

OUTLINE MAP  
OF  
**LE SUEUR CO.**  
MINNESOTA  
• 1898 •

EXPLANATION

- Section Line
- Stream or Lot Line
- Wagon Road
- Railroad
- Creeks & Springs
- Woods
- Churches
- School Houses
- Adjacent lands owned by same party connected by a line, thus
- Post Office
- Coal, Lead or Zinc Mine
- County Bridge

# Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

Newsletter of the Le Sueur County Historical Society

## Members' help is needed

The LCHS Finance Committee has been working hard in preparing a budget proposal and request for funding for the Le Sueur County Board of Commissioners. The Society greatly depends on the county's support. For LCHS to continue making progress with its mission, the Society is asking for an increase of the county's contribution. The increase would enable the Society to go beyond just covering expenses. More funding allows the Society to do more programming and improve services to citizens.

The Commissioners are making plans for the county's 2025 budget and LCHS hopes to be part of that plan. The LCHS board is asking LCHS members and county residents alike to contact their district's commissioner representative. Ensure them that preserving and recording Le Sueur County's history is a good investment for current citizens and future generations.

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AUTUMN, 2024

## The President's Corner...

"Where has the summer gone?" is a comment I have heard quite often during the last few weeks. I would like to expand on that question, and ask, "Where has this *entire year* gone?"

It's hard to believe that September — the ninth month — is already upon us. Numerous town celebrations, Fourth of July celebrations, the Le Sueur County Fair and the Ottawa Church Harvest Festival have all come and gone for another year. The Genealogy Center in Elysian has also closed for the season. I would like to take this opportunity to offer a special, heartfelt "Thank You" to all of our dedicated volunteers, for sharing their time and talents in staffing these sites and events for all of us to enjoy.

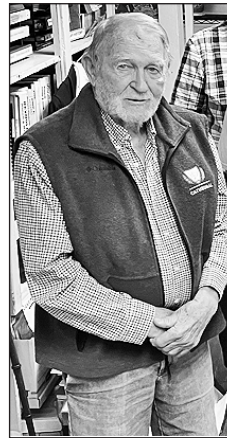
I attended the Le Sueur County Fair (Aug. 15-18), on its first day of operation, and was impressed with both the variety of items on display, as well as the way the artifacts were displayed in the log cabin and school building located on the fairgrounds in Le Center. Both buildings vividly showcase the rich history this county contains. Over the span of the four-day run of the fair, 222 people registered their names in the guest book at the schoolhouse, and 212 signed the guestbook in the log cabin. No doubt, there were many more visitors who attended the fair, visited the historic buildings operated by the Le Sueur County Historical Society, but did not sign their names in the guest books provided.

Restoration of the Elysian School building continues. With the work already completed on the bell tower, roof and soffits, the building already shows noticeable improvement, and will continue to take shape as phase II (reassessment of the windows) gets underway. At its monthly meeting, on Aug. 22, the LCHS Board voted to approve the contract to begin the window reassessment process. The criteria being followed is from Minnesota Historical Society, per our discussion with John Beatty, representative from MNHS. After many years of exposure to the ravages of sun, wind, rain, hail and yes, the dreaded "s" word (it is coming, folks!), the building is no longer at the mercy of the elements the way it once was. It will be a proud and happy day when the building is once again open to the public for tours and other Historical Society events. In the meantime, the Board asks for the members' continued patience, as we work through the many and complicated phases of the restoration process.

Enjoy the beautiful fall colors just around the corner, and all the excitement generated by the start-up of schools, colleges, fall sporting events and harvest season. The silver lining to all of the rain we received this spring and summer is that there should be ample ground moisture for next year's crop, and the fall colors should be exceptionally brilliant. It is as if the leaves are lit from within, showing off their red and gold hues in dazzling splendor. Take a drive along the beautiful bluffs of the Minnesota River, from Kasota, through historic Ottawa to Le Sueur, or drive around one or several of the many lakes that dot the landscape of Le Sueur County. Fall is a lovely time of the year.

Bryce O. Stenzel  
Le Sueur County Historical Society President

## Thank you, Bill!



It was with a heavy heart that the Le Sueur County Historical Society board accepted the resignation of director Bill Stangler. In addition to Bill's service to the Society as president, Bill played an integral part in re-suscitating a troubled historical organization which had fallen on hard times. Bill's

hard work, service and dedication to our county's history sent our Society into a new direction and that guidance will be sorely missed.

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***The mission of the Le Sueur County Historical Society is to collect and preserve the story of Le Sueur County — telling its history through historic sites, a research center, collections, exhibits and educational programming.***

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### **This is your newsletter!**

Have news to share? Or a little piece of local history people might find interesting? Share with other members of the Le Sueur County Historical Society!

The next newsletter will feature Christmas memories and traditions. We'd like to share yours!

Send any newsletter items to P.O. Box 123, Le Center, MN 56057 or email [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org).

# Hats off for another successful Genealogy Center season

Except for special requests, the Le Sueur County Historical Society Genealogy Center is closed until next Spring. Thanks to all of the people who helped the Le Sueur County Historical Society's Genealogy Center this season.

The Center is a popular draw over the summer months. More people from outside the county are doing family tree research and coming to Elysian, Minn. to find it. Genealogy Center Supervisor and Volunteer Sally Olson reported 45 search requests were received this year.

Some Center visitors this summer came from as far away as Springfield, Ill., Clay, N.Y. and Mead, Wash. Maybe they stopped somewhere for a sandwich. Maybe they filled their vehicle with gas. The value of the Center can go well beyond its four walls.

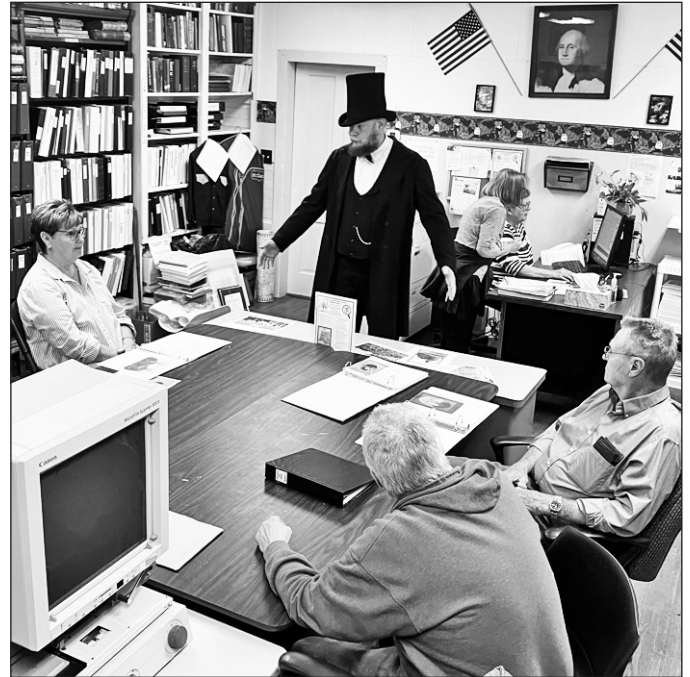
LCHS encourages history enthusiasts to join our great team of volunteers at the Center. Many enjoy researching Le Sueur County history for others and learning a few new things themselves. Along with doing research, volunteers are needed to file obituaries, organizing files, scan photographs and make copies.

Anyone interested in being involved with the Genealogy Center — or any LCHS projects — should contact LCHS via email at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.

## STORAGE NEEDED

The Le Sueur County Historical Society needs dry, secure storage for artifacts while the Elysian museum is being repaired. If you know of any potential sites, please contact us at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) as soon as possible.

## Our president makes an appearance as a president



Le Sueur County Historical Society President Bryce Stenzel (center) helped the Society celebrate the Fourth of July with his tribute to Abraham Lincoln. The Society welcomed visitors to the LCHS Genealogy Center in Elysian, Minn. as part of Elysian's annual Fourth of July celebration.

## See what's new on the Society's website [lesueurcountyhistory.org/](http://lesueurcountyhistory.org/)

LCHS Genealogy Center Supervisor Sally Olson has posted several historic photos centering around the Waterville and Elysian area. The slideshows are available for viewing on the Society's website under the photos and videos menu.

It is the goal of the Society's board to use the website to keep members better informed of the many projects facing the Society today. Let us know what you'd like to see on YOUR new website!

## Another great year at the Le Sueur County Fair



Le Sueur County Historical Society's exhibits at the Le Sueur County Fair continued to attract a crowd over the Aug. 15-18 event. Hundreds of people signed the guest books at the settlers' log cabin and Dist. 75 Schoolhouse.

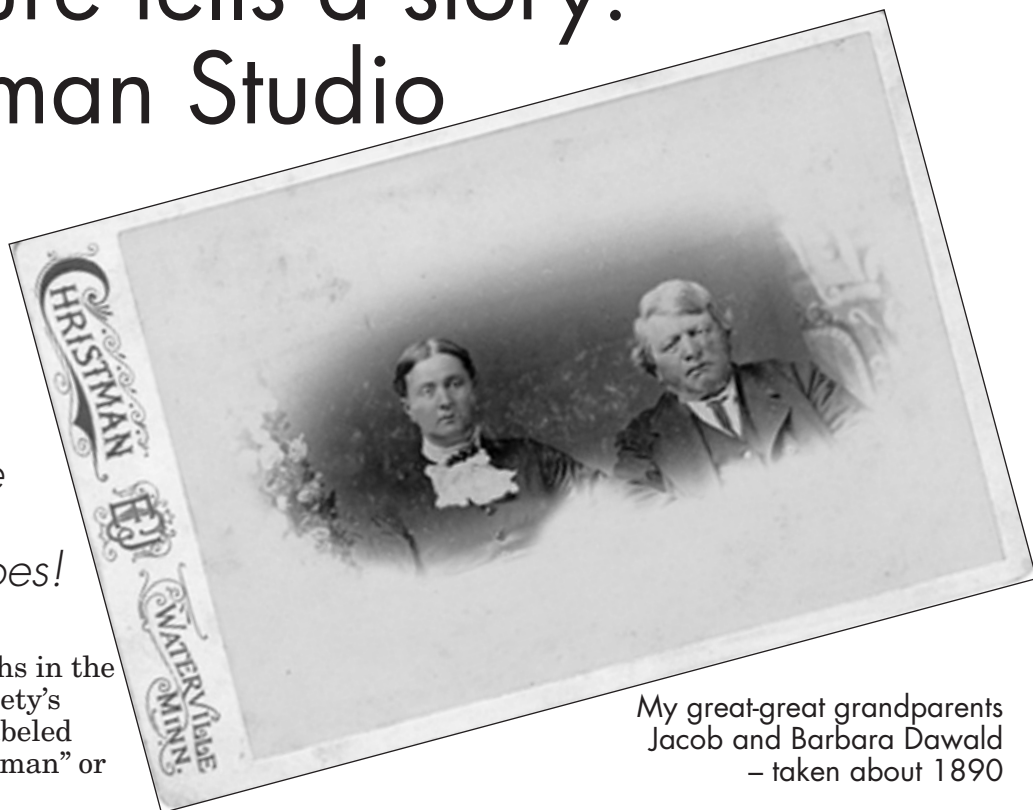
The LCHS board of directors would like to thank the volunteers who prepared the two exhibits for public viewing, along with those who gave their time to greet fair visitors and spread the word about the work of the Society.

# Every picture tells a story: The Christman Studio recorded Waterville history

*Does your family have old photos labeled "Christman?" Mine does!*

By Sally Olson

There are countless photographs in the Le Sueur County Historical Society's collection (many unidentified) labeled "E.J. Christman" or "C.W. Christman" or "Christman."



My great-great grandparents  
Jacob and Barbara Dawald  
– taken about 1890



Charles W. Christman  
– Le Sueur Co Historical Society

In the 1850s the territory of Minnesota was making very attractive offers to young men who would take up lands. This appealed to Hiram Christman and his wife Elizabeth Peale who arrived in Minnesota Territory with their five children from Rockford, Illinois, in 1856. They settled two miles east

of Elysian near where Highway 60 is now. Back then it was an ox team "corduroy" road and "Indian trail."

Pioneer farming did not interest their youngest, Elijah, so he went to St. Paul and entered a "young man's college." He became interested in early tintype photography and built up a good business in this work. At age 27, Elijah married Jennie Jones and settled in Oelwein, Iowa, where he started a photography studio. They had three children, two of

whom died in childhood. Their surviving son Charles was born in 1879.

When Charles was five years old, the young family returned to Le Sueur County where they opened a photography studio in Waterville. Elijah ran this successful business until it was sold to his son Charles in about 1900.



Young Charlie Christman (probably photographed by his father Elijah) – Le Sueur Co Historical Society

*Do you have a family or hometown story you'd like to share? Send it to [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org).*



Waterville in 1907 — CWC

In addition to his business, Charles was interested in conservation, bird life, woodworking, and flowers. Not having children of his own, he took an interest in the welfare of children and young people — sponsoring picnics and parties and “wholesome” entertainment. He was a member of the Waterville Commercial Club, was a fireman, an active member of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, an original incorporator of the Security State Bank, and a Mason.

Because of his love of the outdoors, Charlie also took photographs that he made into postcards of the area.



Charlie & June Christman in their 1903 Oldsmobile  
– Le Sueur Co Historical Society

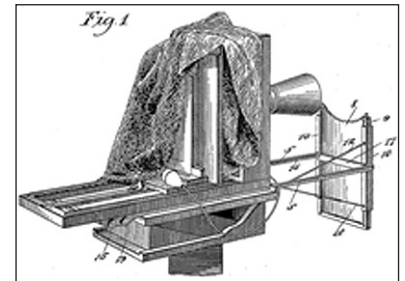
Charles married Edna June Glotfelter, the daughter of a prominent early Waterville family, on May 21, 1902. They ran the Christman Studio together for many years.



5 June (Glotfelter) Christman (R) and her sister Laura (Glotfelter) Findahl – Le Sueur Co Historical Society

Charles may have been a lover of automobiles as he obtained an early license to drive one. A brief newspaper article mentioned, “C.W. Christman has received notice of the shipment of nine new cars to be delivered here soon.”

Charles patented a photography “vignetter” in 1900. A vignette can appear as a blur or a dark shadow anywhere along the borders of a photograph. Vignetting can be done to add artistic flair to a picture.



If you want details about that invention, find it on the internet at <https://ppubs.uspto.gov/dirsearch-public/print/downloadPdf/0652083>

Charles died at the peak of his life at age 60 in 1940. The Christman Studio lived on as the 1940 and 1950 census records for Waterville show his wife June as the owner and operator of a photography studio.

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for Waterville show the Christman Studio located in the same building on Third St. on the 1894 map through the 1934 map (latest available).



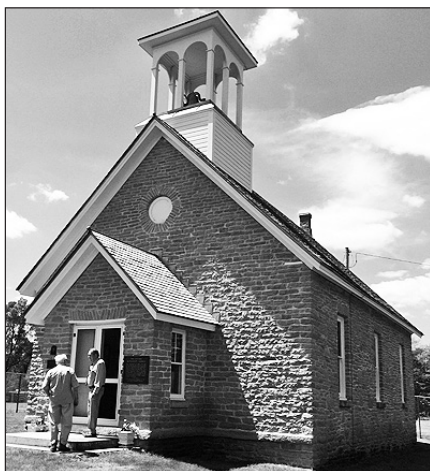
# Ottawa Church is available for event rentals

Ottawa Stone Church is available for event rentals

Now that the Ottawa Stone Church in Ottawa Minn. has returned to its historic glory, the landmark is being made available for social gatherings such as weddings, reunions or similar events.

Rental of the church and grounds for an entire day (8 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.) is \$150. A damage, cleaning and key deposit of \$250 is required for all rentals. Late cancellation fees may apply.

The renter is responsible for any and all damage to the facility occurring during the term of the rental by the renter or by guests. The renter is responsible for cleaning the facility and grounds after the event. Smoking is prohibited in all Le Sueur County Historical Society facilities. No open fires, including candles, are allowed in



the Ottawa Church or on the property.

Other rules and guidelines for renting the church are included on the application.

The church is one of seven native limestone buildings left in the village and is listed with all seven others on the National Registry of Historic Places and are also on the list of Minnesota's Ten Most Endangered Properties.

A rental application must be made to the Le Sueur County Historical Society for review. An application is available on the Society's website <http://lesueurcountyhistory.org/>. For more information, contact the Society via email at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.

Make an enchanting day even more memorable with a unique touch of yesteryear!

## LCHS membership is a great gift

Do you have a friend who loves history? Give them a membership to the Le Sueur County Historical Society. All members have a voice in LCHS goals and operations, an opportunity to help preserve Le Sueur County history, and free access to the Society's Genealogy Center.

The Genealogy Center has proven to be a valuable resource in researching family histories. The list of historic resources at the Center includes church histories, cemetery records and maps, birth records, marriage certificates and indexed obituary clippings from newspapers. At the Center you can find old plat books, maps, and town history books and files. Some family histories which have already been compiled can be found at the Center as well.

Many current members — along with people from all over the United States, enjoy researching Le Sueur County history for others and learning a few new things themselves.

Individual memberships are \$30 per year. An entire family can join for \$40.

Not sure a membership is the way to go? Make a contribution to the Society in a friend or relative's name.

The Le Sueur County Historical Society is a 501C3 Minnesota nonprofit organization. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.

## LCHS offers business membership initiatives

The Le Sueur County Historical Society board of directors recently agreed to offer a four-times-a-year advertising opportunity to member applicants at the \$250 business level; \$500 contributor level; or \$1,000 benefactor level.

Participating business level members can have a 3-inch by 2-inch advertisement in the LCHS members' newsletter. Contributor level qualifies for a 3 by 4-inch ad; and benefactor level members are eligible for a 6-inch by 4-inch space. The newsletter is mailed quarterly to the Society's 246 members.

"You don't have to be a business to participate in this offer," said LCHS Board Member Paul Malchow. "Wish someone a happy birthday; recognize a branch on the family tree; or just say 'Have a nice day.' The space in the newsletter is just our way of giving something back to larger contributors."

To take advantage of this offer — and at the same time lend your support to preserving Le Sueur County history, use the membership application form found elsewhere in this newsletter.

If you have any questions, contact LCHS via email at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.

# Pass it on ...

Do you have a friend who is interested in history? Do you know a student who is curious about life in Le Sueur County "way back when?" Sign them up for membership!

**New members who sign up now are automatically entered in a drawing to win a \$50 gift certificate to Little Dandy in Le Center, Minn. The drawing will take place in December ... so don't wait!**

## LCHS Membership Application

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- Individual — \$30
- Family — \$40
- Supporting — \$100
- Business — \$250
- Contributor — \$500
- Benefactor — \$1,000

### BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP:

- Research at the Genealogy Center without charge
- Receive Society newsletters, updates and invitations
- Cast a vote at meetings of membership
- Dues and donations are tax deductible
- Le Sueur County Historical Society is a 501C3 Minnesota nonprofit organization with historic sites in Cleveland, Elysian, Le Center, Le Sueur and Ottawa

### I can help with

- Building and grounds maintenance
- Recording inventory and artifacts
- Educational programming
- Genealogy Center assistance
- Communications

My signature on this application confirms my commitment to supporting the mission of the Le Sueur County Historical Society.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Mail application with check payable to: Le Sueur County Historical Society  
ATTN: Membership  
P.O. Box 123  
Le Center, MN 56057

For Society Records: Received \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_ Approved \_\_\_\_\_



Le Sueur County  
**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 123  
Le Center, MN 56057

**PRESORT  
STANDARD  
Permit #55  
New Prague, MN  
56071**

# District #75 Schoolhouse to recognize Margaret Traxler on Oct. 20

Margaret Traxler is scheduled to be honored at a special ceremony on Oct. 20 at 2:00 p.m. for her special contribution to help repair the Dist. #75 Schoolhouse.



The one-room wood frame structure, typical of the many rural schools which dotted the townships of Le Sueur County, is on display at the Le Sueur County Fairgrounds in Le Center, Minn. The Le Sueur County Historical Society redid the aging structure inside and



out. Traxler presented the Society with \$40,000 to help pay for the school's new roof.

"It's because of the generosity of people like Margaret that the Society is able to do these special projects," said LCHS Board Member Dean Pettis. "We want future generations to know about her love for Le Sueur County history and education."

LCHS will be presenting Traxler with a plaque which will be on display at the school. The public is invited to attend. Refreshments will be served.

Watch for further details on the Society's Facebook page: LCHSHISTORY