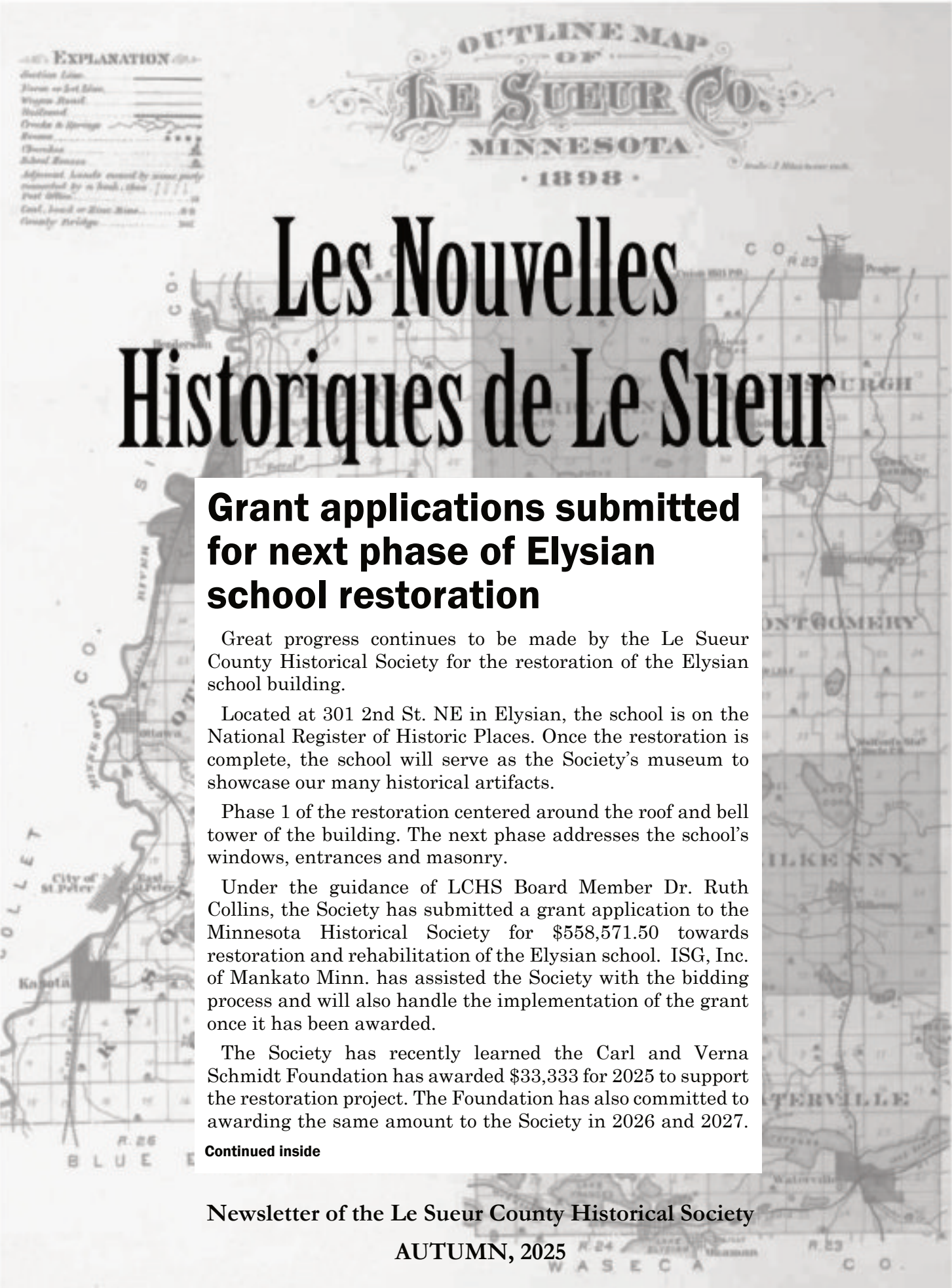




# Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

## Grant applications submitted for next phase of Elysian school restoration

Great progress continues to be made by the Le Sueur County Historical Society for the restoration of the Elysian school building.

Located at 301 2nd St. NE in Elysian, the school is on the National Register of Historic Places. Once the restoration is complete, the school will serve as the Society's museum to showcase our many historical artifacts.

Phase 1 of the restoration centered around the roof and bell tower of the building. The next phase addresses the school's windows, entrances and masonry.

Under the guidance of LCHS Board Member Dr. Ruth Collins, the Society has submitted a grant application to the Minnesota Historical Society for \$558,571.50 towards restoration and rehabilitation of the Elysian school. ISG, Inc. of Mankato Minn. has assisted the Society with the bidding process and will also handle the implementation of the grant once it has been awarded.

The Society has recently learned the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation has awarded \$33,333 for 2025 to support the restoration project. The Foundation has also committed to awarding the same amount to the Society in 2026 and 2027.

**Continued inside**

## The President's Corner...

Where has the summer gone, is a common question I hear, as we close out August, and begin preparations for the fall harvest season. It has been busy summer for the Le Sueur County Historical Society, with many activities, as well as the ongoing restoration of the Elysian Museum.

Summer began with the unveiling of the new Adolph Dehn mural on the side of the Waterville Public School that faces State Highway 13. It was undertaken by a talented group of high school artists, who researched Mr. Dehn's work, and were able to reproduce one of his landscape paintings, true to its original colors, on the side of the building. The painting chosen for the mural depicted a farm scene, which still exists in rural Waterville. Once the outlines of the barn, trees and other features were in place, it became a giant "paint by the numbers" project. The results were impressive. The students and their instructors have every right to feel proud of their accomplishment. The mural will stand for years as a testament to both Mr. Dehn's creativity, and to theirs. The mural also serves as a reminder that although he achieved world renown as an artist, Adolph Dehn originated from Waterville, Minnesota. What an important lesson for students to learn. It doesn't matter where we start out in life that counts, it's what we do with our talents and opportunities that makes the difference.

On July 4, and again, on August 9, I was invited by the Le Sueur County Historical Society and Ottawa Historians to portray President Abraham Lincoln, and present his Second Inaugural Address. March 4, 2025 marked the 160th anniversary of this occasion in Washington, D.C., but I was asked to re-create the ceremony at both the Genealogical Center in Elysian and at the Ottawa Town Hall. Both days were hot, as one would expect for mid-summer, in Minnesota, but the August 9 day at the town hall was extremely humid, as well. I reminded the audience that Congress takes a recess during the month of August for a reason! While Lincoln gave his inaugural address in March, so it would have been cooler, he was no stranger to the oppressive humidity of Washington, D.C. in summer, and particularly in August. This is why, beginning in 1862, Lincoln and his family moved to the "Soldier's Home Cottage," north of the White House, where they would spend the summers. The cottage was situated on a hilltop, which caught a bit of the breeze, which in the days before air conditioning, was the only way to beat the heat and some of the humidity. Both presentations I did were well attended. A special bonus, at the July 4



program, was the showing of a shawl worn by one of Sally Olson's ancestors, which was worn at one of Lincoln's inaugurations!

I spent several hours at the Le Sueur County Fair, later in August. Special thanks to all the

volunteers who cleaned and staffed the log cabin and schoolhouse for the event. Everything looked great, and we had a wonderful turn-out. One of the special events I took in at the Fair was the presentation given by R.J. Kern, a photographer for National Geographic magazine. His specialty is to attend county fairs and photograph the 4-H members and their animals. Mr. Kern gave a very positive and important message to his audience—particularly the young people. He stated that it's not the "winning" of a blue or Grand Champion ribbon that counts, it's all the learning that took place that brought the participant to the fair in the first place. Dean Pettis and I even got to participate in the Le Sueur County Fair photo taken by Mr. Kern later that same afternoon. Look for us in the oversize Adirondack chair that is at the center of the photograph.

Ottawa Historians will have their annual prayer service at the Ottawa Church, on Sunday, September 7 at 12:30 p.m., followed by the harvest potluck picnic in the Ottawa Park.

Finally, I just received word that the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation has awarded the Le Sueur County Historical Society a \$99,999.00 grant for the Elysian Museum window priority/phase 2, to be issued over a three-year period. This is wonderful news! Congratulations to Ruth Collins for spearheading this important fundraising campaign and for writing and submitting the grant application. Great things are happening for LCHS, as fall is in the air!

Bryce Stenzel

Le Sueur County Historical Society President



**88 N. Park Ave. Le Center  
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# Adolph Dehn mural graces Waterville school

The Adolph Dehn work, "Minnesota in August," has been transformed into a large mural on display outside Waterville Elementary School. A team of student artists, under the direction of Waterville-Elysian-Morristown art instructors and Artist-in-Residence Tom Jay,



painted the mural as 26 separate panels. The panels were then assembled in a framework attached to the side of the school building.

A dedication of the mural took place June 6 during Waterville's Bullhead Days.

The Le Sueur County Historical Society was proud supporter of the project.

## Dehn Foundation donates art

The Adolph Dehn Foundation has gifted to the Society a number of original pieces by the famed artist. Among the treasures are signed lithographs including "Village Church" (1932); "Church at Waterville" (1930); "La Mesa" (1945); "Time and Tide" (1949); "Minnesota Shower" (1946); "Threshing Scene" (1937 or 1938); and "Clear Night in Winter" (1965).

LCHS is in the process of framing the artwork in preparation for public display.

## School restoration continued

LCHS was the recipient of \$80,521 from the Schmidt Foundation to support Phase 1 of this project.

LCHS has rented dry and secure storage in Elysian to house the many artifacts currently inside the school building. Plans are underway to catalog the artifacts in a new computer system as they are being moved. This will finally give LCHS a permanent and accurate account of the many items placed in our care.

This summer the Society has invested \$3,000 to remove decaying and hollowed trees located on the south property line of the school. This will give workers more room to operate during the Phase 2 project while at the same time removing the possibility of broken and falling trees further damaging the school.

LCHS also spent \$18,800 from the general budget for the architectural designs, scope of work and conditions assessment for the museum.

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# Sakatah Cemetery Association has updated veterans' information



The Sakatah cemetery Association announced earlier this year that its searchable website of veteran's grave information has been updated. All information related to the veteran's service on the memorial markers or contained in various written

records has been added. Find it at <https://sakatahcemetery.org>

On the website you will see a "Search Our Records" button. Any keyword entered in the search box searches the entire data set. (For instance, entering "vet" will return all 290 veterans on file. Other good search options include a person's name, cemetery lot number or section, or veteran records.

The Association has 290 known veterans' records. Ninety-four served in World war II; 58 veterans not tied to a war; 32 veterans who served in World War I; 15 Vietnam; two Spanish-American; one Mexican and 57 Civil War veterans. (Civil War veterans can also be searched by the State units they enlisted from. There are 22 from Minnesota; 10 Wisconsin; Eight from unknown states; five from Indiana; three from Illinois; and one each from Kansas, Vermont, Iowa, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. The Civil War veteran data comes from the gravestone or records of the Waterville Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Post 93 sourced at the Minnesota History Center.)

The Mexican War (1846-1848) has the oldest known veteran, Lieutenant William Booth.

Nelson and Samuel Rardin, assumed to be brothers, served in both the Spanish American War

## Prayers and a picnic



With fall in the air and the turning of leaves, the Ottawa Historians host their annual Prayer Service and Harvest Picnic. For over 50 years folks have gathered at the Ottawa Stone Church for prayer and fellowship. This year's featured speaker was Glenn Schmotter whose great grandparents lived in Ottawa. Schmotter fondly recalled time he spent in Ottawa and reminded the audience of the dedication of the area's early settlers. Music for the prayer service was provided by Tim Griep who also serves on the Ottawa Town Board. After the prayer service was a potluck picnic in the park. The Harvest Picnic has been a tradition for over 100 years.

(1898) and the Civil War in the Minnesota 13th Infantry.

Stephen E. Belknap served in the Civil War and World War I.

Five soldiers who served in the legendary 1st Minnesota Infantry are buried at Skatah Cemetery. These were the first troops offered to President Lincoln for the Civil War by Governor Alexander Ramsey. At this time it is unknown where these individual soldiers fought; but the 1st Minnesota participated in the battles of First Bull Run, Antietam, and the Battle of Gettysburg.

The inscription on the Minnesota Running Man Monument at Gettysburg reads:

*On the afternoon of July 2, 1863 Sickles Third Corps having advanced from this line to the Emmitsburg road eight companies of the First Minnesota regiment numbering 262 men were sent to this place to support a battery Upon Sickles' repulse as his men were passing here in confused retreat two Confederate brigades in pursuit were crossing the swale. To game time to bring up the reserves and save this position General Hancock in person ordered the eight companies to charge the rapidly advancing enemy.*

*The order was instantly repeated by Col. Wm. Colvill and the charge instantly made down the slope at full speed through the concentrate fire of the two brigades breaking with the bayonet the enemy's front line as it was crossing the small brook in the low ground. There the remnant of the eight companies nearly surrounded by the enemy held its entire force at bay for a considerable time and till it retired on the approach of the reserve. The charge successfully accomplished its object. It saved the position and probably the battlefield.*

*The loss of the eight companies in the charge was 215 killed and wounded – more than 85 percent. Forty-seven men were still in line and no missing. In self-sacrificing desperate valor this charge has no parallel in any war. The next day the regiment participated in repelling Pickett's charge losing 17 more men killed and wounded.*

Some other historically notable people buried at Sakatah Cemetery include Mary

Alexander (1783-1862) - a daughter of a Revolutionary War soldier.

George W. Bailey (1842-1902) was a Chinese General. According to his obituary in The Waterville Advance, Bailey was an only child of John Charles and Heart Rittenhouse Bailey and was born in Philadelphia, Penn. His mother died when he was a child and his father, a world trader, sent him to China to be educated. A young George Bailey joined and rose to the rank of General in the Chinese Army. He returned to America, studied medicine and became a doctor in Pennsylvania. Three years prior to his death, he married Rose Wilcox of Waterloo, Iowa and moved to Waterville. He was buried under the auspices of the Nights of Pythias.

Other notable people interred at Sakatah Cemetery include Anna Dickie Olesen (Burge) – 1885-1971. Olesen was the first woman endorsed by a major party to run for U.S. Senate and worked for President Franklin Roosevelt on New Deal policies. Major Albert Bowman (A.B.) Rogers (1829-1889) was a businessman, soldier and railroad civil engineer and land surveyor. Rogers was the discoverer and explorer of Kicking Horse Pass and discoverer of Rogers Pass through the Rocky and Selkirk mountain ranges in British Columbia, Canada. Also buried in Sakatah Cemetery is Luther Zoan (L.Z.) Rogers (1837-1897), considered the Father of Waterville.

The Sakatah Cemetery is located off State Highway 60, southeast of Waterville.

— Submitted by Jim Weatherhead, Sakatah Cemetery

## One-room learning



The District #75 schoolhouse, located on the grounds of the Le Sueur County Fair in Le Center, once again rang with the sounds of students when sixth graders from Tri-City United visited on May 9. Teachers Jason Hollom and Rachael Faulds brought their students to learn about the one-room schoolhouse era and what it was like to attend school during that time. Retired teacher Bette Traxler led the tour and answered the students' many questions.

# July 4 celebration draws an appreciative crowd



Many visitors gathered at the LCHS campus in Elysian on July 4 for a special program. The Society's Genealogy Center was open and many historical artifacts were on display in the Louis Hruska building.

Highlighting the day was LCHS President Bryce Stenzel's portrayal of Abraham Lincoln. Stenzel presented Lincoln's second inaugural address, "Promise for a Just and Lasting Peace."

March 4, 2025 marked the 160th anniversary of President Lincoln's speech. At just over 700 words, it was the second-shortest address ever given by an American president. "It ranks as one of the

most significant in the history of the United States," said Stenzel. "It represented the culmination of Lincoln's political thought — employing all of his writing skills."



## All is fair in Le Center!

Over the course of the Le Sueur County Fair, Aug. 14-17, hundreds of visitors toured the LCHS Settler's Cabin and District #75 Schoolhouse. The annual event showcases the work of the Society and proves the ongoing interest in Le Sueur County's history. Visitors came from states throughout the country and even from Japan.



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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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## LCHS Membership Application

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

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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  
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and artifacts
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programming
- ☐ Genealogy Center  
assistance
- ☐ Communications

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## **Genealogy Center open Oct. 11 - exhibits on display**

Even though the open season for the LCHS Genealogy Center has concluded, the Board of Directors will open the building to the public on

Oct. 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. There will also be a number of artifacts on display that same day.

The Center is located at 301 NE 2nd St. in Elysian.

## **Calling all those interested in Kilkenny history...**

LCHS has been contacted about interest in starting a Kilkenny Historians Group. The LCHS Board will be holding its Oct. 21 meeting at the Kilkenny library (288 Laurel Ave. S) at 6 p.m.

LCHS members and anyone interested in Kilkenny history is encouraged to attend and learn more. Interested parties may also contact Janice Sellner in care of the Kilkenny library.

## **Maple trunk available**

Visitors to the LCHS campus in Elysian may recall the three majestic maple trees on the south edge of the property. The trees were showing their age and for safety reasons the board decided to have them removed. LCHS has saved the trunks of the trees and one of the trunks is up for sale to interested parties.



The trunk is over two feet in diameter and about seven feet long. It has several interesting knobs and lobes which give the wood unique character.

Interested parties are asked to contact the Society at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) for more information.