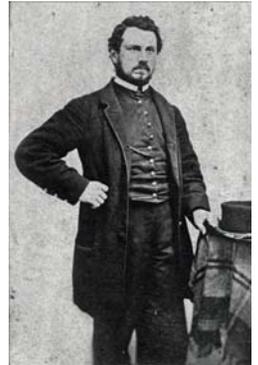


George Henderson

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Company A was assigned to patrol the areas around the towns of Anoka and Princeton. There were depredations on both sides and these were made worse by the wild reporting and inflammatory stories that filled the newspapers. It was a dark time in Minnesota's history.

The Eighth patrolled on the frontier through the fall of 1862 and wintered at the Chippewa Agency along the



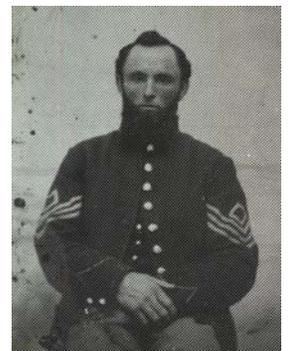
Captain J.S. Cady



Jarvis Nutter

They returned to Fort Snelling and were honorably mustered out of the service on July 11, 1865. The regiment lost one officer, Captain Cady, and 26 enlisted men to fighting and another 56 men to disease during their service.

The Eighth was assigned to the 23rd Army Corps and did service in Tennessee, Washington DC, and into North Carolina. They were part of the Union Army that accepted the surrender of Confederate forces under General Joseph Johnston on April 26th, 1865.



Martin Bean

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President – Al Pearson (District #1)

Vice President – (Open)

District #2 – Bill Prugh

District #3 – Orville Lindquist

District #4 – Tom Sheroman

District #5 – Jan Anderson

District #6 – Judy Hanna

District #7 – Bart Ward

At Large A – Lori Yager

At Large B – Dan Frank

At Large C – Tom Ward

At Large D – Robert Munns

At-Large E -- William Erhart

At Large F – Paul Pierce, III

At-Large G -- Catherine Vesley

At-Large H -- Harvey Greenburg

County Commissioner Liaison –

Robyn West

### **Staff**

Executive Director – Todd Mahon

Program Manager – Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant – Caitlin Frey

Volunteer Coordinator – Elaine Koehn

Curator Projects – Marilyn Anderson

Office Staff – Gail Dahl, Carol Dordan,  
Don Johnson

Janitorial – Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director...**

*By Todd Mahon*

I've been working in the nonprofit world for nearly fourteen years now. For 13 of those years, I have worked closely with boards of directors at a handful of organizations. This month comes with the election of members to the Anoka County Historical Society's board and with it, we will be seeing some new faces on board. As a student of history, I know that history is the study of change. Some celebrate the change, others decry it. In this case, I will say that I am excited to welcome some new faces, but I want to take a moment to reflect on someone who is leaving our board.

I first met Jan Anderson when I was invited to interview for the position of executive director. She, along with Catherine Vesley and Paul Pierce, made up ACHS's Human Resource Committee. Those three were tasked with interviewing applicants and making a recommendation to the full board. Whether they erred or not in selecting me is a debatable point, but six years later I'm still grateful that they chose me. It was with a heavy heart that I received Jan's letter that informed the board she would not be seeking an additional term on the board.

For my money, Jan is everything you want in a board member. She is enthusiastic, willing to try new things, and not afraid to ask questions. She spent her professional career as a teacher and has certainly used those skills to ACHS's benefit. Her writing skills and teaching abilities gave her cause to write *Anoka County and Its Neighbors*, a large-format book designed for reading to students in a class room. But it always amazed me at how Jan was adept at and willing to try things outside of her established skill set. Jan is a great fundraiser. She believes so faithfully in our mission to preserve and promote Anoka County's history that she is one of the best salespersons I know. From personal experience I can say that she is hard to say no to!

All of this leaves me feeling inadequate in expressing how much I'm going to miss having Jan on the board. She deserves a witty, more pun-filled goodbye than this. All I can truly offer is my personal thanks and the gratitude of the entire Historical Society. We are all the beneficiaries of her kindness. Jan has assured me that she will continue to participate in ACHS activities and will be an active member. I assured her that I will hold her to that, if only for a few more Ole and Lena jokes to brighten my days. Thanks Jan.

## **From the President...**

*By Al Pearson*

I am a farmer and after finishing our 2011 fall harvest season and starting to plan for the next year, I started to think back to the 1940s and 50s when we got out the grain binder in July to cut oats and rye. This machine cut the grain and tied it in 20 to 30 pound bundles. Eight to ten of these bundles were stood together with grain heads to the sun to form shocks. We shocked the grain as quickly as possible to get it dry and ready to thrash.

Next, the threshing machine separated the grain from the straw, both products used for the farm animals.

Not every farmer was able to own their own threshing machine. My Dad co-owned one with a neighbor and it was used to harvest at all the neighboring farms.

Working together was good because everyone had some equipment that was used at each place as they moved from farm to farm. We needed several tractors with wagons to haul the bundles to the threshing machine which was stationary and set up in the farm yard. One man was needed to work and run the threshing machine and one to keep an eye on the grain wagon. The rest of the crew was loading and hauling the bundles in from the fields. I remember one year when we had no grain wagon, so the 17 year old neighbor girl handled bagging the grain. The bags weighed 100 pounds, so it was a big job for a slight girl.

The women had a most important part in this summer harvest. They made mid-morning and mid-afternoon lunch and took it to the men in the field. There was a big dinner at noon with dessert served in the farm house. There was a certain amount of competition to be the best cook which worked to our advantage. We ate really well.

We children were allowed to go with our fathers by the time we were about ten years old to drive the tractors or horse and wagons for the big boys and men to load the bundles. The girls helped with the table setting and keeping the small children busy. They also set up an outdoor wash area for the crew to clean up before coming in for dinner.

If a farmer couldn't pay the threshing bill, well, maybe next year's crop would be better. Or Dad might be offered a calf or steer. He didn't really worry about the bill because he'd get paid sooner or later, one way or another.

This was always a fun time of the year if you were a kid. It was hot in July very hard work. I think I like an air conditioned combine better.

# The Story of an Artifact

## The Flag of the Eighth Minnesota Infantry

Imagine you are a soldier on a battlefield during the American Civil War. The noise from muskets and cannons all around you is deafening—roaring to the point of pain in your ears. Smoke fills the air. Men around you are running in all directions, firing weapons and shouting, even though you can't hear them. The battle lines are moving, shifting with the tides of the fight and you desperately want—*need*—to know where your regiment is going. Orders shouted by your officers are almost useless in the *mêlée* of noise. Buglers and drummers are sounding the movements you are supposed to follow, but every company has them. Which one do you listen to? Your life may well depend on following the proper command. How can you know where your regiment is and where they are going?

You look for your flag.

Civil War regiments carried flags as signals for the men to know where their lines were. Flags could lead the way in a charge or a retreat, giving the men a visual cue they were trained to follow, but flags were much more than that. The flag was a symbol of pride, of belonging, of unity. Many flags were presented to the units with great ceremony by groups or organizations with the community. Local women were often involved, hand making the silken banners with the finest of fabrics. A regiment that was captured had to surrender its flag, the ultimate in disgrace. Capturing an enemy's flag was an equally high honor. Marshall Sherman of the First Minnesota Infantry was awarded the Medal of Honor for capturing a Confederate flag at the battle of Gettysburg. That very same flag still evokes deep passions. It is in the collections at the Minnesota Historical Society and a group of Virginians want it back, a subject of heated debate still today.

Most Civil War regiments carried two flags, one was the national flag and the other was their regimental flag. The color bearers were highly coveted and honored positions, even though it meant standing—unarmed—in the midst of a battle with the full responsibility of standing firm. If a color bearer broke in fear and ran, he could take the entire regiment with him, causing havoc on a battlefield. With such importance, the man carrying the flag was a favorite target of the enemy and the casualty rates for color bearers was exceptionally high.

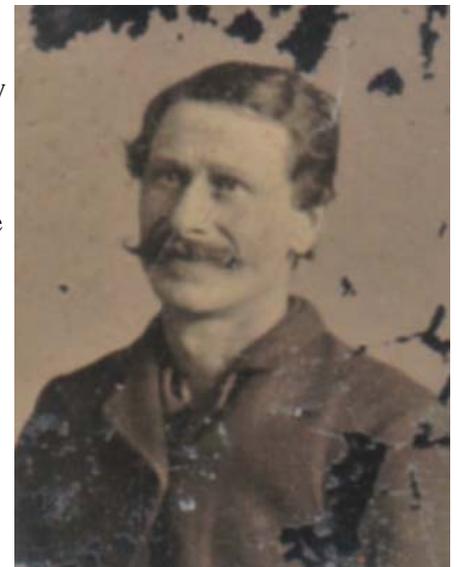
Some regimental flags were hand painted with emblems of the state or the regiment. Some had the names of battles the unit had been in added with paint or ribbons as they carried it through the war. Many regimental flags had to be replaced during the course of the war, but the old flags, the ones riddled with bullet holes, tattered and dirty, were still cherished and some do still exist.



These fragile strips of silk provide enough evidence to see the feathers of the eagle and a bit of the banner it carried in its beak. These are the only pieces in the ACHS collection, but more of the flag is preserved at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Such was the history behind the Eighth Minnesota Infantry's flag. Its main feature was a hand painted eagle claspng a ribbon in its beak on ground of blue silk. When the war ended and the men came back to Minnesota to be mustered out of the army, the flag was there. In a grand gesture, the men of the Eighth were allowed to cut a sliver of silk from the flag so each man could keep a bit of their noble banner. While such action destroyed the flag, it did let each man have a piece of it.

One man who kept a cherished bit of that flag was Henry Mansur. Henry was living near Elk River and was only 16 when he managed to get himself mustered into Company A of the Eighth Minnesota Infantry in March of 1864. He served with the regiment through the rest of the war. Henry kept his piece of the flag throughout his life and treasured bits were passed down in the family. In 1995, Henry's great-grandson, Jerry Jacob, brought the flag pieces to ACHS.



Henry Mansur, ca. 1864

# U.S. Dakota War History

with author

**Dean Urdahl**

at the

**Anoka County Historical Society's  
Annual Meeting**

**March 18, 2:00pm**

**Anoka City Hall**

**2015 First Ave N, Anoka**

**Cost: \$5.00 for ACHS members, \$7.00  
for non-members.**

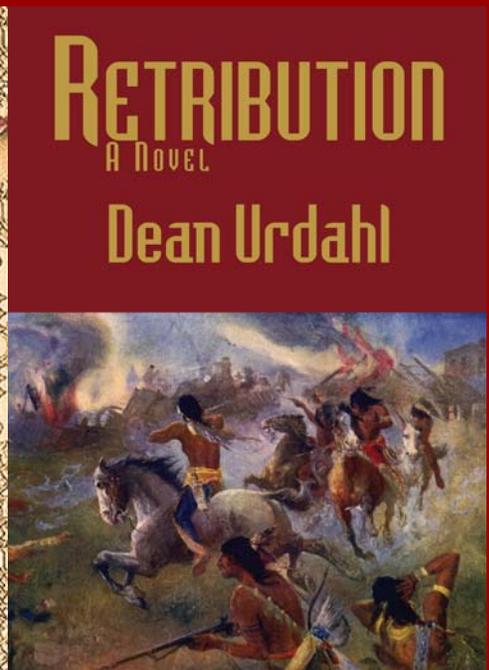
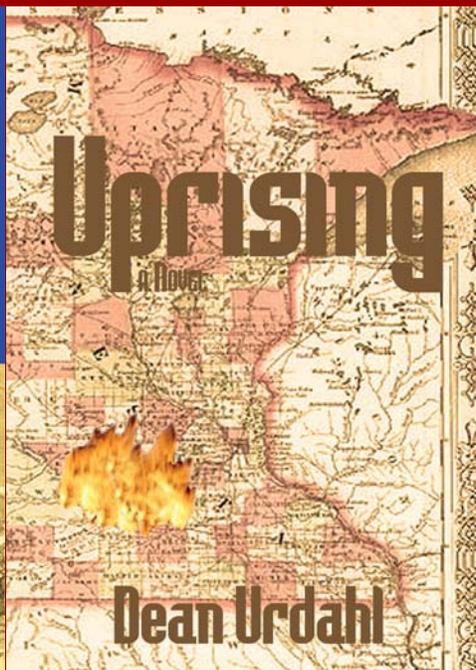
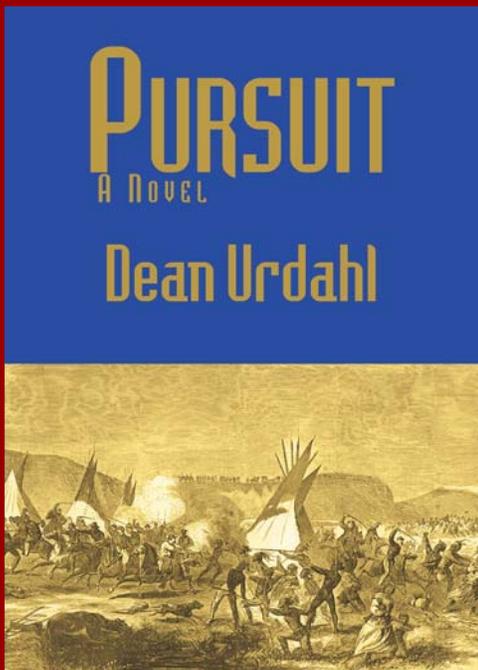
**More information:**

**(763) 421-0600,**

**[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)**



Join the Anoka County Historical Society for its annual meeting and learn more about the 1862 U.S. Dakota War. Author Dean Urdahl has written three novels set in the conflict and featuring actual historical characters. His presentation will include a background on the war, its causes, and its legacy. ACHS will set up a display at the event that will look at Anoka County men who served in Company A of the Eighth Minnesota. The unit was made up largely of Anoka County men (and a woman) and was sent west to fight the Dakota before being sent south to fight the Confederacy during the Civil War. The event will be preceded by a brief business meeting that will include the results of the elections to the ACHS board of directors. Refreshments will be served.



# *Clothing the County*

## *Fashions from Work to Play*



Nearly everyone has—at some point—stood staring at their closet trying to decide what to wear. Clothing is necessary for physical health, but fashion is necessary for our mental health. We all want to look good and the upcoming spring exhibit will highlight what we thought made us look good from the 1800s almost to today. This fashion exhibit will open on May Day, May 1st, with a special evening event, so put the date on your calendar! From work clothes to a night on the town, this exhibit features fashion for men, women, and children from the distant past and the not-so-distant past with commentary on why we wore some of the clothes we chose and why it changed in the ways it did.

### *Some background*

Hand sewing was the only way to make clothing before Isaac Singer began selling his sewing machines on the installment plan in the late 1850s. That “a little money down and so much a month” idea made sewing machines more economically accessible to people and within a few decades, nearly every household had a sewing machine. Mass production also helped by cutting the cost of sewing machines to around \$55 in most areas. Women could sew clothing for their families with these labor saving devices or take in sewing to earn a little extra money.

Ready made or ready to wear clothing was available in the mid 1800s, but limited mostly to coats and undergarments, particularity for men. Most of this was made

in cottage industry settings where each piece was made one at a time. The millions of uniforms needed for the Union Army during the Civil War gave the first real push for mass production of ready-made-clothing and a standard set of body measurements was found to be fairly common, giving rise to a sizing plan in ready made clothing. Men’s clothing continued to be mass produced and sold in increasing amounts after the Civil War, but women’s clothing was still mostly made just for her. This may have been due to the fashions of the day that required well fitted garments. It was not until the 1920s that women’s clothing began to move toward mass production. This was fed by the mail order catalogues that were very popular and carried the latest fashions on their pages. In 1937, the US Department of Agriculture began a study of body sizes aimed a creating a standard sizing that everyone across the clothing industry could follow.

WWII took many women out of the home and put them into jobs that left little time for sewing and, coupled with the better fitting and fashionable clothing available in the ready made market, sewing clothing for the family began to decline. Today, it is considered quite novel to learn of someone sewing all their own clothing.

## *You can help build this collection for the future!*

ACHS has a rich textile collection, but while developing the exhibit, we noticed a number of “holes” in the collection. We’d like our members to help us fill those holes with something from their own closets. **We are specifically asking for garments that someone from Anoka County wore along with any details—when, where, what was the occasion, maybe even a photo of the person wearing it.** These details give the garment provenance, a story, that can be archived with the garment and make it more meaningful to someone in the future.

Clothing does not need to be in new condition; a few wear spots, missing button, or a stain might help tell its story, but it must be clean and in reasonably good condition.

If anything on this list is in your closet or up in your attic, please consider donating it to ACHS to help us continue to build on the fine clothing collection we already have. Call Vickie or Marilyn at 763-421-0600 to discuss what you might have to help us “fill the holes.”

### **Do you have:**

- Wide legged bellbottom hip huggers from the 1960s
- A mini skirt from the 1960s or early 1970s
- Urban cowboy boots, shirts, skirts, or jeans (men’s or women’s) from the 1980s
- A current day baby sleeper or snowsuit
- A current day baby dress or shirt and pants
- A current day disposable diaper or cloth diaper system
- Baby plastic pants that fit over a diaper
- Children’s swim suits, any era.
- Current day maternity clothing
- A string bikini
- Current day pajamas for children or adults
- Current day undergarments, men’s, women’s, and children’s (Any Victoria’s Secret you’re willing to part with?)
- Women’s dresses from the 1980s and 1990s
- A man suit from the 1980s or 1990s (even better to have the shirt and tie that went with it.)
- A fringed leather jacket from the 1970s
- A speedo swim suit
- Halloween costumes (any era)

## Up To Date

### Greetings Volunteers – by Elaine Koehn

*“National Volunteer Week is about inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities.”*

Congratulations to all of our volunteers! In 2011, you volunteered 5,164.25 hours! Whether you were able to give 200 hours or 10, that time can never be replicated. We may count your time in numbers; we may attempt to place a cash value on your time; but we will all be poorer if we don't realize that once you give your time, it is gone forever. You cannot place a value on something that is priceless.

National Volunteer week is April 15-21. The staff at ACHS wants to show all of you how much you are appreciated. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, we will provide a luncheon for volunteers who have served at the History Center for ten years or more, initiating our **“Ten Plus Club.”** Your long term commitment serves many purposes. You illustrate to the community the value of our work and by helping us fulfill our mission, you make our load lighter. If you have been with us for over ten years and did not report hours, please give me a call so we can add you to the Club list.

In addition, the Annual Volunteer Recognition is scheduled for Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, so watch for your invitation and plan to attend. It is fun to set aside special time for the terrific people who volunteer with ACHS!

Spring is soon upon us and I am busy planning events for the volunteer program, including the Volunteer Appreciation Day, the Spring Teas in conjunction with the opening of the new fashion exhibit in our gallery, and preparing for Ghost Tours and all the summer events.

This spring, in conjunction with the new exhibit, we are offering a Ladies Night Out Tea on Thursday nights. It will include a tour of our new fashion exhibit, set to open on **May 1<sup>st</sup>**, along with a few surprises. The Teas will be on **May 3<sup>th</sup>** and **May 17<sup>th</sup>**. Watch for more details about these new adult teas coming soon.

The Saturday **“Dolly and Me Teas”** will be held on **May 12<sup>th</sup>** and **19<sup>th</sup>**. Little girls will tour the new exhibit, create a Spring Hat and enjoy tea and pastries and of course, two lucky little girls will win a new outfit for their dolly.

We have three new docents joining the group of cemetery and Ghost Tour Docents. Brandis Marty, Dawn Rust and Jeannie Max have expressed an interest and will join us at the Docent Training on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. We are fortunate to have these volunteers join our team. They all possess a great deal of experience and have the leadership qualities necessary to enhance our tours.

Finally, I would like to welcome Jean McFarlane – working with research; David Venhuizen – scanning photos; and Katie Varderbruggen who helped out at the Body Building Workshop and is interested in studying history to become a curator. We are very fortunate to have each of you!

### Announcements and News

◆Just a reminder that the March 8 and April 12 ACHS Board of Directors meetings will be at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are held at the History Center. Board meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome.

### Charter Members of the Ten Plus Club

*Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud.* –Helen Dyer

#### Ten Plus Club

Jan Anderson  
Marilyn Anderson, Staff  
Dennis Berg  
Shirley Christenson  
Mike & Mary Clark  
Carol Dordan, Staff  
Lucille Elrite  
Dan Frank  
Judy Hanna  
David Legrid  
Darlene Levens  
Becky Loader  
Genevieve Meyer  
Linda Mundle  
Paul III & Mary Pierce  
Bill Prugh

Lynne Rickert  
Pat Serreyn  
Violet Smith  
Wes & Lois Spadgenske  
Ann Steen  
Marlys Talbot  
Sandy Thorsen, Staff  
Barb Thurston  
Catherine Vesley  
Deb Wallace  
Bart & Ellen Ward  
Tom Ward, Tom  
Vickie Wendel, Staff  
Ron Wendel Family  
Ernie & Sharon Woizeschke  
Lester & Shirley Ziegler

I commend these volunteers! Your dedication and commitment to the History Center is greatly appreciated. If for some reason, hours were not recorded and someone was omitted, please give Elaine call at (763)421-0600.

**Thank You!!**

### Beginning Genealogy Class

Tuesday, March 13

4:30-6:30

Anoka County History Center

\$7.00 for non-members

\$5.00 for members (ACHS or ACGS)

To register call 763-421-0600

or

email [ACGSMN@yahoo.com](mailto:ACGSMN@yahoo.com)

# Contributions & New Members – Thank you

(All lists are current to February 27, 2012)

## DONATIONS

David & Winnifred Conger  
Linwood Township  
Jerome & Marilyn Manley  
Orville Lindquist  
Rachel Peterson  
Lynne Rickert  
Jill Weaver

## EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial/Dan Frank

## ARTIFACT DONORS

Jeannie Bennett  
Juanita Reed Boniface  
Diane Buganski  
Janet Eppers  
Don Johnson  
Jackie Konen  
Dick Lang  
Tim Layeux  
Karen Little  
Terrance Mox  
Eileen Rathbun  
Skip Rither  
David VenHuizen  
Dave Westendorf estate

## NEW MEMBERS

Jerry & Pat Gallagher, Phoenix, AZ  
Dorothy Hallin, St. Bonifacius  
Diann Hendrickson, Blaine  
Bill & Kate Morphew, Andover  
Matthew & Shelly Pahl, Cedar  
David VenHuizen, Anoka



Give to the Max Day comes only once a year, but the GiveMN site is available all year to make donations right from your smart phone or computer!

## ***The Anoka County Historical Society extends our sincere sympathy to the families of:***

***Janet Douglass Johnson***, who died on December 20, 2011. Pat had been a member of ACHS for years and was a loyal supporter of local history..

***Dave Westendorf***, who died on December 26, 2011. Dave was a member, a veteran, and friend.

***Doretta Hoium***, who died on February 9, 2012. Doretta was the mother of our ACHS "Friday" volunteer, Pam Fredrick.

***Donald Soderquist***, who died on February 1, 2012. Don was the husband of Lorraine, a life time member and avid supporter of ACHS and local history.

## ***Pieced and Patched Exhibit Closing!*** **Last Chance to see 30+ Historic Quilts!**

### **Saturday, March 17, 2012**

**10:00 — 4:00**

See quilts from the collection of the Anoka County Historical Society that span the years from the mid-1800s to modern day. Each has a special story told in the exhibit. The quilts are returning to their safe storage for preservation, so don't miss your chance to see them!

**2:00**

Got a quilt of your own (made or inherited) and want to know how to preserve it safely? Bring it along to show and we'll help evaluate the best ways of preserving it. Samples of preservation materials and suggestions for keeping quilts as heirlooms for generations will be discussed.

Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600

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## *Coming Events*

### **March — April**

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) Images highlight some of the many faces of people who have called this place home.

### **March 10, 2:00 pm**

### ***Faces of Anoka County Lobby Exhibit***

### ***Quilts and Their Stories***

(Rum River Library, 4201 6th Ave., Anoka) Quilts can do much more than warm your toes, they can warm your heart, too! This program presents slides of quilts in the collection of ACHS along with their stories. This event is FREE and funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

### **March 17, 2:00 pm**

### ***Pieced and Patched Quilt Exhibit Closing Event***

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) This will be the last chance to see these wonderful quilts before they are tucked carefully away to preserve them. Got a quilt of your own (made or inherited) and want to know how best to keep it safe? Bring it along to show and we'll help evaluate the best ways of preserving it. Free

### **March 18, 2:00 pm**

### ***ACHS Annual Meeting & Dakota Conflict Program***

(Anoka City Hall, 2015 1st Ave. N., lower level) Dean Urdahl has written three historical fiction books centered around the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 and will speak about this conflict. ACHS Board election results will be announced during a short business meeting. See page 4 for more.

### **April 14, 2:00 pm**

### ***The History of St. Francis***

(23100 Rum River Blvd., St. Francis) Relive local history with slides, stories, and artifacts from this city and its citizens. The program will be held in the Rum River North Park shelter building. This event is FREE and funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

### **April 17, Noon**

### ***Volunteer Recognition for the 10+ Club***

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) A special time to honor those who have been volunteering for ten years or more with ACHS! See page 6 for more information.

### **April 21, 2:00-4:00 pm**

### ***Volunteer Recognition Day!!***

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) A day to say thank you to all of our incredible volunteers! See page 6 for more info.