

# Territorial News

A Publication of the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc.

January-February 2008



## ***150 Years of Statehood!***

**WE MADE IT! SEE ARTICLES INSIDE ABOUT THE MTP'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THIS HISTORIC EVENT.**

## **2008 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

Saturday, May 3, 2008  
111 Years and Still Going Strong!

## **Board Openings**

We are currently looking for Members that are willing to join the MTP Board of Directors. If you are interested, please contact the MTP Office, 651-379-1849

**The Portrait Committee is unable to proceed until we get some more volunteers. Please examine your conscience and see if you are able to help.**

*Mary Vavrosky, Chair*

## President's Message:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Here we are on the doorstep of a new year. What a good time to be a member of the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc. The Holiday Party gave time to meet friends and members. What fun.

On display at the Holiday Party was a traveling exhibit that will be going to many events that are planned for this Sesquicentennial Year. This traveling exhibit was made possible by a Grant from the Sesquicentennial Committee. Applied for in August, we received the Grant in November. On this exhibit we will be able to apply information, maps, brochures, and other information about our organization. In October, Seraphine Byrne and I gave the traveling exhibit an initiation at the Rendezvous in Winona, MN. It was well received. This exhibit will be going to more Rendezvous' and other historical events throughout 2008 and in coming years. A more formal display will be going to other events, such as the "Festival of Nations" and Statehood Day on the Minnesota State Capitol grounds, etc. and it will be on display for the Annual Membership Meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2008. Please plan on attending.

It is with sad regret that I had to accept the resignation of one of our long-standing Board members, Ruth MacNabb. She has been on the Board for over 20 years and has been an asset to the organization. Ruth has served as Assistant Treasurer, has been on many committees and also received the 2007 MTP Pioneer of the Year Award. Her work with the State Fair will be sorely missed. Because of health reasons, she felt that her time to resign was necessary. The Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc. will always be in her heart. She will truly be missed.

Minnesota is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> year of statehood and we will be participating in many events throughout the year as we celebrate our history along with them. More information is in the Sesquicentennial Report by Mark Green. We continue to get our name out to the public through these events, such as speaking engagements and displays at various organizations and schools.

The MTP is moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with updates in the office. Such as a newer computer which will help the Secretary with her job and also the Treasurer to keep better records. We will be purchasing a new color laser printer which will be able to handle the newsletter and other important publications. I wish to thank everyone who has given donations for these items this past year.

Now is the time, as we celebrate Minnesota's Sesquicentennial, for all of our members, both new and old, to consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors. Please come and join us and help participate in our future.

*Richard MacNabb, President*

## THE MINNESOTA SESQUICENTENNIAL IS HERE!

THE CELEBRATION HAS BEGUN. You see signs of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood all around the state. If you went to the fair last summer you probably passed the official booth of the Sesquicentennial on the same street as the MTP log cabin but down by the Fair Information store on the way to the grandstand.

**In 1908**, on the occasion of the state's Semi-Centennial, the legislature entrusted the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers with the celebration. They granted the MTP \$1,500 to have the celebration and the big reunion of pioneers from all over the country at the State Fair. It was a grand affair that confirmed MTP as the "cheerleader" of Minnesota history while the Minnesota Historical Society became the well-respected academic repository of Minnesota collections of history. Unfortunately, the founding pioneers of MTP died out soon after, leaving their descendants to carry on in their memory. However as time passed, we dwindled in numbers of members who wanted to remember their connection to the past - their ancestors. Generations down the line just could not prove their connections to their ancestors. There are thousands of possible members out there, but we, as active members, must continue the traditions of the past and pick up the cause of "cheerleading" the history of Minnesota wherever and whenever we can. Maybe this will cause others to find their heritage and become a member.

**Are there any members** who remember what the MTP did during an occasion of celebration? Do you have family stories or pictures of the old occasions of celebrations that involved MTP? How about the 1958 Centennial? What did we do for that, or any gathering, even at the fair? We could gather them together and share them with all the membership in future newsletters. Post a letter or email the stories or pictures to the office. Let's keep up the cheering for Minnesota and MTP.

We hope to be involved in all the activities we can attend. We would like to encourage you as MTP members to go to these events and help us whenever you can. You may have heard that we received a one thousand dollar grant from the MN Sesquicentennial Committee toward the purchase of a traveling exhibit. Thanks to the support and generous consideration of ABF Display Company, also recognized as the Nimlok-Minnesota company (special thanks to their consultant Justin Bradford, who went the extra mile for our cause), we have purchased a beautiful nine by three foot exhibit that stands about nine feet tall and it can be used with either a black or gray paneled side. One side is topped by a lighted sign with the group's name and logo on it. We can be proud of this professional exhibit and it would be a pleasure standing or sitting beside it and talking about our ancestors and their immigration to Minnesota more than 150 years ago. We need you to help us bring the exhibit to many events around the entire state this year. We are looking for events and people that want to go there. So call us at the office and give us news of any indoor or outdoor event (we already have another wonderful exhibit that **Seraphine Byrne** and **Richard MacNabb** have created and used at a few indoor and outdoor conferences and we can use it when needed, as the new exhibit is strictly indoors) in a community around the state and if you can help us to "run" the exhibit. We are hoping to take it to the statehood celebration in St. Paul this May and you also may see it at the Annual Meeting, or at least pictures of it. We would like to take it where ever we could and have plans for possibilities at The Festival of Nations or the October Teachers Convention and maybe even Iron World. So share your knowledge of places to go. The exhibit packs away neatly into two portable boxes with wheels and can easily be transported and assembled by two people.

We have the ability to change the designs on the exhibit. We are preparing for as many types of events as we can think of- using different pictures and posters to display on it.

If we take it to a school for children we could have one for elementary school and one for high school. If we take it to different regions of the state we hope to find a design for that area of the state, thinking of communities like St. Cloud, Duluth, Hibbing, Winona, Rochester, and other points West, South, North and East.

**We are looking** for families that have pictures of their families traced back to the original ancestor. We would like to have one panel of the exhibit with pictures starting with youngest member of the family that is an MTP member, or at least obviously qualifies (if grandmother or grandfather would like to make them members, better yet life members- then they cannot quit or forget their dues) and then go up the panel with pictures of each generations back to the original member, like a "picture" family tree. If you would like to donate the use of your family history by copying pictures of these family members and possibly laminating or shadow box style framing them then we would be able to attach Velcro to them and put them into an arrangement for the panels on the exhibit. We would like the pictures to vary in sizes where some are 8 by 10 or smaller and one or two only slightly larger. We would have to use your name and location and probably the oldest application that we have on file for your family. We would like you to call if you are interested in donating this expense to the success of the exhibit. We are looking for people from various counties so we can vary the design for the area in which we are setting up the exhibit. If this interests you, please call, as we will be looking for people from different counties. So, on a first come basis, we will inform you if your county has been covered, and you will be contributing to the success and interest in the exhibit.

**We have also been honored** to be finalist in the Legacy grants of the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission. Out of more than one hundred and five entries we are in the finals. This grant is earmarked for use in finishing the enormous task guided by **Mary Vavrosky** in taking each portrait that we have and taking a digital photograph and repacking them in new boxes. It seems we have run out of willing volunteers to undertake the time and effort to complete this huge task, probably because it is physical and almost overwhelming. Mary has faced up to this challenge but it seems we are running out of muscle to move the portraits around. So we are seeking help in this grant and will continue to seek out further aid and interest in accomplishing this goal. It really goes to the heart of the organization, because these are the people who founded the state and they lie "a moldering" in their cases unless we can save their images for the future. Even if we get the grant we will still need help, so call the office and leave your name and you will be contacted to work, as there is enough light work to keep everybody working. We need your help, or the help of a younger family member, who may not be a regular member, but can volunteer do the "muscle" work necessary to carry the pictures and not drop them. It helps to be strong, but more a willingness to work. But come and work at it, no matter how strong you are. .

So we have enough to keep you involved all year long in a service capacity. Involvement is commitment to the goals and dreams of MTP. Read over the mission statement and see how committed you are to our history. We are alive and kicking and making our mark cheering on the history of Minnesota.

We also would like to thank **Senator Sandy Rummel, from District 53B**, who gave us a Sesquicentennial Flag in honor of receiving the Sesquicentennial mini-grant. Watch the paper or go to the MN Sesquicentennial web site or our web site for further information.

**Keep cheering! Happy Birthday, Minnesota!!**

*Mark Green*, Co-Chair of the MTP Sesquicentennial Committee.

## *Secretary's Report*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!** I hope that everyone's Holiday season was filled with family, fun and love. After a hiatus away from the office for the holidays, I am back and by the time you receive this newsletter, should be catching up on all the paperwork that accrued while I was gone.

The Christmas party was really nice; the food was good and the company even better. Seraphine had a new display up that she put together and takes with her for talks, shows and other events. It looked really nice.

I sent out dues reminder postcards last November and we have been receiving them back since. We still have about 14 people who have not paid yet. Check the address label on this newsletter, if you have an \* after your name, you still owe 2007 dues. **Dues are \$24.00 per year.** You should make your check out to the **Minnesota Territorial Pioneers** and mail it to the MTP office:

Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc.  
176 Snelling Ave N. #328  
St. Paul, MN 55104

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at the office on Tuesdays 9 am to 1:30 pm, 651-379-1849. If you do owe, it might be advantageous to pay both 2007 and 2008 now, for a total amount of \$48.00, and save yourself the postage later.

**Dues are payable in May of each year.**

As we celebrate the 150 years of Minnesota Statehood, please consider encouraging your family members to join us. What a great time to be part of the MTP becoming a Sesquicentennial Member! Check out our website at [mnterritorialpioneers.org](http://mnterritorialpioneers.org) **Anne Sladky** is doing a GREAT job on keeping it updated and looking good. She has put some very interesting links there and is continuously looking for more websites to link to that pertain to Minnesota's history and our history.

As we approach spring, the MTP is looking for a few good board members. If you have a Saturday a month available, why not spend it with us! In this Sesquicentennial year, the Board is and will be very busy with many projects, both new and old. Please consider joining us and helping to set goals for this great organization to guide our future generations.

*Mary Casebolt, Secretary*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mark Green accepted the nomination for the position of Corporation Clerk and was elected this past November. Thank you, Mark. He has held this office for several years and decided last May that due to health problems that he would not seek re-election. He is on the mend and once again has accepted this responsibility along with Chair of the Sesquicentennial Committee. He has also been very active with this committee and would like to see more members participate in this event. See his report.

## PETER BLESİ:



Peter and his wife Margaretha "Zimmerman" set out from Switzerland to come to the USA to make a new life for themselves. The Canton of Glarus gave them 222.22 Swiss Francs for travel expenses. They traveled 50 days and arrived at New Orleans around October 14, 1853. They then traveled up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to Chicago and visited Milwaukee and New Glarus, WI to find land. Being out of money, they worked their way to St. Anthony, MN (Mpls.) and arrived in April, 1854. They found land a few miles SW of

Champlin, MN which they named New Schwanden and cut down trees for logs to build their cabins. In the last survey by Hardin Nolan in September, 1855, they found several cabins with paths from one cabin to the other in this primitive forest. The first log church was built in 1866 as well as establishing the St. Fridolin Cemetery of which the land was given by Fridolin Zopfi. The church was named "The First German Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Schwanden of which Peter Blesi was the founder. He moved into the cabin on March 25, 1855 with several other settlers who followed. Several of these fought in the Civil War and returned to their beloved community. Only one man, Peter Blesi's brother, Melchoir Blesi died at Nashville, TN of typhoid fever. The community thrived until the 1960's. Peter and Margaretha moved to Minneapolis, MN in 1887. His son, Henry Blesi, continued farming. Henry's son, Harry H. Blesi continued with the farming in 1912, when he left for a street-car motorman's job in Mpls and married Sadie M. Signor of Randall, MN. His son, Gordon Blesi continued with farming from 1938 until 1965 when he sold 110 acres to the Hennepin County Park Reserve and this is contained in several thousand acres which includes all these early Swiss Pioneers. There have been memorials established in honor of these brave Swiss pioneers. In 2005, a record was found in Wisconsin, Green County Reg. of Deeds, which states that on March 17, 1855, Peter Blesi purchased Plot 15 for a standard fee of \$25.00 and this was recorded in the book of Deeds, Vol. 11 on page 544. Peter Blesi sold that plot to Beat Elmer for \$48.00. Mathias Wischer was acting agent because Peter was listed as living in St. Anthony of Ramsey County, MN Territory, Vol. 11 on page 543. Wischer's signature was witnessed by Rudolf Baumgartner. Peter had purchased a yoke of oxen in Anoka in January 1855 for \$155.00. He agreed to pay back 60% within one year. So he was a smart and frugal man to take care of his obligations.

Submitted by: Wayne Blesi, Member

*Happy New Year!*

It was fun to see everyone at the Holiday Party (I had to keep that President of ours in order!) Everyone had a chance to see one of our new traveling displays at the holiday party, and there was a lot of interest from our members (also visitors at the Cherokee Restaurant) Good Comments

We have received from Kay Harsila (Board member, and also chair of the Membership Committee) a framed high school certificate, dated 1886. Also, Judy DeNardo of Eagan, MN, donated a number of clothing items, to include 3 Baptismal Gowns (1895); Women's clothing, to include some undergarments; small table cloth (hand embroidered); and a small shawl. All these items will be an asset to the collection. Thanks to both of these ladies for thinking of the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers. Keep those donations coming. It is such a small world, Judy found us through the Website and then when she brought the items to the office, found out that she had gone to high school with Seraphine!!!

Keep thinking of us when you are cleaning out those attics and closets (during your spring cleaning). I am also looking for historic documents. Other items that I would like to add to the collection include children's and men's clothing (shirts, pants, coats, shoes, etc), old toys and children's books.

On March 8th and 9th, 2008, Seraphine Byrne and I will be going to New Ulm for the New Ulm Trade Fair. We will be taking the traveling display/exhibit with us. We will be talking about the MTP, history of pioneers and Minnesota History along with showing some of our artifacts.

So save the date and plan on attending the Annual Meeting on May 3rd. See you there!

*Richard MacNabb, Curator*

**Donations**

Since the last newsletter, the following people have donated to the MTP:

**Anonymous** \$1.00  
**Gale Brothers** \$100.00 (where needed)  
**James Eckert** \$44.81 (Copier)  
**Donald K.** Fax Machine for the office  
**Tony Nemo** copying of the newsletter and financial audit  
**Richard Sandeen** \$6.00 Scholarship Fund  
**Ruth Shriver** \$1.00 Scholarship Fund  
**Ilyne Nesheim** \$5.00 Office expenses

Thank you to every one of the above people. Your contributions are appreciated.

## *Buttons and Fish*

Buttons and fish pertain to the development of the Dutch people - symbols of their endurance, patience, love of peace and independence to worship as they wished and their interest in education, sciences, arts, industry, and commercialism.

Their origin is not known, whether they came as a tribe or independently as families, but they came and found the lowlands about the time of Christ. The lowlands were a cluster of 68 sea grass islands formed as three alpine rivers dashed toward the North Sea clashing with the sea waters coming in at high tide. Their humble huts were flooded twice daily. The people after time learned to build their humble dwellings on stilts. The people survived by collecting rain water and by the fish left on the beaches by withdrawing tide water, a special pea adapted to salt water was found on river banks. Sea grass was found on river banks. Sea grass was usable to make small hand nets to catch more fish. This called for rafts which needed large nets and then the use of boats. So through the following centuries occurred progress to their fishing fleet of today. Also, they learned to extract salt from seawater. Fish and salt were in demand by England who supplied the Dutch with wool and marl. Thus commerce with a foreign nation took root.

The marl was used to build up their islands to produce arable fields free of floods. To control the waters, dikes and canals were built. Today, there are highways and bridges and only 20 some islands. With commerce came the need for larger and better slips, the maritime fleet of 1400 ships sailed the seas bringing home raw products and luxury items. Holland developed into a great commercial and industrial center, leader in the arts, crafts, sciences, education. About 14th century, Jews arrived setting up a money exchange system still in use.

In all its affluence, the fisherman wanted recognition of social status. Males wore full breeches with a large button on each side for closure. The fisherman wore knee length breeches closed with a pair of large linked buttons on each side. They came into use as silver about the 17th century-- they ranged in size from 2 to 4 inches diameter. Their pictorial designs and styles were whatever was fashionable for the time: coins, heroes, myths, biblical, folk art. They are indeed fabulous, but with the modern trouser, they are no longer in use except for festivals when old costumes are revived. Silver buttons on breeches call for silver buttons on their jackets.

The ladies never used buttons. Their clothing was always pinned in place, so silver pins adorned their dresses.

The fisherman used knitted tunics as underwear often with a small motif. They admired the elaborate designs of fishermen sweaters of the British Isles., so their women created a style better fitting, horizontal patterns knitted on the round on the same size needle. Now fancy, the sweaters moved to the outside. Each location had its own design as for their breeches buttons, but now the knee length breeches were replaced by trousers. Each sweater was individually made identified as to its specific owner by 10 initials placed in lower right corner. The larger necks were drawn with a cord (often a shoe lace) with two or more buttons under the chin. For the affluent, they were silver. A man could be identified by his sweater and buttons as to what community he can from.

The Dutch fisherman certainly deserves recognition for their achievements in the past 2 millenniums.

*Submitted by: Marie Hutchinson*



# 2007 HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

38 hardy souls attended on a very cold December day, hopefully leaving well fed and full of holiday spirit! A special treat was a display of part of the traveling exhibit used by Seraphine & Richard in their presentation at events around the state. After remarks by Richard & Seraphine & the invocation by Rev. Phillips, we enjoyed a delicious meal, followed by the gift exchange. The names for the door prizes were drawn by Amy Jensen, her daughter Nicole, & grandson James. Musical entertainment was provided by **Dale Peterson**, saxophone, & **Bill Harrison**, clarinet, playing seasonal selections. Best wishes to all for a healthy, happy 2008!

Sincerely, *Catherine Harrison*, Social chairperson

## *Upcoming Board of Directors Meeting Dates*

February 16, 2008

March 15, 2008

April 19, 2008

May 3, 2008 – Annual Membership Meeting

May 17, 2008 – Annual Board of Directors Meeting

All meetings are held on Saturdays at 10:00 AM

In the Main floor Conference Room

at

Associated Bank Building

176 Snelling Ave N

St. Paul, MN 55104

## **It's Just a Thought** .....

**Marie Hutchinson** (Life Member) has offered a mitten pattern to the Pioneers. I understand that this pattern has been passed down through her family for generations. I had an idea that was somewhat different, how about the Pioneers publishing a book of patterns that have been passed down through their families. These could be knit, crocheted, cross stick, embroidery, tatting etc. or even any pattern that you have developed yourselves. If you would be willing to help us celebrate our heritage during this Sesquicentennial year, please send these patterns in. **Laurie Pekarik** (Life Member) is already working on a tatting pattern and also on a pattern book of edging that was donated to the MTP years ago. This could really be intriguing. It would be a great fundraiser for the MTP and a way for members to help support us.

***Mia Hutchinson sent an email off to the League of Minnesota Cities inquiring what Minnesota Cities were incorporated before 1858. This was the response she received.***

Dear Mia:

This email is in response to your inquiry requesting the names of cities incorporated before 1858. According to our written files, the following cities were incorporated in or before 1858. Note that the dates are based on a variety of sources so they are really a best guess.

*Cynthia Kirchoff, League of Minnesota Cities*

Anoka (3-2-1858?)

Clearwater (2-28-1857)

Duluth (5-19-1857)

Hastings (6-25-1857)

Henderson (2-21-1855)

Le Sueur (6-10-1858)

Mantorville (5-19-1857)

Minneapolis (3-1-1856)

New Ulm (3-6-1857)

Owatonna (8-9-1858)

St. Cloud (3-1-1856)

St. Paul (3-4-1854)

Stillwater (3-4-1854)

Taylor Falls (7-15-1858)

Winona (3-3-1855)

My city, Chisago City and Scandia are two that are missing. It will be fun trying to see what we can add to the list. It is incomplete. There are many more which should be included, some of which really are no longer in existence except by name only. How many more are there that our members would know of and if they would like to send in their city/town along with a short history. Let's see what we can come up with to help celebrate Minnesota's Sesquicentennial. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Mia Hutchinson*

# Wish List

Donations are needed for the following items:

Carriage Repair

Office Printer

Scholarship Fund

Please consider making a tax deductible donation towards one of the above items. The carriage repair alone is over \$7000.00! Thank You!

# Minnesota Territorial Pioneers, Inc.

## Taken from an interview with WTCN TV – September, 1958

Maternal Grandfather:

Nicholas Pothen, settled in Minnesota, 1854 in the Midway, St. Paul. South of the fairgrounds, north of the N.P. right of way when he was 16 years old.

The forerunner of the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers was the **OLD SETTLERS ASSOCIATION**, an exclusive men's group formed for social purposes about 1856.

Our **Pioneer Portrait Hall** was built in 1886 and I believe is the oldest building now standing on the Fair Grounds.

The **Log Cabin** was dedicated in the year 1900 and my grandfather planted the elm trees now standing in front of this building and took part in the dedication.

The **first Minnesota State Fair** was held at Fort Snelling in the year 1860. Subsequent fairs were held at Owatonna, Red Wing, and Minneapolis. The first Fair held at the present site was in 1886.

The ground for the present site was deeded to the State for annual Fair purposes in April, 1885. If at any later date, the state should discontinue use of this land for a Fair, it would revert back to Ramsey County. Ever since its inception, Thursday of Fair Week always has been designated **Pioneer Day**.

Activities for Pioneer Day being at 10 AM with a reception. Throughout the day, a member, dressed in an Italian costume, will circulate through and around the Log Cabin and Portrait Hall playing hurdy-gurdy. A picnic at noon with music by the Wabasso High School Band. At 2:00 PM the Pioneers and others will be entertained on the patio in front of the Log Cabin by the White Bear High School Square Dancers. At 3:00 PM Sioux Indians from Prairie Island will dance. The dances are as follows:

War Victory Dance

Corn Dance

Green Grass Dance

Rabbit Dance

Our big attraction in the Log Cabin is the schnitzel bank which was a gift from the City of New Ulm.

Our oldest members are:

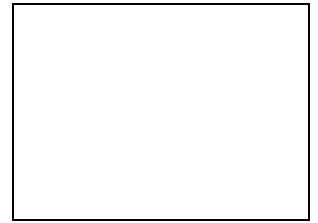
August Coller, St Paul, 98 years last March

Otto Nagle, Minneapolis, 97 years last May

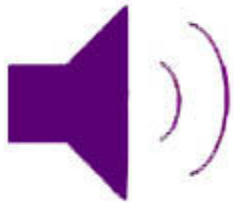
Cyril Parranto, White Bear, 93 years

Interviewee was W M Anfang, Life Member

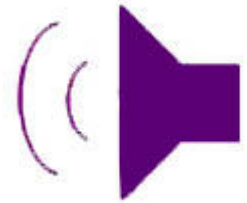
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St Paul MN 55104



**MINNESOTA SESQUICENTENNIAL  
COME HELP US CELEBRATE**



**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED!**



**PORTRAIT COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!**