



EXPLANATION	
Section Line	—
Form or Lot Line	—
Way or Road	—
Railroad	—
Creeks & Springs	—
Rivers	—
Churches	—
School Houses	—
Adjacent lands owned by same party connected by a link, thus	—
Post Office	—
Coal, Lead, or Zinc Mine	—
County Bridge	—

# Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

Newsletter of the Le Sueur County Historical Society

## Insurance inspection leads to several LCHS site improvements

A July 30 survey of Elysian LCHS properties by Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) created a punch list of projects for the Society.

MCIT is not an insurance company, but a risk sharing pool providing coverage and risk management services for its members, Minnesota counties and associated public entities. MCIT is a joint powers entity established in 1979 pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 471.59 and 471.981.

While touring the Society's Elysian campus, MCIT presented several recommendations for mitigating potential hazards on the property. While satisfying MCIT's recommendations has no impact on LCHS's coverage, LCHS Board of Directors felt it was in the Society's best interest to comply to its best abilities.

Outdoor stairways on the Elysian property were deemed needing attention. The wooden stairway located between the school and the Genealogy Center was removed and the area was backfilled with black dirt. The concrete stairway leading up to the Genealogy Center was missing a handrail and the height of the stairs was deemed irregular. Both of these issues will be addressed as weather permits.

MCIT pointed out unguarded fluorescent light fixtures in one of the Society's storage sheds. "These bulbs could become damaged by accidental contact leaving glass shards as well as exposing individuals to heavy metals such as mercury, a common component of fluorescent lights," read the report. The board has contacted Volkman Electric to replace the fluorescent lights with LED fixtures, as well as installing a new light above the shed's entrance.

Damage to the roof of the Behlen storage shed was also noted. The roof has since been repaired.

**Continued inside on page 3**

## The President's Corner...

I was privileged to attend the Ottawa Church fall harvest festival on Sunday, September 8, 2024, in which I was invited to ring the church bell, in the newly restored bell tower. As the clear, crisp tones rang out over the quiet town of Ottawa, and echoed along the peaceful Minnesota River valley, I was reminded of both how isolated those early settlers who built the "Little Stone Church" must have felt, but also of how fortunate they were to have the opportunity to worship as they chose. I thought of how many times that same bell had brought the people together, just as it was doing now.

While we still live in uncertain times, those pale in comparison to what was happening in 1859, when that Methodist congregation was founded. Fanatical abolitionist, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in October of the same year brought the nation to the brink of civil war, which is exactly what Brown desired. Only a year later, in the fall of 1860, Republican candidate for President, Abraham Lincoln, would win the electoral vote of the populous Northern states, but only earn 40% of the popular vote—an ominous sign of things to come, as none of it came from the Southern states. There was no peaceful transfer of power in 1861. War was the direct result of Lincoln's election to the presidency.

I was also present for a special, October 20th ceremony, at the Le Sueur County Fairgrounds, in Le Center, recognizing the significant financial contribution made by Margaret Traxler, to help pay for the replacement of the District 75 Schoolhouse's wooden roof. A commemorative, bronze plaque was unveiled on the outside wall of the schoolhouse. As stated by LSCHS Board Member Dean Pettis (also present at the ceremony), "*it's because of the generosity of people like Margaret that the society is able to do these special projects.*" Not only was the roof replaced, but the Society was able to refurbish the interior of the schoolhouse as well. Both the fall harvest festival and plaque dedication were well attended. The weather, both days, was bright and sunny, with warm temperatures, and the ever-present wind that blows across south-central Minnesota throughout the year.

The Le Sueur County Historical Society continues to move ahead with the restoration of the Elysian School Museum building. Phase I of the mammoth project has been completed, and Phase II (window replacement) will soon be underway. As the year 2024 comes to a close, let us all be reminded of the many challenges we have faced together, and have overcome. There will be, no doubt, many more challenges to face in the coming year, but the knowledge that we have already surmounted many obstacles in the rebuilding of the Le Sueur County Historical Society should allow us to move forward with both confidence and renewed purpose. That is the value of history—reminding us that, like our ancestors, we have weathered the storm, and we have withstood it.

May all of you have a blessed Merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous new year in 2025, which will be our Society's 60th year! That is indeed, something to celebrate.

Bryce O. Stenzel  
Le Sueur County Historical Society President

## Genealogy Center remains busy during off-season

Even though the Society's Genealogy Center is closed to the public for the winter, much is happening to get ready for the next season. The building's furnace recently received a complete inspection and a clean bill of health. The board is taking steps to install more electrical outlets in the building to accommodate computers and printers; and make plug-in access safer and more convenient.

A new fixture was also installed to light the stairway running from the street to the Center's entrance. Preparation is also underway to install a wheelchair ramp leading to the Center's rear entrance. At one time a ramp existed, but was removed a number of years ago for unknown reasons.

Volunteers have been hard at work pouring over our vast collection of photographs in hopes of identifying the subjects and dates. Few have the subjects' names or locations written on the back and this limits their historical value. Plus, the center has limited storage capacity for these unidentified photos. We are looking at posting some of these photos on the Society's website in hopes people can identify them. Stay tuned...

Meanwhile, the Genealogy Center is scheduled to reopen on April 25 through Sept. 19. Volunteers are always needed to help out at the Center with research, filing, organizing and cleaning. 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.

## Seeking old LCHS newsletters

The Society is asking members' help in locating LCHS newsletters printed before 2019. We would like to have an archive of past newsletters to better reflect Society activities over the years. If anyone has any old newsletters they would like to donate, send them to P.O. Box 123, Le Center, MN 56057.

## Site improvements *continued*

MCIT suggested tree branches situated above the two storage sheds be trimmed. In the event of a storm, MCIT felt falling branches could damage the roofs of the buildings. The offending limbs have been removed.

The log house located between the school and the Genealogy Center was a subject of concern. MCIT felt the foundation of the house was deteriorating, increasing the risk of further damage to the structure. The LCHS board has discussed the condition of the log house for several years and has received an estimate for restoring the structure. At this time, the cost of such a project is prohibitive to the Society's budget. Further options are being explored.

Several conditions of the red brick Elysian school were listed in the MCIT report. All of these issues will be satisfied as part of the school's restoration project.

MCIT was concerned about the overloading of electrical outlets in the Genealogy Center. Bids for rectifying the situation have been received and work is expected to commence soon.



## Repairs made to Behlen storage building

A big item was checked off the Society's to-do list when repairs were made to the roof of the Behlen storage building located on the Elysian campus. Last month, Cletus Willette and his crew from Acreage & Farm Construction of Dodge Center replaced beams holding up the roof which were damaged by a large fallen tree branch. Research by Society member Bob Burgess revealed a claim of the damage had never been filed with our insurance provider. A claim was filed and a settlement from the insurance company paid for a good portion of the work. Special thanks to Bob for his efforts in seeing this through.

# Preparations underway for Phase II of the Elysian school restoration

With final Minnesota State Historical Society approval of Phase I nearly complete, attention is turning toward beginning Phase II of the multi-million-dollar project.

Phase I was comprised mainly of repairs made to the building's roof and bell tower. All work needed to match the original components of the school — including shingles, soffit, brick and mortar types.

Phase II encompasses the remainder of the structure's exterior. This includes replacing all windows and doors, tuckpointing brick, and reworking the stairs entering the building to match the original design. Phase II also looks to be the most expensive phase of the restoration.

The grant from the Minnesota State Historical Society provided a majority of the funding for Phase I, along with a grant from the Schmidt Foundation. The state Society is aware of the different phases of the school restoration and has indicated a willingness to entertain future grant requests from LCHS. However, meeting State grant requirements is an arduous and time-consuming task. LCHS Board Members Dr. Ruth Collins and Bonnie Reak navigated and prepared the Phase I grant application; but more help is being sought

within LCHS to distribute the work more widely. Any members with grant writing experience are being sought.

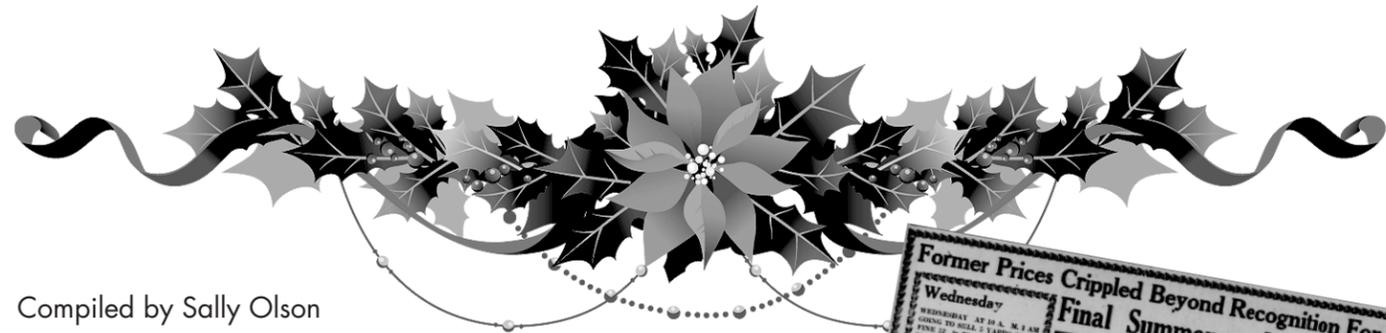
The Society has retained the engineering services of ISG Inc. in Mankato to oversee the project estimating and bidding process. Once all components of Phase II have been defined and costs estimated, LCHS presents those figures in the state Society grant application.

LCHS ran into funding complications during Phase I. Because of Covid, nearly two years lapsed between the time estimates were created, the State grant was awarded, and actual work commenced. Over those two years, material costs increased greatly and could not be covered by the State grant. Thankfully, the Schmidt Foundation stepped in to help alleviate the shortfall.

Collins and Reak expect estimates for Phase II to be closer to actual costs. However, the scope of Phase II carries a large price tag and there are no guarantees the State will be willing to fund it in its entirety — if at all.

More details of Phase II and the grant application should be available in time for the LCHS annual meeting in April.

# Christmas in the Valley 100 Years Ago



Compiled by Sally Olson

The various rooms in St. Anne's School held Christmas exercises which were enjoyed very much by those in attendance.

The High School gave a pleasant Christmas party at the Washington School Friday afternoon. The members of the High School drew the name of some other member and provided that one with a Christmas gift which were given out at this time. This made a fair distribution of Christmas joys and a lively time.

The Methodist Church of Sharon observed Christmas in a fitting manner by giving a fine program at the Church on Tuesday evening. Recitation, songs, dialogues, a young people's chorus, a male quartet, a beautiful Christmas tree, an abundant treat and a good congregation all made the occasion one of real interest and inspiration.

The employees at the shirt factory had a delightful Christmas gathering last night in the factory room. Each one had prepared a Christmas gift and they were drawn by the girls, every present causing surprise and excitement to the recipient. A very social evening was passed and Christmas refreshments were distributed. The employees of this institution are noted for their lively and enjoyable gatherings.

The Le Sueur streets have been filled with busy shoppers this week. The natural Christmas shopping season called them and besides the Kampen sale was a big drawing card. One sees autos in plenty filled with the great non-freezing fluids, also wagons and sleds with their heavily blanketed horses. All means but aeroplanes have been employed to arrive in time to shop in Le Sueur.

The Christmas seal sale is going on finely. It is hoped a larger sum than ever will be realized as a result of the faithful work of the children in town. (Christmas seal program was a fundraiser for the battle against tuberculosis <https://www.mnopedia.org/multi-media/theresa-ericksen-promoting-christmas-seals>).

**6 More Days To do your Buying Before Christmas**

We are ready to serve you—Our Motto—not the cheapest but the best for the money.

National Candies—none better.	25-30-35-40-45c
Cream Candy	20-22-25c
Hard Mixed	25-35-50c
Chocolates	
Also Fancy Candies of all kinds.	28c
Best Mixed Nuts	
Brazils—Almonds—Walnuts and Peanuts.	18c
Best Late Howe Cranberries, pound	50c
2 lb. Jar Old Fashion Mince Meat	
Celery—Lettuce—Parsnips—Carrots—Cabbage—Rutabagges, etc.	25c
3 Large Grape Fruit	35c - 45c - 55c - doz.
Sunkissed Oranges	25c - 35c - 40c
Grapes—Bananas—Box Apples—Jap Rice Popcorn.	
Christmas Trees	25c - 35c - 40c
Large assortment of tree ornaments—wreaths—bells—etc. Fine line of Gold Band Dishes—Fancy Bowls—Plates—Vases—etc.	
Tissue and Crepe Paper.	10c
Large Red Candles	10c
Box Christmas Candles	10c

**Miller Brothers**

**Former Prices Crippled Beyond Recognition For The Last Days**

**Final Summons—Last Days**  
To those of you who are keen to save Money we hang out this last appeal.

**KAMPEN'S FINALS!**  
THOUSANDS OF EXTRAORDINARY VALUES MARK LAST DAYS OF THIS GREAT SALE

**Come To This Sale**  
Every Price on Every Article Smashed!

**Wake Up Buyers!**  
Only a Few Short Days—The End!

**Smart Fall and Winter Dresses**  
\$8.65

**25c BOX SALE**

**Rooster Contest Friday at 4p. m. All guessing FREE.**

**Final Prices on Dry Goods**

**Final Call—Final Blow**

**Big Remnant Sale Wednesday**

**Now For the Final Wind-up**

**Now For the Final Clean Up**

**C. A. KAMPEN**  
LE SUEUR, MINN.

*Le Sueur Courier*, December 26, 1866  
The Baptists and Methodists in Le Sueur produced a festival on Christmas Eve. The event began with prayers and music followed by a "splendid supper such as the Ladies of Le Sueur only know how to prepare."

The Presbyterians had a "magnificent tree" enjoyed by teachers, scholars, and parents. The music by the older scholars was "rendered very good."

John Kreger sponsored a ball at Myricks Hall attended by twenty couples. Sheriff Tousley was "Room Manager." The supper was excellent and a merry time was had by all.

*Le Sueur Courier*, January 1, 1868

The prominent feature of Christmas in Le Sueur seemed to be sleigh riding. Every description of cutter, bob, pugg-pung and rudder seemed to be in service. The day being pleasant, with a slight thaw in the morning afforded the first favorable opportunity for a sleigh ride this winter, and we imagined that it was improved by those wishing a ride. Whole families stowed away in the capacious wagon bed on runners, with the merry laughter and bright smiles to be heard and seen on the streets and roads in town, told how well Christmas was being enjoyed by some.

The only service held was by the Episcopalians. It was intended to have held the services in the new church on Christmas but the non-arrival of the stained-glass windows delayed the opening of the church. The society met in the Baptist Church. The windows have arrived and are now in the Church.



Sally Olson sent in this great photo of her great grandfather's meat market (in the background) in Waterville, Minn., taken during the winter.

## Christmas Buying Xmas Presents

Reprinted from the *Le Sueur News-Herald*, Dec. 26, 1926

For several weeks residents of this section have been confronted with offers of merchandise, designed for Christmas presents and supplies. The assortments available in small town stores were remarkably comprehensive and one could purchase anything desired, for if the merchants didn't happen to have it in stock they could get it. In country communities the problem of preparing for Christmas and buying presents for friends and relatives is no longer a formidable one. By reading pre-Christmas advertisements one is able to make a selection leisurely at home and simply present the list to the shopkeeper. Naturally, this has resulted in more pleasant Christmas days than in former years. Another factor of course is a greater amount of available cash.

Old residents here can recall a time when the service maintained by our merchants was far from the thorough and satisfactory business it is today. Some

60 years ago observance of Christmas in the approved manner was largely an individual enterprise. Pioneer merchants, alive to their own interests, did their best to stock up with holiday goods, but handicaps to transportation, lack of funds on the part of prospective customers, and above all, the dominance of the struggle for existence in the new country, all tended to hamper efforts to observe Christmas in the time-honored fashion.

Study of the old records and documents reveals an amusing assortment of gifts provided by pioneer shopkeepers in the older settlements. Stores in this section in the days before the railroad, were dependent for their supplies on overland freight service. In summer those near the Minnesota river were served by steamboat, but in winter the overland trails were the only avenues of traffic. Wise merchants obtained their stocks before winter set in, as the roads were easily blocked and freight transportation sometimes was impossible all winter.

With these conditions obtaining, it is obvious that the merchants were forced to be content with small stocks and little in the way of luxuries was hauled over the rough trails. Bolts of cloth, hair ribbons, coarse boots and shoes, fancy fans, handkerchiefs, pipes, hunting equipment, sawdust dolls with "china" heads, playing cards, games such as dominoes and checkers, tops, toy soldiers of wood and tin and building blocks were among the articles offered, not all in one store of course. There were other things too in some settlements, while others had very few of the articles listed, but these are fairly representative of the possibilities in the way of Christmas shopping in pioneer days.

**Suggestions for an Electrical Christmas**

Electric Appliances make a pleasing and lasting Christmas gift. We have something for every member of the family:

- Hoover Sweepers, Thor Washers, Hot Point Irons for the women.
- Dresser Lamps, Electric Curling Irons, Boudoir Sets for the Girls.
- Flashlights for the Boys.
- Electric Lanterns for the Men.
- Lighting Fixtures, Electric Heaters, Twin Plugs for the Home.
- Eight light Christmas Tree Lighting Outfits in 110 and 22 volt.

**LeSueur Electric Company**  
H. L. PRAHL Phone 270 W. F. SCHOELL

# Stone Cold Tomb: Abraham Lincoln's Final Resting Place

Special program to take place Feb. 17

By Bryce O. Stenzel

April 14, 2025, will mark the 160th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre, in Washington, D.C. To commemorate this tragic, pivotal event in American history, LSCHS President, local historian, and Lincoln Costumed Historical Interpreter Bryce Stenzel will offer a special, educational outreach presentation, on the fascinating history of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois, which has surprising architectural ties to Le Sueur County, Minnesota.

The presentation will be held at the Elysian Tourism Center, just off of MN 60, on Monday, February 17, beginning at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public, but donations to the Le Sueur County Historical



Memorial in Mankato, President of the Mankato Area Community Band, and Secretary of the New Ulm Battery.

Society are welcome.

*Bryce O. Stenzel is a native of Mankato, who currently lives in St. Clair. He is a 1990 and 1995 graduate of Minnesota State University, with Bachelor of Arts in Teaching and Master's degrees in history. He has taught history courses at the elementary, middle, high school, and collegiate levels. He is the author of ten books on local history, Civil War and Abraham Lincoln-related topics. He is the current President of the Le Sueur County Historical Society, having been elected in April, 2024. He also serves as President of the Friends of the Boy in Blue Civil War*

## Traxler honored for Schoolhouse renovation funds

Margaret Traxler unveiled a memorial plaque in her honor at a special ceremony on Oct. 20 at the Le Sueur County fairgrounds in Le Center, Minn. The Le Sueur County Historical Society is recognizing Traxler for her special contribution to help repair the District #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. In 2020, 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."

If you have ideas for memorializing a loved one with a gift to the Society, please contact us at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.

### New address? Let us know!

If your mailing address has changed, or you are no longer receiving the LCHS newsletter, send your current address to P.O. Box 123, Le Center, MN 56057. We need your help to keep our records current.



Margaret Traxler (center) was recognized on Oct. 20 for her contribution to the repair of the Dist. #75 Schoolhouse in Le Center. Looking on is LCHS President Bryce Stenzel (left) and Dean Pettis (right) who was instrumental in arranging for the plaque honoring Traxler.

## LCHS annual meeting set for April 22

A date has been set for the annual meeting of the Le Sueur County Historical Society. The gathering will take place April 22. Time and location will be announced at a later date.

Elections for five seats on the Society's Board of Directors will take place at the annual meeting. Any member interested in a board position should contact the Board as soon as possible.

# Moving forward to a new year

The Le Sueur County Historical Society continues to make progress in improving facilities and establishing practices which will guide the Society for years to come.

But none of this would be possible without strong support from our members.

Please consider renewing your membership and invite a friend to join as well.

The LCHS Board of Directors looks for big things in 2025. Together we can make it happen.

## 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**



With member support, LCCHS was able to complete Phase I of the Elysian school restoration project.

## **Time for 2025 LCCHS membership renewals**

A busy holiday season is behind us. At the Le Sueur County Historical Society, the board is going “full steam ahead” — continuing to strengthen our organization and tending to some much-needed improvements to our facilities. You’ll learn more inside this newsletter.

The Board of Directors is asking your help in continuing these efforts by being a member of the LCCHS.

Membership renewal reminders are being mailed later in January. Please take a few minutes to fill out the form and return it with your check.

## **Have friend join too!**

### **LCCHS 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 LCCHS goals and operations, an opportunity to help preserve Le Sueur County history, and free access to the Society’s Genealogy Center.

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

The Le Sueur County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 Minnesota nonprofit organization. All memberships and contributions are tax deductible.