

EXPLANATION	
Section Line	—
Bound up Lot Line	—
Wagon Road	—
Railroad	—
Creeks & Springs	—
Houses	•
Churches	✕
School Houses	✕
Adjoined lands owned by same party connected by a line, then	—
Post Office	—
Coal, Iron or Zinc Mine	—
County Bridge	—

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

Scale: 2 Miles to one inch.

Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

Newsletter of the Le Sueur County Historical Society

Historical Society annual meeting is April 22

All members of the Le Sueur County Historical Society are invited to attend the Society's annual meeting on Tuesday, April 22. The event will take place at 6 p.m. in the 4-H building at the Le Sueur County fairgrounds in Le Center, Minn.

2024 was a busy year for the Society and the annual meeting will provide members with updates on the historic Elysian school restoration, improvements made at the Genealogy Center, and a brief financial report. The LCHS board is also proposing minor changes to the Society's bylaws which need to be approved by the general membership at the annual meeting.

Five seats on the Society's Board of Directors are open and elections will take place at the annual meeting.

Members in good standing are eligible to vote. Once the board has been elected, board members will

**Continued inside
on page 3**



SPRING, 2025

The President's Corner...

It was particularly gratifying to see as many people turn out for the “*Stone Cold Tomb: Lincoln’s Final Resting Place*,” presentation as did so, on Monday, February 17, which was “Presidents’ Day.” In spite of record cold temperatures that even forced many area schools to cancel classes the following morning, twenty brave souls made the effort to attend the lecture. A special “thanks” to Ron Greenwald and Dean Pettis, for coming early that evening to help me set up chairs and equipment at the Elysian Tourism Center. It was a wonderful facility for a presentation of that nature, which featured PowerPoint slides of the Tomb during its initial construction in 1869, as well as of several reconstructions and remodeling efforts since then. The program also featured a recounting of the 1876 attempt to steal President Lincoln’s body and use it for ransom by a group of counterfeiters, as well as what was finally done by authorities to ensure that his remains would never be disturbed again.

The reason this topic was chosen, aside from the fact that it was timed to coincide with Abraham Lincoln’s birthday in February, is that there was a remarkable local connection to the construction of the Tomb: a significant portion of the decorative stone used on the interior of the structure (after its renovation in 1930-31) came from right here in Le Sueur County—namely the Babcock-Willcox Quarry, in Kasota. I had previously read about the use of “pink Kasota stone” in tour literature about the Tomb I had gathered, after visiting Lincoln’s final resting place, on several occasions. It was also emphasized in public, guided tours I had taken. But what really convinced me that I was on the right track in locating where the stone actually came from was a series of personal and email conversations I had with Donn Vetter, the owner of Vetter Stone. He confirmed for me, through photographs I had taken of the Tomb’s interior, that not only was it stone from this area, but that it was Babcock and Willcox, who produced it. Their quarry for “pink Kasota stone” was located where the city park in Kasota is now located. Vetter Stone did not come into existence until 1954, well after Babcock and Willcox had discontinued its operations. Not only did Mr. Vetter take time to share with me his knowledge of the quarry, he was one of the attendees at the February 17 lecture! That was an added bonus to what turned out to be a wonderful evening, despite the weather.

Much has been made by Southerners, in particular, about the special pride they feel toward “their soil.” Knowing this extra bit of local history should give Le Sueur County residents a bit of extra pride in knowing that their stone has been shipped around the world, adorning some of the most important public buildings, including the final resting place of one of America’s greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln.

Bryce O. Stenzel
Le Sueur County Historical Society President



Stenzel to reprise Lincoln tomb presentation April 7

Stone Cold Tomb: The Final Resting Place of Abraham Lincoln will be repeated on Monday, April 7, at the Elysian Tourism Center beginning at 7 p.m. It is being offered again to allow people who wanted to attend the program but could not, on account of the weather.

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 event is free and open to the public, but **donations to the Le Sueur County Historical Society are welcome.**

The winners of the door prize drawings which took place on February 17 was Desiree Michaelson, who won a one-year LCHS membership; and Julie Sybilrud who took home a U.S. flag. Congratulations to both winners! Another New Membership Drawing and U.S. flag Door Prize Drawing will be held on April 7.

A special “Thank You” to the Elysian American Legion Post 311 for donating the flags for the door prize drawings.

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.

Annual meeting continued

select officers for 2025.

The guest speaker scheduled to appear at the annual meeting is author and storyteller Jason Lee Willis. A transplanted Minnesotan from South Dakota, he is best known for his works, “The Alchemist’s Map” and “The Dream Catcher Chronicles,” along with other fiction and non-fiction works. His children’s book, “Tall Tales of LeSueur,” brings to life Pierre Charles Le Sueur through some of the tall tales that have been written about him throughout history.



Jason Lee Willis

“I grew up in some pretty boring places,” Willis writes on his website, “so as a writer, my theme is that things are never as simple as they seem. I like to look at things from different perspectives, to explore possibilities. My novels are set in Minnesota, and are often based on real people, events, and places, but I like to insert fantasy into the equation.”

You can learn more about Willis and his books by visiting <https://jasonleewillis.wixsite.com/novels>

The Society’s annual meeting is an opportunity to meet fellow members, learn updates of LCHS activities, and conduct business vital to the Society’s operations in 2025. Members are encouraged to bring questions and comments to present to the board.



HAPPY EASTER! LCHS Board Member Dean Pettis shares a few Easter-theme postcards.

LCHS board to present bylaw changes at annual meeting

Discussions involving the bylaws of the Le Sueur County Historical Society prompted the board to look closer at the governing document. The consensus of the board was that some language in the bylaws no longer pertained to the organization and should be removed. Other articles needed to be updated.

Any bylaw changes must be approved by the general membership. For convenience, members will be called on to vote on the changes at the April 22 annual meeting.

The vote called for on April 22 is for the bylaws as a total document. The board welcomes questions on any particular sections of the bylaws, but specific areas of the document will not be added or deleted before the vote.

Language in the new bylaw proposal stays the same until the “Membership” article. Levels of membership have been added, while cumbersome language pertaining to membership are being removed. Similar extraneous verbiage concerning “Meeting of Members” has been removed in the new version.

The most noteworthy change in the “Board of Directors” section calls for a minimum of seven people on the board of directors; where the current bylaws call for a minimum of three. Most of the other changes are housekeeping for the board.

A complete copy of the proposed bylaws is available for viewing at <https://www.lesueurcountyhistory.org/bylaw>. Hard copies are available by request. Copies will also be on hand at the April 22 LCHS annual meeting.

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.

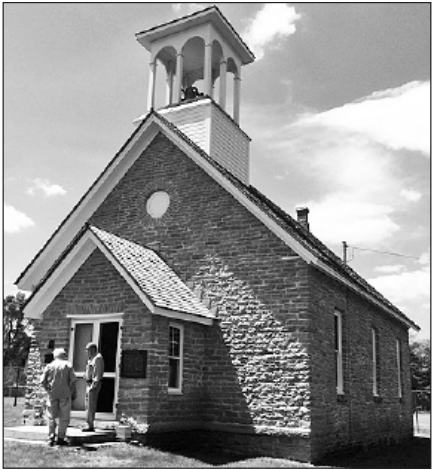
Ottawa Stone Church open weekends beginning in May

Beginning May 22, the Ottawa Stone Church will be open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.

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 \$300. 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 or call (507) 267-4091.

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

Dehn family donates artwork to Society

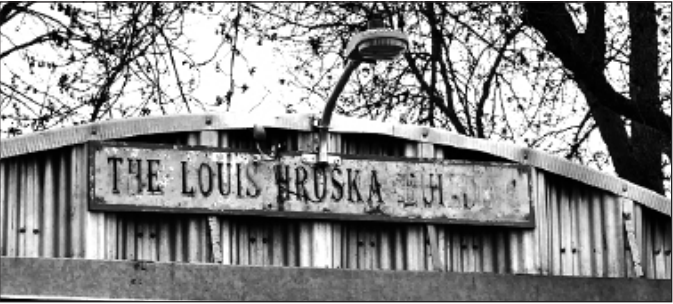
The Adolph Dehn Family Foundation generously donated signed and numbered lithographs by the artist to the LCHS recently.

"Village Church," an 8.5 x 12.75-inch matted lithograph, is based on a church in Waterville, Minn. "La Mesa" is a full-color watercolor, 21 x 27.5 inches in size. The lithograph "Time and Tide" is 17 x 12.5 inches in size; and "Threshing Scene," a framed lithograph, measures 9.5 x 12.75 inches.

The works will be framed and the LCHS board is exploring options for displaying Dehn's artwork publicly.

The Society thanks the Foundation for its thoughtfulness and support.

See the light...



In addition to electrical work done at the Genealogy Center, David Volkman and his crew is in the process of improving the lights of the Society's "Hruska" storage shed located at the Elysian campus. An outdoor light has been installed and the interior fluorescent lights will soon be replaced with a safer and more energy efficient system.

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 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.

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.

Phase I of the Elysian school restoration is officially over

LCHS has recently received State Historical Society approval that Phase I of the red brick building's restoration is complete.

To keep momentum going on the multi-million-dollar project, preparations for a Phase II grant application are already underway.

Phase I was comprised mainly of repairs made to the building's roof and bell tower. 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 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. More help is being sought within LCHS to distribute the work more widely. Any members with grant writing experience are being urged to contact the board.

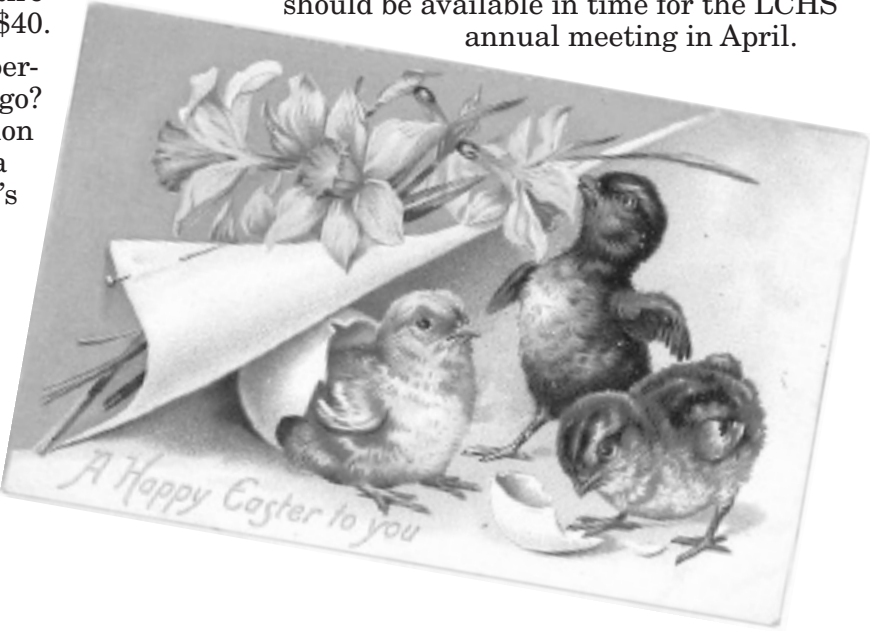
Society has retained the engineering services of ISG Inc. in Mankato to oversee the estimating and bidding process for the project. Once all components of Phase II have been defined and costs estimated, LCHS presents those figures in the State Society grant application.

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



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.



A different kind of harvest

LCHS Genealogy Center volunteer extraordinaire Sally Olson discovered photographs of an ice harvest taking place in Waterville.

Getting those blocks of ice cut and hauled up to the train was a multi-man effort!

Carl Stavanau is harvesting his ice crop. It is a fine quality 14 inches thick without any snow.

— *The Faribault Journal*
February 4, 1914



HARVEST
WATERVILLE, MINN.
—CHRISTIAN STUDIO—



COMING UP
WATERVILLE, MINN.
—CHRISTIAN STUDIO—

Carl Stavanau is harvesting a fine ice crop. The recent cold snap froze the ice to the right thickness and the ice stored for the coming season is clear as crystal and very firm. Mr. Stavanau is cutting and loading a large amount of ice for the Great Western railroad company. The Great Western has always been partial to our lake ice, claiming it to be the best and purest obtainable.

— *The Le Sueur News-Herald*
February 17, 1932



SAWING THE ICE
WATERVILLE, MINN.
—CHRISTIAN STUDIO—



LOADING CARS
WATERVILLE, MINN.
—CHRISTIAN STUDIO—

Carl Stavanau and Sons, who started work Monday morning on their ice harvest at Waterville, will devote their time for the next two weeks or more to loading cars for the C. & G. W. railroad. Cars of ice taken from Lake Sakatah, will be shipped to the company's ice houses at Olewein and other points, while later ice will be cut from Lake Tetonka to fill the local ice houses. Up to the present time the ice is of good quality and averages up to about 15 inches in thickness.

— *The Le Sueur News-Herald*
February 1, 1939

Help celebrate our milestone

2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the
Le Sueur County Historical Society.



Your support helps keep us going for years to come.
Please consider renewing your membership and invite a friend to join as well.

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**

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

**P.O. Box 123
Le Center, MN 56057**

Genealogy Center opens for the season April 25

The Society's Genealogy Center received some TLC this winter in preparation for a new season beginning April 25. The building's electrical system was improved to eliminate the network of extension cords, 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.

The Society's Research Center at 301 NE 2nd St. in Elysian is open Fridays and Saturdays from 1-4 p.m. through Sept. 19. The phone number is (507) 267-4091.

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.

A user fee of \$10 is charged, but the fee is waived for LCHS members. If you wish to have Center staff assist with research, there is a fee of \$10 per hour. Document scans and copies are 25 cents each. The Center is equipped with a Microfilm scanpro printer/reader/scanner. Patrons can view archived newspapers from throughout the county and print selected items.

While most Center patrons are walk-ins, appointments can be made via email at info@lesueurcountyhistory.org or by calling (507) 267-4091.

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 or call (507) 267-4091.