

# Clay County Historical Society

Clay County Historical Society Newsletter

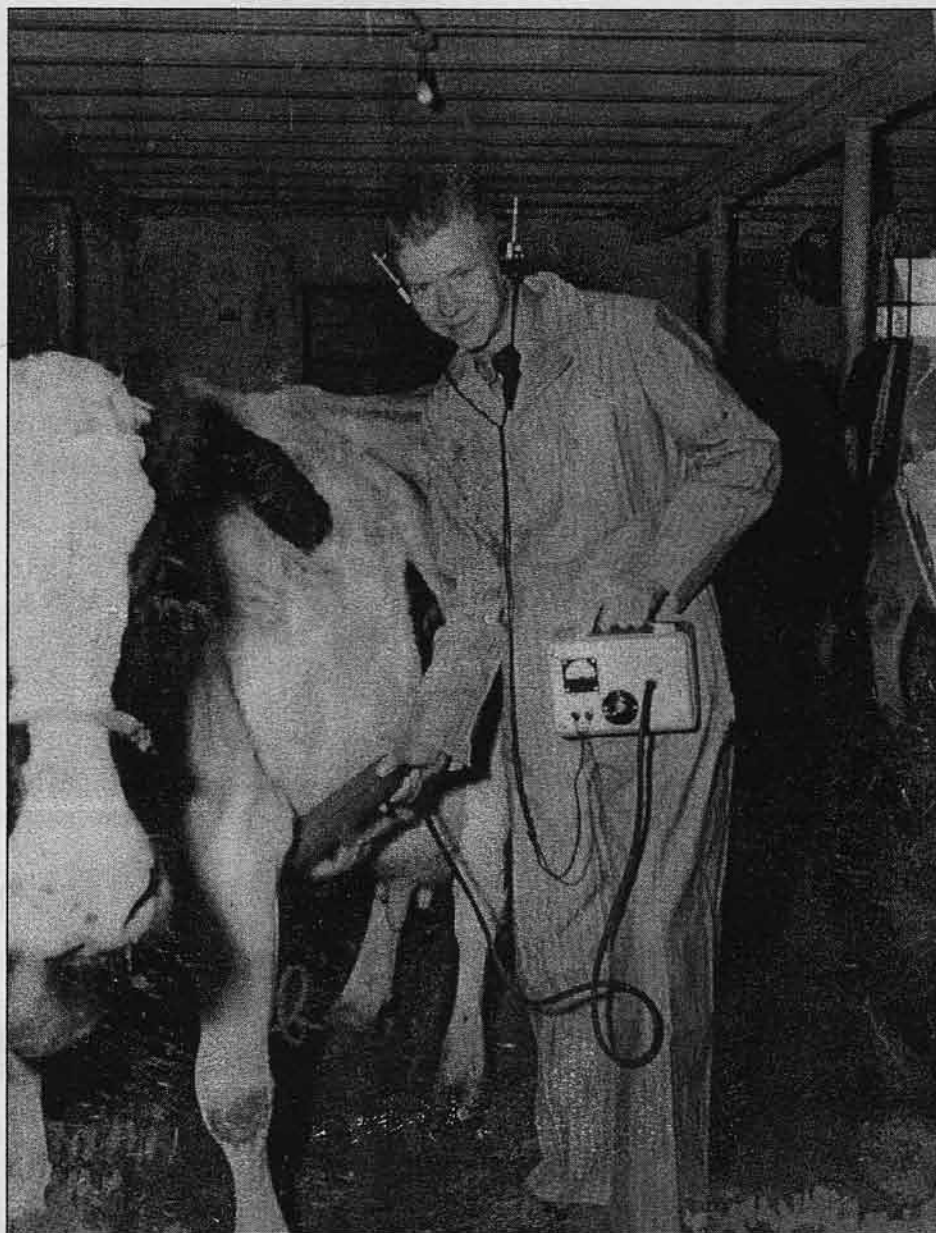
January/February 2005

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## In this issue:

### Page

- 2 President's Column
- 3 Here Comes the Bride: Weddings in America exhibit open
- 4 Winners of the Romance Raffle
- 5 Seats available on CCHS Board of Directors
- 5 Exhibit Grand Opening and Annual Meeting April 12
- 6 Outreach Displays
- 7 Looking Back: 20 Years with CCHS by Pam Burkhardt
- 9 Historic Treasure in the Douglas House: the Stories behind the Stuff



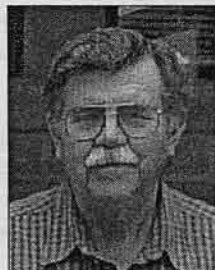
## Can you help us identify this photo?

This photo ran in the Hawley Herald, probably in the 1950s. We'd love to know what this young fellow is up to. He appears to be checking a cow for radioactivity with a dosimeter (Geiger counter). If you have any information, please contact Mark at the museum.

## President's Column

By Dale White, CCHS Board President

At our annual meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup>, the terms of two members of our Board of Directors will expire and two new Directors will be elected to replace them. Applications for the two board seats are now being accepted.



It seems—from my limited experience—that many folks who have served on a nonprofit board of directors were at first hesitant. But after serving for a short time, they view the opportunity differently and realize there are as many rewards as there are obligations. Every member of CCHS believes in the mission of the organization, and here is the opportunity to help sustain it. Maybe give a little effort in recruiting people and funding; maybe lend your voice to projects that evolve from our discussions. Being a Director on the Board requires no more skill or talent than every member possesses, no more time than most can make available.

Remember that you will be gaining from the experience of serving on the board, too. You will meet new people and probably make new friendships, learn more about the operation of a nonprofit organization and being effective on a nonprofit board, and most of all, feel the satisfaction and pride of knowing that you helped further the preservation of Clay County's history for future generations.

If you have even the slightest interest in finding out more about being on the CCHS Board, please call the CCHS office, or me, or any of the other Board members. Feel free to attend any of our board meetings at any time; they are open to the public. They are always at 8:00 am on the third Wednesday of the month. The next one is March 16.

+ + + + +

Over this last Thanksgiving I suggested to my elderly Uncle Bob that he join Clay County Historical Society. Born and raised in Clay County, he readily filled out a membership form. Then shortly before Christmas I drove to his home—in a neighboring county, for many years—to pick up memorabilia of his World War II travels through Europe with the idea of donating it to the Society. Interesting stuff.

An everyday event, but just another reminder to me. Every day of the week, every week of the year, something from the past is broken, burned, or buried: a 1920s letter from an address north of town, a 1930s photo no one can identify found with Grandpa's estate papers, objects from Aunt Anybody's parlor being dismantled after she has left for the nursing home.

This is stuff that used to go in the attic. But there are few attics anymore. Give it to the Clay County Historical Society!



## CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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[www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history](http://www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history)

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Lisa Vedaa, Editor  
Pam Burkhardt, Contributor  
Mark Peihl, Contributor

## Please report address changes

Please help us keep our records up-to-date and our postage costs down by notifying us of your new or seasonal addresses. We do request address service from the postal service, which notifies us of your new addresses, but we are charged \$.70 to \$1.00 for each address correction. We currently have approximately an additional \$5.00 postage cost for all the address corrections we receive when each issue of the newsletter is mailed.

Please help the historical society save money for educational exhibits and programs, and assure that you get your CCHS newsletters, by notifying us of your winter address or letting us know if you are going to be away for any length of time. Your help is appreciated!





## Here Comes the Bride! New exhibit thru March 13

The bride is the central figure in an almost universal ritual—the wedding. Each wedding is a symbol of family continuity that signals the end of a courtship and the beginning of a marriage. While some elements of the wedding ceremony have remained unaltered, many aspects of courtship and marriage have changed dramatically throughout history.

*Here Comes the Bride: Weddings in America*, an exhibit currently on display at the Clay County Museum through March 13, explores the history of weddings in America from Colonial times up to the present day. The traveling exhibit was developed by the Rogers Historical Museum in Rogers, Arkansas. It is being hosted by CCHS to complement the current exhibit *Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County*.

The twelve exhibit panels discuss a variety of topics including courtship, wedding attire, decorating for the wedding, the wedding ceremony itself, wedding gifts, and the honeymoon. One panel is devoted to ethnic wedding customs, while another looks at the influence of royal weddings.



Wedding portrait of unidentified couple, 1900 to 1910.

Changes in the wedding dress itself is one focus of the exhibit. Other interesting topics include the evolution of the wedding cake, the history of the diamond engagement ring, the beginnings of the gift registry, and changes in the honeymoon. An interactive portion of the exhibit invites visitors to fill three "hope chests" with illustrations of costumes, wedding gifts, and other items appropriate to three different periods in American history.

The final panel looks at recent changes in marriage and weddings. World War II began a period of emphasis on home and family that encouraged early marriage. This coupled with postwar prosperity resulted in the big, white wedding becoming a normal part of middle-class life, and weddings became a big business.

But with all the changes in courtship and marriage, weddings continue to fascinate us. Television soap opera weddings have been among the most-watched episodes in history, and millions tuned in for the real-life wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Di. Now as throughout history it seems that everyone loves a bride!

## Response to donation request continues

We are delighted to report that donations from our members in response to the special request in November have almost exceeded \$5,000! Donations received in 2005 will help fund our exhibits, archives, collections and educational programs. Listed below are individuals who have responded to our request since our last newsletter.

In addition to our regular annual events in 2005, we also have many projects scheduled for ourselves in our

Long-Range Plan. We need muslin for textile preservation, a large format printer for reproducing photos and documents for exhibits, a small shop vac, and tarps to better protect the 1936 Buffalo Fire Engine.

We are genuinely grateful for the support you have shown throughout the years, and especially in the past few months. We ask that you please keep us in mind when planning your charitable contributions for 2005.

Contributors since last newsletter:

Russ & Lois Bekkerus  
Dr. Jim L. & Portia Danielson  
Vincent & Jean Dolva

Jim Bergquist & Jane Eastes  
Cathy & Burt Grover  
Audrey Z. Jones  
Margret Kragnes  
Dan & Faith Meurrens

Mrs. Gisela S. Nobel  
Ron & Nancy Saeger  
Chris & Ellen Velline  
Dale D. White  
Steve Wright/Wright Funeral Home

## Romance Raffle Winners!

The lucky winners of the prizes awarded in CCHS' Romance Raffle, drawn February 14 at 3:00 p.m. were:

- 1st Prize \$100 Sarello's gift certificate (donated by Voxland Electric): **Delores Eiler**, Moorhead
- 2nd Prize one yard of bobbin lace (made and donated by Pam Burkhardt): **Jean Doty**, Hawley
- 3rd Prize Scandinavian Iron Candle Holder (from HHIC Heritage Gift Shop): **Rose Bergan**, Hawley
- \$50 gift certificate for custom framing (donated by Steve Johnson, expert framer): **Tula Henrikson**, Fargo
- \$20 Carol Widman's chocolate gift certificate (donated by CCHS): **Deb Gregor**, Kindred
- One dozen roses from Country Greenery (donated by CCHS): **Bea Arett**, Moorhead

Congratulations to these winners and much thanks to all who supported the historical by purchasing tickets!

## Calendar

June 2004—March 27, 2005

*Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Weddings in Clay County*

January 22—March 13

*Here Comes the Bride: Weddings in America* traveling exhibit from Rogers Historical Museum, Rogers, Arkansas

March 1—April 3

"Ugliest Bridesmaid Dress Contest" display & public voting

Feb. 26

"Displays on a Shoe String"  
FM Communiversity class by  
Pam Burkhardt, 1-5 pm

April 8

*Inside, Outside, Upside Down*  
exhibit opens to public

April 12

CCHS Annual Meeting and Grand  
Opening of *Inside, Outside,*  
*Upside Down* exhibit, 5:30-9:00pm

June 24-25

Bergquist Cabin Open House, 1-4

Schedule subject to change

## Ghosts in the Walls: a closer look at the objects found in the Douglas House - Part 1

### James Douglas' Collars

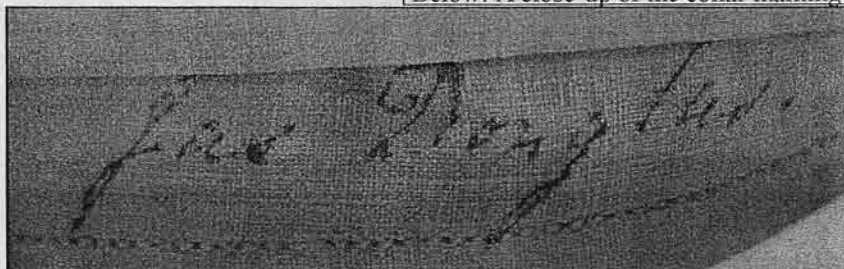
Two of the three men's cloth collars found in the Douglas House are marked "Jas. Douglas" in ink. A third is not marked, but is the same size (16" x 2") and are "West End" or "The West End" brand. All have one fold. One collar is badly frayed. Small collars like these were the fashion in the late 1870s.

In the late 1800s, collars were removed from the shirts for washing and marked to identify the household. All three collars have buttonholes on each side in the front and one at center back to hold the collar in place on the shirt. James Douglas lived in the Moorhead house from early in 1873 until 1888.

The makers of the "West End" brand are as yet unknown. The name might refer to London's West End known for its theaters. More broadly, the West End includes the district of Mayfair – an area famous for high-class, men's tailoring establishments.

See page nine for more about research on the Douglas House.

Below: A close-up of the collar marking





# Positions open for Board of Directors

CCHS is now accepting applications for candidates to fill two vacancies on the Board of Directors that will be left by Donna Voxland and Helen Rudie when their terms expire in April. Voxland and Rudie have both faithfully served two three-year terms on the CCHS Board, the limit allowed by the society's by-laws. We look forward to welcoming two new faces to the board, but we are very sorry to have to say goodbye to Rudie and Voxland and their experience with and commitment to the organization.

As President Dale White mentioned in his President's Column on page two of the newsletter, the position of a director on the CCHS Board is a great opportunity for those with an interest in Clay County's history to help shape the future of the preservation and promotion of that history. We ask no more from a board member than what they should feel compelled, as a leader of the organization, to do for its health and growth.

The following is a summary of the description for the position of a member on the CCHS Board of Directors adopted by the Board in the Spring of 2004:

**Term:** The length of one board term is three years. A board member is allowed to serve two consecutive three-year terms, but is not required to do so.

**Purpose:** To serve the board as a voting member, to develop policies, procedures and regulations for the operation of the Clay County Historical Society and Clay County Museum & Archives; to monitor finances of the organization, its programs and performance.

**Attendance:** Regularly attend monthly board meetings and committee meetings as scheduled. Attend board retreats and board development activities, and special historical society events such as the Annual Meeting, Open Houses, and exhibit openings.

**Responsibilities:** Establish policy; Secure adequate funds and monitor finances; Show commitment to board activities; Be well informed on issues and agenda items in advance of meetings Maintain and update long-range plans. Contribute skills, knowledge and experience when appropriate; Participate in organizational decision-making; Assume leadership roles in board activities, including fund raising; Represent the organization to the public and to private industry.

We hope that you can see the qualities and skills listed above in yourselves and volunteer your service to the Clay County Historical Society! Applications can be acquired and submitted through the Clay County Historical Society office Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Applications will be considered at the March 16 board meeting.

## April 12 set for CCHS Annual Meeting and new exhibit Grand Opening!

Mark your calendars to attend the CCHS Annual Meeting and the Grand Opening of our new exhibit, *Inside, Outside, Upside Down*, Tuesday, April 12!

*Inside, Outside, Upside Down* will open to the public April 8, but we'd like to treat our annual meeting guests to a special reception and ribbon cutting! Join us 5:30-6:30 in the atrium outside the Clay County Museum for a reception and ribbon cutting for our new exhibit at 5:45. Come to see how we match the refreshments to the title of the exhibit!

The new exhibit will explore the process of learning about objects and photographs by looking at them from different perspectives, e.g. examining the construction of

an 1870s dress to learn about dressmaking methods of that period. The exhibit will also showcase time capsules, aerial photographs, and surprise caches in house walls.

The dinner for the Annual Meeting will begin at 6:30, a short business meeting will be held at 7:30, and the program will begin at 8:00. Tim Glines, Manager of Outreach Services for the Minnesota Historical Society. Glines will speak about the county historical society movement in Minnesota. Cost for the dinner will again be \$15, and reservations are now being accepted by mail or phone. Send your reservation with payment to CCHS at PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561, or call 218-299-5520. The deadline for reservations is Monday, April 4.

## Outreach Displays

|                            | <u>Open</u>             | <u>Close</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Hawley Public Library      | January                 | April        |
| Moorhead Public Library    | January                 | April        |
| Barnesville Public Library | January                 | April        |
| Fargo CVB                  | [closed for the season] |              |

The Hawley Public Library opens **LISTEN TO THE MUSIC** - a display featuring musical instruments, a roller organ, radio and sheet music.



**EATING OUT** is at the Moorhead Public Library highlighting artifacts and photos from our award-winning exhibit *Eating Out in Clay County*. The artifacts and photos show cafés and restaurants and taking lunch to work and school.

Part 3 of the toy display called **GIRLS' TOYS** is at the Barnesville Public Library. These toys were meant to prepare a girl for her future role as a mother and homemaker. Dolls, laundry and ironing toys from early years are featured as well as WWII-era paper dolls.



The Fargo Dome has a temporary display on the Hjemkomst Center in a small case shared by CCHS and HHIC.

## IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

Five generations of Charlotte Watson family wedding dresses from the *Old, New, Borrowed, Blue* exhibit are featured in the atrium display case. The dresses cover more than 100 years of wedding fashion, from 1865 bell-shaped skirts to the 1977 frontier-revival style.

CCHS arranged a new display of exquisite, hand-decorated china in the lobby area. These items were painted by Beulah Forness who holds china-painting classes in the building Tuesday mornings.

## Artifacts & Donors

November/December 2004

### Donors:

Moorhead: Donna Voxland; Beth Dille, Robert & Dorothy Belsly  
Glyndon: Dalan Rasmussen  
Hawley: Margaret Ristvedt

**Artifacts:** Minutes book from the Merry Mixers Home Makers' Club, 1956-1977; black & white photo-postcard of the Riverside Inn, Hi-way 10, Hawley; color photo-postcard of aerial view of the Clifford Warner horse barn in South Moorhead; 1980s US West portable phone by Motorola; windmill pump from Belsly farm south of Moorhead w/photo and written history; nurse uniform with apron that belonged to Mable Grover (1898-1911)

## Perfect Fit Insured by X-Ray



PRIMEX X-RAY SHOE FITTER guarantees comfortable perfect fitting shoes for the whole family. You know before you buy because you see for yourself. Try PRIMEX fitted shoes and see the difference in walking pleasure and foot ease.

Come in and see our new, up to the minute Primex X-ray Machine. We will be pleased to X-ray your feet.

X-ray machines like the one in this April 28, 1949 advertisement were popular in shoe stores in the 1930s and 40s. The use of the machines was gradually discontinued through the 1960s due to stricter regulations and pressure from insurance companies. We would love to display one in our *Inside, Outside, Upside Down* exhibit. If anyone knows where one we might find one hidden away, please contact us at the CCHS office, 218-299-5520.



# Looking Back...

## Twenty Years with CCHS

By Pam Burkhardt, Collections Manager

This September will be my twentieth anniversary working full time for the Clay County Historical Society. A lot has happened to CCHS since then.

In December 1984, I started working part time for the Clay County Museum. I took over an inventory project started in October 1983 by Diane Sandeen. The museum was converting to a new artifact numbering system.

Since 1971, the museum had been in the Great Northern Depot located between the railroad tracks and Fairmont Creamery building on First Avenue to the north and the first Moorhead armory and other buildings used by a car dealership to the south. The frequent train traffic made the building and artifacts shake. At first, I braced for a collision, but later didn't notice it very much.

The main building had a small basement divided into two rooms. The farthest room from the stairs had a bank of wooden cupboards on one long wall used for artifact storage. Artifacts shared the space with the furnace and water heater. Boxes lined the second long wall. In the center, a long, shallow, tin sink had been used for photo work, but was now filled with artifacts and had boxes underneath. The front basement space had multiple stacks of newspapers rising up from the floor: the bottom ones impossible to get out. Cupboards built as a scout project held most of the clothing collection. While working in the basement, we used walkie-talkies to communicate to keep running up and down the stairs to a minimum. You knew when to turn the walkie-talkie on after someone pounded on the floor above or hit the ceiling with a broom handle from below.

The storeroom on the main floor held most of the artifacts on a variety of shelves. Other artifacts were in boxes and trunks stored in a loft built by Director John Shermeister. I was the only one who could walk upright there without hitting the ceiling! Our thousands of glass-plate negatives were stored in a small room in one corner on the main floor. Artifact locations hadn't been updated since the move from the courthouse - you had to remember where everything was.

Archival and research materials were stored on roller shelving in several places, but were easier to find. On the other hand, we had no table or chair for researchers to use!

The office area was separated from the exhibit area by a partition placed over work counters left by the railroad. The front door opened directly onto displays in old store merchandise cases. Sharing the exhibit space were a floor loom, parlor organ, permanent wave machine, high wheel



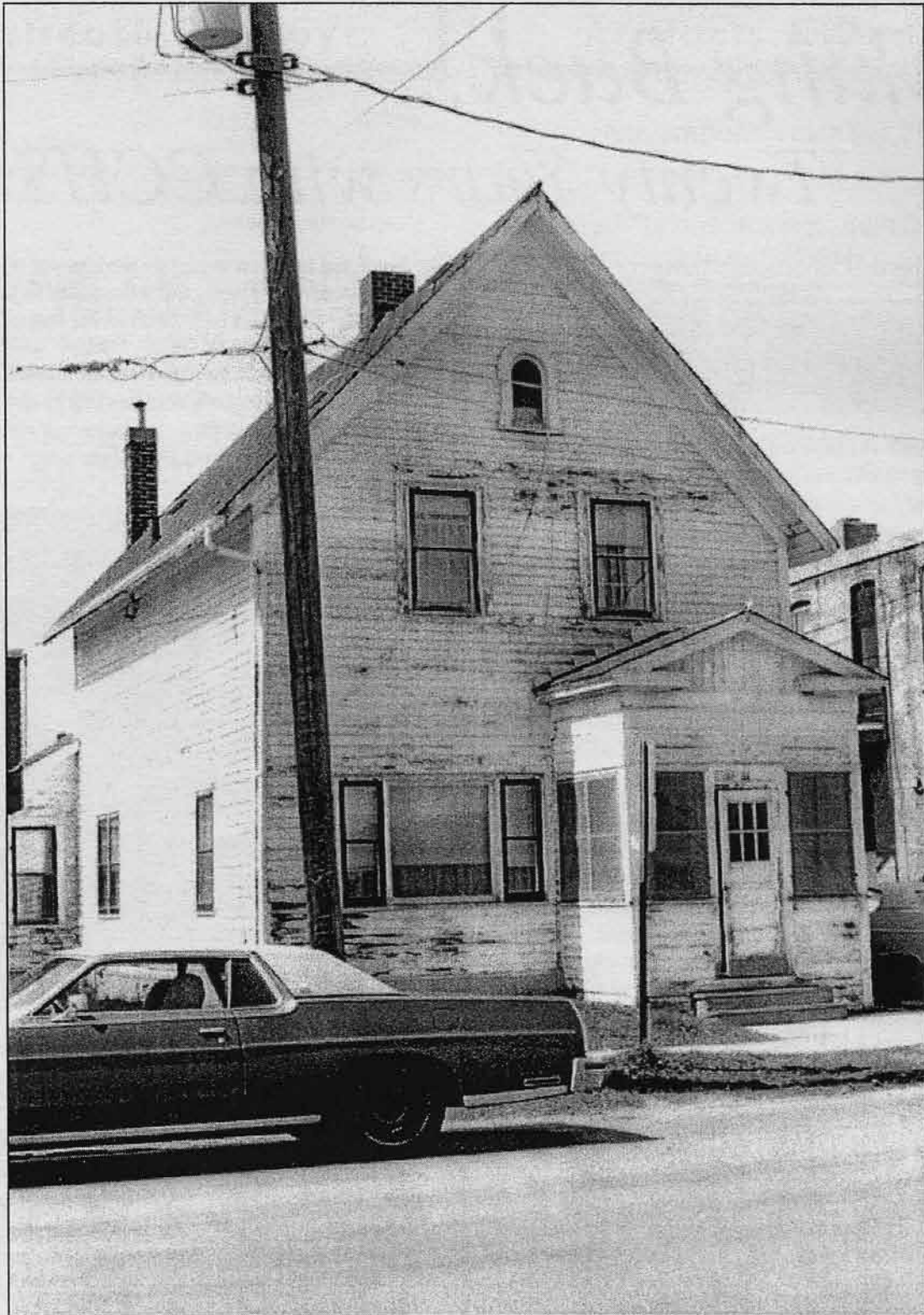
A photo taken in the spring of 1986 shows one corner of the NP Depot in use as office space, archives, research, photo lab, artifact processing and storage.

bicycle and a stuffed birds. Exhibits were changed every three months. Because I had exhibit experience, I was immediately given the task of doing those along with my inventory work.

The main building was heated; the annex /freight house was not. The bottom of the freight door revealed a gap of about two or three inches allowing dirt and leaves to enter - and other things! Most of the items stored there were coated with a thick layer of fine, black dust. Working conditions notwithstanding, that inventory project was probably the most enjoyable I've had at CCHS!

Office Manager Bonnie Ackerman had the only typewriter - a Selectric. I brought my own manual typewriter from

Continued on page 13...



This 1986 view of the Douglas House is to the northwest. The chimney at left goes straight up the back wall of the house from the kitchen. The chimney at right followed up the middle of the south wall (at left) to the second story then angled up to the right and exited the roof in the center of the house. Artifacts were found in an open gap between the outside south wall and this chimney. CCHS Photo.



# Historic Treasure Unearthed in Douglas House

By Mark Peihl, CCHS Archivist

In our last newsletter, we announced that a cache of artifacts and papers had been discovered in the wall of the James Douglas house, one of the oldest homes in Clay County. Since then we've had time to study the materials and make some sense out of them. Here's the promised update.

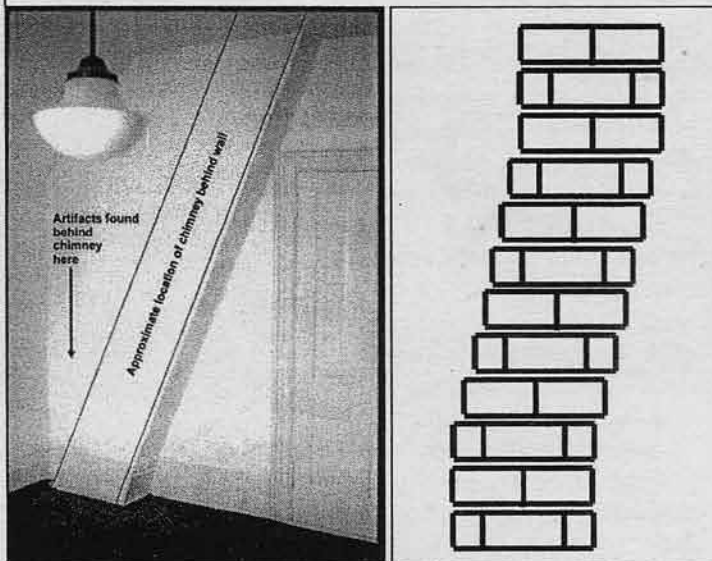
A little background first. As you may recall, the rebuilding of the Main Avenue Bridge and Moorhead's redevelopment plans required the demolition of many buildings between Main and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues South and from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the River. About a year ago the city chose Sterling Company of Fargo to redevelop the area. Sterling's plan included saving and incorporating two old buildings into the new development: the 1898 Kassenborg Block (formerly home to Kirby's Bar) and a non-descript looking little house just to the south, James and Wilhelmina Douglas' home. The latter was built in 1873, less than two years after the Northern Pacific Railway reached the Red River.

The plan required moving the Douglas house about ten feet to the north and setting it on a new foundation. To do so, workmen first had to tear out an old, dangerous chimney. It was an unusual bit of construction. Originally, a fireplace sat near the south wall of the first floor front room. Its chimney ran up the south wall to the second story. There it turned and followed the angle of the roof line to the center of the house then straight up through the roof. To create the angled section, each succeeding course of bricks was corbelled over, i.e. stacked slightly offset. (See illustration). The Douglasses built a chase wall to cover up the chimney as it passed through an upstairs bedroom. This created an enclosed void between the sloping chimney and the outside wall. In the attic above, the void was not covered. Presumably, at some point, materials stored in the attic were accidentally pushed, perhaps unnoticed, into the void where they remained until construction foreman Shawn Lealos found the treasure trove while removing the chimney.

Shawn reported the find to construction manager Joel Degerness who notified Sterling Company owner and architect Kevin Bartram. Kevin called CCHS and asked if we could have a look at the stuff and try to make sense of it. On December 2, Kevin brought over two plastic grocery

bags of artifacts and paper. It was like an early Christmas for the staff as we went through the dusty but fascinating find. We laid the items out on a table and took a quick inventory (see sidebar on page 11).

All the materials except for two perplexing issues of the *Fargo Forum* (from 1940 and 1950) seemed to date from the period the Douglasses lived in the house (1873-1888) or before. They all likely related to the family somehow. But how? Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt and I went to work.



(Above left) In 1986, CCHS Archivist Mark Peihl was able to take documentary photos inside the then empty Douglas House. This view shows the upstairs bedroom through which the angled chimney passed (approximate location indicated) hidden by the chase wall. Behind the chase wall and between the chimney and outside wall (at left) was an open void. The artifacts tumbled down from the attic into this void where they remained until early December last year. CCHS Photo.

(Above right) Masons created the curiously angled chimney by corbelling over each succeeding course of bricks, as in the above illustration.

We clearly had two separate research paths: the artifacts themselves and the Douglas family. Information gleaned

Continued next page...

about the artifacts often led to revelations about the family. Clues from the family's history often helped explain the artifacts. We consulted many sources: census, tax, land, mortgage, death, marriage and church records, city directories and diaries, newspapers, photographs and more. And, of course, the internet. The research was fun and nearly addictive.

In this issue (and future newsletters), CCHS Collections Manager Pam Burkhardt will report in depth what we found about selected artifacts. I'll focus here more on the family itself and what the artifacts tell us about the Douglasses.

James and Wilhelmina Douglas were among Moorhead's earliest settlers. They and their daughters, Mary (age 14), Minnie (12), Helen (also known as Nellie, 8) and Jessie (6), arrived before the Northern Pacific Railway in late summer 1871. The Douglasses set up a hardware and farm machinery store in a wood frame building with a tent roof on the southeast corner of Center Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street (where the old Frederick Martin Hotel now stands). We still don't know much about their life before 1871. We know that Wilhelmina was born in 1832 in Stanstead, Quebec (on the Vermont border) to Mary and William Wood Squire, a Methodist minister. (A legal document found in the house referring to land in Stanstead led us to Wilhelmina's birthplace and family history.) James came to Canada from Scotland in his youth. He likely came from Hawick, in south central Scotland (where his brother John, who also lived in Moorhead at one time, was born).

The Douglasses were considerably older than the average Moorhead settlers. In 1875, 95% of Moorhead residents were younger than James, then 48. (Eighty-four percent of Moorheadites were under 35. The most common age was 26.) We don't know what the Douglasses did in Quebec or what motivated them to pull up stakes with four young daughters to start a new life on the raw edge of the frontier. They appear to be risk takers, like many Moorhead entrepreneurs. Their financial fortunes rose and fell several times; a pattern which repeated itself with astonishing regularity among early Moorhead residents.

The US Postal Service appointed James the first Moorhead Post Master in 1871. Postmasterships were decidedly political appointments. James' brother John had married the sister of Minnesota Senator William Windom's wife. James apparently used this tenuous connection to win the appointment. (Senator Windom and his family visited Moorhead several times, staying at the Douglas'. A boys' magazine found in the house, *The Youth's Companion*, June 25, 1874, is marked "...D. Windom." It was probably addressed to William D. Windom, young son of the Senator.) With the establishment of Clay County government in spring 1872, James also became the county's first Probate Judge.



The Douglas House as it appeared in September 1876. This is from an F. Jay Haynes stereoview taken from in front of his studio on Center Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The view is to the southwest. Marjorie Roberts Collection.

As with most early Moorhead store owners, the Douglasses soon roofed and made improvements to their building. They lived in the hardware store until Fall 1873. The *Red River Star* reported on August 2, "James Douglas' house is going up – or rather going down, as the cellar is now being dug. The dwelling will be 20 x 30, one and one-half story high, and located on Mr. D.'s lot on the south side of the Railroad Water Works." (Actually, the home site was east of the water works. The Northern Pacific Railway took water from the Red at a point just south of the present Main Avenue Bridge.) It was one of the first homes built south of the railroad tracks. To

early settlers from the East, the south side looked barren and wind swept. Most residents lived either in the tree-sheltered Point neighborhood (today's Viking Ship Park) or on the riverbank along 9<sup>th</sup> Street North. The Lake Superior and Puget Sound Land Company charged less for the south side lots.

Land records also show another curious but common early Moorhead pattern. In October 1874, James Douglas sold his home site to his aged mother-in-law, Mary Squire (who had come west to live with her daughter). James also kept all his other land holdings in the names of Wilhelmina or one of his daughters. That way, if he got into financial trouble, his creditors could not take his land away. Several other Moorhead entrepreneurs did the same.

The timing of the sale is probably not an accident. That fall  
Continued next page...



James was planning a risky venture. In the early 1870s, Jim Hill and Norman Kittson's Red River Transportation Company (RRTC) held a monopoly on steamboat traffic between Moorhead and Ft. Garry (Winnipeg). Dependent on steamboats for delivery of their wholesale goods, Ft. Garry retailers chafed under high shipping costs. Moorhead retailers likewise suffered high shipping costs to their best customers, the Canadians. The two competing groups set aside their differences and formed another steamboat company, The Merchants' Line, that fall. James Douglas sat on the board and held the General Manager position.

On April 1, 1875, Wilhelmina broke a bottle of champagne over the bow of the steamboat *Manitoba*, launching the company. Her sister ship, the *Minnesota*, slipped from her ways a short time later. Cutthroat competition followed. The RRTC chopped their freight rates in half. The Merchants lowered them further. Passenger rates also plummeted, from \$11.00 for a 1<sup>st</sup> class ticket to \$5.00, 2<sup>nd</sup> class from \$7.00 to \$3.00. The results were damaging to both companies, fatal for the new upstart. After a collision in May between the *Manitoba* and the RRTC's *International* (which put the *Manitoba* on the bottom of the Red for a time), the Merchants' Line's fate was sealed. In August, the Merchants' Line sold out to RRTC. According to one account, the Moorhead investors cut a secret, separate deal leaving their Canadian partners holding the bag. Douglas, nevertheless, must have lost considerably in the venture.

The next year, tragedy struck the family. In February, 1876, Wilhelmina's mother, Mary Squire, died at age 75. Barely six months later, the Douglas' oldest daughter, Mary, died of tuberculosis. She was 19.

In the late 1870s things began to look up for the family. By the end of 1876, James was solvent enough to replace his store with a new brick structure. He also began buying farm land: three quarters north of Rustad and all of section 4, Kragnes Township. In 1877, they sent their second oldest daughter, Minnie, back east to school. Minnie's essay notebook from Mrs. Lay's Seminary, Montreal, was found in the house with a commencement program, June 1879. (One of Minnie's essays compared farming methods in Clay County with those carried on in the east. We'll reprint it here in the future.)

The Douglasses may have been living frugally, gardening and selling dairy products. An 1878 seed catalog was found in the house. Presbyterian minister O. H. Elmer, another 1871 Moorhead arrival, kept a marvelous diary during the period. In January 1879, he mentions paying Mrs. Douglas for butter and milk.

But in 1879 the Douglas' fortunes turned again. The

Continued next page...

## Inventory of Materials Found in the Douglas House

### PERIODICALS

- 1 issue *Fargo Forum*, [Feb.?] 1950, fragments
- 1 issue *Fargo Forum*, November 15, 1940, fragments
- 1 issue *Minneapolis Budstikken*, Jan. 31, 1882
- 1 issue *The Daily Globe*, Toronto, Nov. 14, 1874
- 1 issue *Red River Posten*, Fargo, D.T. and Moorhead, MN, April 20, 1882
- 1 issue *The Youth's Companion*, June 25, 1874
- 1 issue *Musical Herald* January 1882
- 1 print *The Sisters* [printed on bottom "This plate is presented with no. 540 of *Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner*." Ca: 187--]
- 1 sheet "Applique and Lace Supplement issued with part 175 (Oct. 1878) of *Bow Bells*"

### MINISTER'S MATERIALS

- Large stack of ca: 3x5 note cards, some tied, some formerly bound, apparently sermon notes
- 1 small card, part of Hebrew language exercise [?]

### ARTIFACTS

- 1 porcelain head doll, ca: mid 1860s
- 1 wool sock
- 1 pair men's slippers
- 3 men's collars, "West End Collar Co.," 2 marked in ink "Jas. Douglas"
- 2 pieces cotton cloth, dark brown and pink

### SCHOOL RELATED

- 1 notebook, "Geometrical Exercises," Andrew Bell, Queens College, Kingston, Ontario, 1850-1851
- 1 notebook, essays by Minnie S. Douglas, Saybrook Hall [Montreal, Quebec], 1879
- 1 program, commencement, Saybrook Hall, Montreal, Quebec, June --, 1879 [Minnie Douglas among participants]

### MISCELLANEOUS

- 1 seed catalog, *Seed Annual 1878*, "D. M. Ferry & Co., Detroit Michigan"
- Fragment of legal document regarding disposition of land in Stamstead, Quebec, Nov. 14, 1833
- 2 partial, torn pieces wrapping paper, legible printing reads "...ancy goods, not... Syndicate Block, 501 & 503 Nicollet Avenue, ...neapolis, Minn... press of J. W. Ennis," marked in pencil "C. O. D. \$35.00" [ca 1883-1888]

previous winter, James had joined others in a scheme to build a narrow-gauge railroad between Moorhead and Grand Forks, but the state legislature turned down their bonding request. On March 3, Rev. Elmer recorded, "Hear that Mr. Douglas is again in financial embarrassment." Creditors had taken over the hardware store stock. The Douglasses sold the store lots and mortgaged their home. By spring 1880, the Douglasses were behind in their tax payments.

But, they pulled their finances back together yet again. They took out mortgages on the farmland, put in successful crops and had the mortgages paid off by late fall 1882.

Minnie married John Irwin in September 1881. John was a Presbyterian minister, like his father. The bulk of the paper items found in the house include what appear to be a minister's sermon notes. They could be John Irwin's but they might have belonged to James' brother John, his father-in-law William Squire or his other son-in-law, John W. Briggs, another Methodist minister who married Jessie in October 1885. We have not found definitive evidence in the notes to identify their author.

Also among the house materials are two Norwegian language newspapers, the Minneapolis *Budstikken*, January 31, 1882 and the Fargo-Moorhead *Red River Posten*, April 20, 1882. These confused us at first (the Douglasses' clearly

were not Norwegian). But when we humidified and flattened the papers, we found penciled in on the top of the *Posten*, "Postmaster's hired girl. Free." We know from census records that the Douglasses employed young Norwegian women as servants. It's interesting to note that one of these girls was interested enough in her heritage to subscribe to two newspapers. The "free" reference probably means the *Posten* was sent postage free. (The *Budstikken* has been microfilmed by the Minnesota Historical Society but the other may be the only surviving issue of the *Red River Posten*. We hope to get it filmed as well.)

In 1883, the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway (later Great Northern) built a line along the failed narrow-gauge venture's route. Douglas built a grain elevator on the new line in section 7, Kragnes Township. The railway named the siding "Douglas."

At some point in the 1880s, the Douglasses ordered a lot of dress goods. The materials found in the house include two torn sheets of non-descript wrapping paper. One is printed "...[f]ancy goods, not[i]ons)...Syndicate Block, 501-503 Nicollet Avenue, ...[M]inneapolis, Minn...press of J. W. Ennis." Written in pencil on a sheet is "C. O. D. \$35.00." Thirty-five dollars was a lot of money in the mid 1880s; equivalent to about \$680.00 today. The Syndicate Block

Continued on page 15...

## New CCHS Memberships & Renewals

CCHS extends a special thank you to the following individuals who renewed their memberships or became new members in November and December:

### NEW MEMBERS

Keith & Michelle Coalwell, Dilworth  
Thomas P. Hannaher, Fargo  
Robert Krenelka, Staples, MN  
Jon & Kristine Riewer, Detroit Lakes  
Dave & Carol Zielinski

### NEW GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

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Barb & Jack Reichert, Edina, MN  
David Watt, Glyndon

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Leona P. Anderson, Hawley  
Delores Bekkerus, Glyndon  
Dr. Don & Dorothy Bentley, Hawley  
Sharon Benzel, Moorhead  
Donna Chalimonczyk, Moorhead  
Ann Darby, Moorhead  
Michael & Kathy Farrell, Barnesville

Sister Mary Ann Fay, Crookston  
First National Bank of Hawley  
Marion Gee, Fargo  
Marv & Audrey Gerhardson, Hawley  
Lloyd Gunderson, Moorhead  
Tom Hall, Moorhead  
Steve Handegaard, Dalton, MN  
Clarence & Donna Hanson, Ruso, ND  
James A. & KariJo H. Hanson, Mhd  
Bonnie M. Haugen, Moorhead  
Vincent & Shirley Haugen, Det. Lakes  
Hawley Public Schools  
City of Hawley  
Lorine Holschuh, Moorhead  
Clayton & Doris Jorgenson, Moorhead  
Jeffory Kluck, Moorhead  
Alden Knatterud, Moorhead  
John & Jyl Kolness, Hendrum  
Korsmo Funeral Service, Moorhead  
Betty Maus, Silverdale, WA  
McLarnan, Hannaher & Skatvold, Mhd  
Donna McMaster, Moorhead  
Richard T. McMurray, Annandale, VA  
Dan & Faith Meurrens, Moorhead  
Moorhead Midday Central Lions Club

Phyllis J. Nelson, Moorhead  
Gisela Nobel, Moorhead  
Robert & JoAnn Nyquist, Moorhead  
H. Allen Ohrt, Fargo  
E. Robert & Donna Olson, Moorhead  
Charles Onstine, Tucson, AZ  
Charlotte Onstine, Tucson, AZ  
Scott P. & Diane Onstine, Fargo  
Jean A. Prentice, Moorhead  
Richtman's Press Club, Fargo  
Darlene M. Rustad, West Fargo  
Gary & Yvonne Scheer, Saginaw, MN  
Fern Schellack, Moorhead  
Sellin Bros., Inc., Hawley  
State Bank of Hawley  
Barry & Renee Steen, Moorhead  
Alvin & Diane Swanson, Moorhead  
O. T. "Bud" Swanson, Moorhead  
Sophia Swenson, Hawley  
Raymond & Mae Tresse, Moorhead  
Kirk & Kathy Watt, Glyndon  
Vivian Wensel, Moorhead  
Howard & Marcell Wergeland, Moorhead  
Wright Funeral Home, Moorhead  
Deloris Zwack-Mellon, Apple Valley, MN



## Looking Back, continued

home. We all worked and ate lunch at our desks. My work space often expanded onto the top of the copier directly behind me. No one could use it until I was finished! The office area was really cramped. We had no fridge or microwave to make life easier. In the winter, you could keep food cold on a windowsill. Also, after a snowfall, the first one to arrive in the morning got to shovel the walkway!

In the spring of 1985, Mark Peihl, current CCHS Archivist, started as a volunteer. In January of 1986, he and Donna McMaster were hired part time to help complete unfinished research for our permanent exhibit at the new Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center. Amazingly, research was finished in six weeks even during packing for the move into the new building!

Our offices moved into the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in May 1986. Here, professional museum display cases replaced the old store display cases and were on view in an exhibit hall designed specifically for a museum. Compared to the depot, our new

space felt enormous! We had proper shelving in the storage rooms and a separate room for Archives where researchers had two large tables with chairs! The Center held Grand Opening festivities in October 1986.

Since CCHS moved into this beautiful facility, we have added over 15,000 artifacts to the collections - almost twice as many as had been accepted since the museum opened in 1936. Our artifacts are easily tracked in a climate-controlled

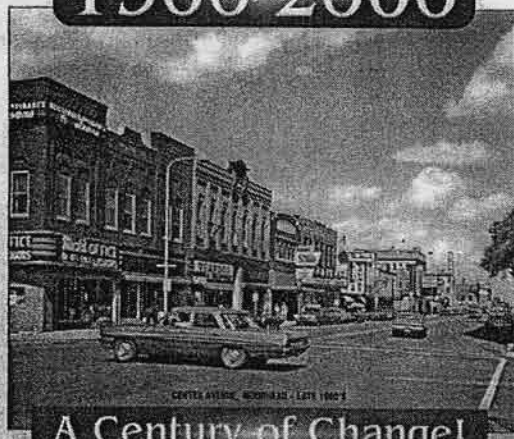
environment. In 1999, part of our operations moved into new space in an expanded and renamed Hjemkomst Center. Currently, each of us has a computer connected to the internet. Our web site <http://www.info.co.clay.mn.us/History/> has been up and running since 2001. In 2002, a former intern, Lisa Hanson [now Lisa Vedaa], returned to take the Director's position after Office Manager Margaret Ristvedt retired. Amenities nearby include vending machines, fridge, microwave, toaster, a break room to eat in . . . and, thanks to the City of Moorhead and our wonderful building staff, we don't have to shovel snow!



In 1987, Archives occupy one room divided into storage and public areas. Empty shelves in the back filled up fast!

## The Last One Hundred Years in **MOORHEAD** MINNESOTA

# 1900-2000



## A Century of Change!

Published by Heritage Publications in collaboration  
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## A Great Gift for 2005!

*Moorhead, 1900-2000: A Century of Change* is full of historic photographs and stories that draw you into the story of Moorhead. See how much Moorhead has changed!

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Pick up your copies today at the Clay County Museum & Archives in the Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, or send your check or money order for \$23.00 to CCHS, PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561.

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This segment of our newsletter keeps growing every issue! Thank you to all of our wonderful members for your tremendous support. Please help us thank these members for supporting the Clay County Historical Society by patronizing their businesses:

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Stenerson Lumber  
Ward Muscatell Automotive Group  
Wells Fargo Bank MN, N A, Mhd  
Wright Funeral Home

Sincere thanks goes to these individuals in the Patron, Sustaining, and Supporting membership levels:

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## Douglas, continued

was constructed in 1883. We will have the Minnesota Historical Society search Minneapolis city directories for 1883-1888 for dress goods stores in the block and for J. W. Ennis' printing business to see if we can narrow down the time frame when this purchase might have been made.

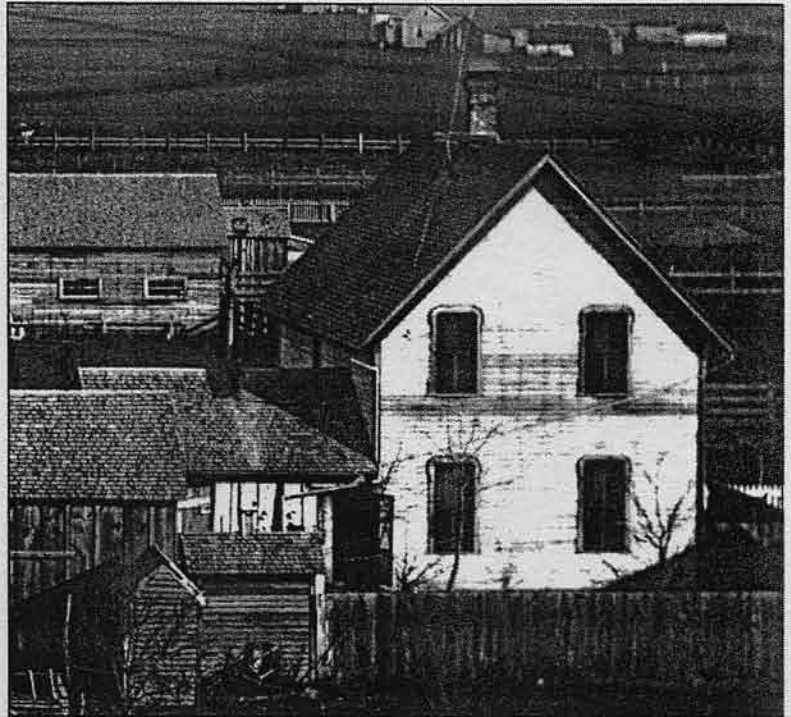
Eighteen-eighty-four newspaper reports describe Douglas' crops on the Kragnes Township properties as excellent. But in August a hail storm wiped out his 500 acres of wheat. Again in a bind, Douglas was tempted to dip into the Post Office coffers to cover his debts. In March 1885, a US Postal Inspector discovered the shortfall and Douglas lost his postmastership. The elevator burned and soon the Douglasses were again heavily mortgaged.

In 1888, the family rented out their Moorhead home, moved to Georgetown and began selling off their land holdings. In November 1889, when James was 62 years old, the *Moorhead Daily News* reported, "Mr. and Mrs. James Douglas will soon leave for Montreal where they expect to live in the future. They will first go to St. Cloud and visit their daughter Nellie [Helen] and afterwards go to Le Seuer and spend a month with Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Briggs. After seeing other friends in Winona they go to Montreal."

James and Wilhelmina later moved to New York to be with their daughter, Helen and her husband, William Terhune. Wilhelmina died in Syracuse in 1906. On June 29, 1914, James passed away at Helen's home in Waterville, NY. He was 93 years old.

The Douglas home remained a rental unit for most of the rest of its existence. In 1898, A. G. Kassenborg bought the house and the lots to the north and built his brick

block on Main Avenue. To make room for the new building, Kassenborg tore off an addition to the north side of the Douglas house and built a new one on its west side. At some point the house's open porch was enclosed and some minor changes occurred to the front window. Otherwise, the house stood basically unchanged until the recent renovation, its treasure trove quietly waiting discovery.



O. E. Flaten took this view showing the back (west) side of the Douglas House in October 1880 looking east from the top of a flour mill which sat on the riverbank just north of the present Main Ave bridge. The addition at left was removed in 1898 to make way for the new Kassenborg Block. It was replaced with another addition to the west side. Flaten/Wange Collection.

# Old New Borrowed Blue

*Weddings in Clay County*

30 dresses from 1865—1977,  
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Through March 27, 2005

Clay County Museum Hours: 10-5 Monday-Saturday, 10-9 Tuesday, 12-5 Sunday  
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