

December 2000

Volume XVII

Number 3

## Old Fashioned Christmas

On Sunday, December 3rd from 2-5 pm, the Plymouth Historical Society and the Plymouth Park & Recreation Department are co-sponsoring the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual "OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS IN PLYMOUTH". The purpose of the event is to provide some old fashioned Christmas spirit and activities for families in Plymouth. Children can visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus will be right there to help the Elves hand out candy canes. A hay ride pulled by Belgian horses with bells jingling will be giving rides (50 cents per person), hot cider and cookies will be provided, carollers and making Christmas decorations are other activities for the children.

This year we have our great story teller back. Bob Gasch will be telling holiday stories, something you don't want to miss!

On Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, starting at 9 am, we will decorate the two old fashioned Christmas trees and the building. We are looking for help in decorating and bringing items that could be borrowed for the day to add some more old fashioned Christmas spirit.

These can be items such as: old fashioned antique ornaments, old fashioned toys to put under the tree, poinsettias, etc.

If you can help to bring decorations, please call Myrtle Eckes, 763-545-6168, or Gary Schiebe, 763-473-4889.

So bring your friends, relatives, neighbors and kids ages 9 months to 90 years young. The annual event has attracted large crowds with some families having a perfect attendance record with their children since it started in 1987. We had a great time last year as we do every year!

### *Activities include:*

*Visit with Santa*

*Old Fashioned Hay  
Ride*

*Hot Cider and Cookies*

*Old Fashioned Xmas  
Decorations*

*Old Toy Train Display*



*Wood Carver*

*Crafts*

*Story Telling by  
Bob Gasch*

*Music Groups  
Armstrong Chamber  
Singers*

*Messiah Recording*

*Fantasia Flutes*

## Nannie E. Howe

This is the third installment of excerpts from the Memoires of Nannie E. Howe (Annie Estella Howe). To refresh your memory from the first & second installment, the memoirs were written by Nannie Estelle Howe Best in approximately the 1910-1920 time frame and chronicle her early days in Plymouth starting in about 1855. She attended the University of Minnesota and became a teacher. It is our understanding that she moved to North Dakota to teach where she met Thomas Best, a local sheriff, and they were married. One of their daughters married an Erickson and had a daughter who they named Estelle. Estelle was never married, lived in Portland, Oregon and was a Librarian.

The following is from Volume II as written by Nannie where she recalls her April Fools antics and the Indian Scare.

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### *April Fools*

We had another neighbor who bought a part of father's farm on the east side and a part of the meadowland. He was a young German named Peter Broffending, and was later married to a German girl named Susan Rats. He built a house and furnished it simply. We used to like to go and see Susan, his wife. She played the accordion and so did Pete play it but not as well as Susan did.

Susan was very neat and orderly. She used to make tatten and crochet to sell. She could make it without soiling it one speck.

She used to give us what I called "Dutch bread" that we liked very much and a cup of coffee to go with it.

There was a "creek" or stream of water that was between our farms. It came from the big Medicine lake and in spring overflowed its banks, sometimes flooding the big meadow partly under water at the time of melting of the big banks of snow.

The fish used to come up from Medicine Lake every spring and we speared them and put down a lot in a barrel for summer or even winter use.

We used to buy Sauerkraut from some of our German neighbors. We used to have grand times fishing and lots of the French and Germans and their women came to fish on our land.

We had a custom of "fooling" one another on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. "April Fools" day we called it.

One April Fools Day, my brother Bernie and I thought it would be fun to borrow Pete's accordion in the morning and suddenly "play it" outside our door and bring the folks out of their beds in surprise. So we arose quite early for us and went over to Pete's.

Now it was flood time of the year but we never thought of that, or that, when the ice was broken up, the water came sweeping down dark and rapid from the big creek. This year I was ten years old and Bernie was still younger but he was a large boy of his age. It maybe I was older than ten.

Anyway, we went, but when we got to the bridge it was covered with water. I was dismayed but I wanted that accordion so I led Bernie down where I knew I could cross by a giant tree bent down from a high bank.

We crossed but I was frightened for the current in the center was swift and black and we waded in deep water until we reached dry land. We knocked at Pete's door, all wet and bedraggled. Pete came to the door. The instant he caught sight of us he was angry.

"You little devils!" he exclaimed. "How did you get over the bridge? It is all under water!"

"We didn't come by the bridge," I said, "we got over the giant tree and then we had to wade. We came to borrow your accordion to April Fool the father."

"I'll April Fool you!" cried Pete. "Show me the place you got over." So we did but by this time the water was deeper and the current seemed swifter with logs and boards and even old hay sweeping along.

"O! Himmel!! Cried Susan, catching up her apron to wipe her eyes for she realized we might have been drowned.

"I don't know, you are such children yet. The old man has got a good head already yet!"

"You don't get my accordion! Now I have to put my horses in and take you home, once more!"

I looked at him trying to be dignified and said, "I understand horses can swim." "You understand ha! You will yet understand more when you get home and take a good licking", he said. "O! Pete!" said Susan.

Pete started for the barn to get the horses but Susan begged him not to go. We could stay there awhile.

"No! No!" said Pete. "It gets worse!!" I take to the old man quick right away off.

"You get drowned coming home," said Susan in distress.

"I come around by the road east five miles," he said.

That satisfied Susan for there was the other roadway. Susan came and stood on the top of the hill, as Pete took us down to the creek – when the horses went down almost out of sight and the wagon lifted. Pete stood up clenching the reins and said, “Take hold hard by the wagon children – hard! Now hard or you get soaked out!” The horses plunged in urged by Pete’s whip – I don’t know whether they swam to shore or not. I know in one place they seemed to disappear and I was wildly happy at the adventure for I did not know enough to be frightened.

But Susan cried, “O! Himmel! O! Pete!” When the horses scrambled up the opposite bank on land, Pete turned and called back “All right! All right!” Now I came by the east road once more yet. The rest of the way was muddy but safe.

When we came up to father’s house, he was taking corn to the chickens. He looked at us in surprise – Pete burst out.

“Howe, you got some damned children. Take ‘em in and lick them good! I saved his life all sure!”

Then mother came out and heard the story in utter surprise. She thought us in bed. But when mother got us in safe, she began to scold us but gave us a hunk of cake all the same and I said, “Your bark is worse then your bite, ain’t it mother?”

“Why you little sauce box! Said mother. Yes I was saucy and ought to have had a smart whipping more than once.

## Indian Scare Times

All of a sudden we were thrown into terror by the Indian outbreak and massacre. It was in somewhere about 1862, I believe.

It came like an avalanche not right at our home, but near enough to be alarming only we children didn’t realize the danger and horror of it, but poor mother did.

Father was not afraid. When everyone else wanted to go to Fort Snelling for safety, father would not consent to go. He said they must stay to protect their homes. He organized a Home Guard Co. Most every pioneer owned a gun.

I remember a few nights we all went over to a neighbor, Mr. Brown’s home – a large, many roomed house – the largest house in Plymouth. But we filled it to overflowing, of course, those that had not fled to Minneapolis or Fort Snelling. It was on the south shore of Parker Lake. Mr. Brown was a southerner who (in war times) was proud of looking like President Jefferson Davis.

One night while we were at Brown’s someone told Pat Kennedy to take a heavy plank from the saw mill and slap it into the lake so noisily and as fast as he could, telling him it would sound like guns going off and frighten the Indians away. Pat obeyed. Father heard the noise and went to investigate.

Pat told father he was obeying orders. Father said, “Do as you think best, Pat,” but it may bring you into danger, unnecessarily. The savages will only have a good chance to see you in the moonlight and it don’t sound like guns.

“I was thinking the likes myself, but you said yourself, sir, a good citizen always obeyed the laws!” But Pat was glad to give up the job. He was completely exhausted.

I used to watch the people going by our home on the road, down by the gate. Some on foot with great bundles, and some in buggies, some in rude wagons, drawn by oxen with household goods piled high, some in carriages drawn by horses and all so frightened looking.

Father tried to talk to some of them saying he did not believe they would come so near Minneapolis; that Indians would not fight in the open, etc.

But they were sure they would be scalped if they did not get to Fort Snelling.

Mother told father not to advise the travelers that he did not know how near the Indians were. Father was not one bit afraid, but mother was pale and nervous all the time. She kept packing and cooking all the tie she could and got father to bring a barrel of water into the house so if we were attacked, we would have water if the Indians set fire to the roof. One night she put us to bed all dressed but our shoes, but father only laughed. I don’t know whether he laughed to calm mother or if he truly believed the savages would not come.

At last Father consented to take us to a friend in Minneapolis. He was a lawyer, Sam Gale. He went to the same college that father did in Mass, only he built up a name as a lawyer and father preferred the family life.

By this time, mother was really sick with fear. That was the day so many folks went by. They said, “Fly! Fly! The Indians are at New Ulm! Killing! Scalping! Burning! New Ulm is all in a blaze!!!”

Mother almost fainted. Father caught her and put water to her lips.

“Yes, yes – I’ll take old Maggie and harness him right away. Well we went to Fort Snelling for all our friends and neighbors had fled.

But father was the same calm, self-possessed person as ever but he was the only man left in Plymouth. The day before, Mr. Hnot, the French gentleman, came over to urge father to go and take his family. He said if they had all stayed at home it would be a different thing, but what could two men to alone and soon it would be only one man for he also was going away.

I think father saw the common sense of his advice. “I’ll go and see Mr. Brown!” said father. “Mr. Brown went to Fort Snelling two days ago,” said Mr. Hnot. “It seems you and

I are the only men left here,” said father. “And it is not brave but fool hardy!” said Mr. Knot.  
“That is just what I tell him!” said mother. “And you are right, Madam Howe!” said he.

We went to Fort Snelling. I’ll never forget what a good time I had. I went up on the ramparts and looked down and suddenly I wanted to jump off! Mother said we had seen enough and took us down. Afterward she said that she had the same impulse to jump off. “I wonder why persons have that impulse?”

We saw the “Old Block House”. Everything was a delightful change for me. It seemed like a grand picnic. We saw many that we know. Some friend invited us into his tent. I liked the journey and the excitement of it all. Mother unpacked the large basket of food and dishes and father brought in the feather bed and bedclothes. I took good care of the baby.

But when they said the soldiers had put down the outbreak and all the people went home again, I wished the scare would break out again so we could stay longer, for I liked the novelty of it all. Well, of course, I didn’t know enough to be frightened. But later my wish was realized. There was another scare or outbreak.

I think that was the time they captured Little Crow but before that I sent all the neighbors away again. You will doubt it but I did send them away. It was this way.

Father said one day, “Nan, go down to the meadow east side by the old oak tree, and get the basket.” The basket was not there so I remembered it was by the bridge. I found it there and then I thought I’ll make believe the Indians are after me and I’ll hide. So I got down in the grass and put the large basket over me. Pretty soon I crept along, carrying the basket over me. It was mother’s long willow clothesbasket that an old German had woven for mother. Now right on the hill above the bridge lived a neighbor. He saw the basket moving and saw it disappear in the woods. I had to pass to get home.

He thought it was an Indian spy. When I got in the shelter of the woods, I ran along the road home with the large basket. It was about dusk. It was some time later when the neighbor came to our house and gave the warning that the meadow was alive with Indians hiding in the tall grass.

“I could only see one plain,” he said, “but I could see the grass moving in a thousand places.”

Well, the warning flew like wild fire and it was not long before the road to Minneapolis was covered by a procession of all kinds of vehicles loaded and not loaded. Some took time to take some of their trunks and some food, others fled as soon as they could put the horses in and put on their hats and cloaks.

This time we went to Stevens, an acquaintance of ours that used to know father in the East and I enjoyed all this too. Only I took time to envy Nellie Stevens’ – her pink dress and slippers. She was a girl of my own age but very slender while I was plump. I even hated my curls, for she had straight hair and told me confidentially that curls were all out of fashion. That was quite a damper on my enjoyment but as mother and Mrs. Stevens got supper, I recovered my spinster when affairs had settled down to normal again. Father was crazy to enlist and go into the Civil War but mother and the neighbors tried to convince him his place was at home taking care of his large family – for now there was nine of us children.

I was almost forgetting about father being in the legislature and his bill to appropriate a small sum of money for the Institution for Deaf and Dumb and Blind. He got the appropriation. He did it for Cora’s sake. And the school was opened at first in a large store building until they could build a new institution. There was a Superintendent and teacher hired and Cora was taken there. It was in Faribault, Minn. Father took Cora and her trunk in the buggy with old Major and Blackie. The journey was too much for Old Major at his time of life and when he got home, he died.

We all mourned for him sincerely and father regretted taking him on so long a trip. I do not remember now whether there was a train all the way from Minneapolis to Faribault or not. I suppose not for it would have been much better to have gone by train if there had been one to go on.

Mr. McKinley was the first Superintendent of the Institution. Father was so afflicted by Major’s death he wrote a long poem on it beginning:

*Old Major*

*Old Major is dead, that good old horse.  
We’ll never see him more.  
He wore a sorrel coat with a white stripe.  
Dawn before, etc. etc.*

There were many more verses but I do not remember them and all telling of his virtues and characteristics and faithful work.

*Additional excerpts will be printed in future newsletters that provide a wonderful look back in time to the early days of Plymouth. Again, a great big thank you to Marla Watson of Portland, Oregon for sharing her “find” with us.*

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## Current Officers

The following are the present officers:

President	Vern Petersen	763-559-2313
Vice President	Vern Doseth	763-559-3777
Secretary	Mable Swanson	763-545-7705
Treasurer	Harvey Schiebe	763-545-6127



## Meetings

The monthly meetings are normally held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Plymouth Historical Society Building, located at 3605 Fernbrook Lane North, Plymouth, MN.



## Wanted!

The Plymouth Historical Society is look for:

- Old pictures of the Plymouth area such as churches, homes, farms, people and events.
- Old children's toys for Christmas display.



## Old Toy Trains

Do you have any old Lionel or other toy trains? If you do, please contact Gary Schiebe, 763-473-4889

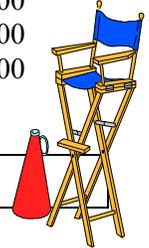
## Mailing and Membership List



If you are not a member and want to sign up or if you have any questions, please call Alberta Casey, 763-559-9366.

The annual dues are:

Individual	\$7.50
Family	\$12.00
Individual Lifetime	\$100.00
Family Lifetime	\$150.00



## Board of Directors

The following is the present Board of Directors:

Kay Bertrand	763-249-0138	2000-2003
Ben G. Broman	763-559-5721	2000-2003
Alberta Casey	763-559-9366	2000-2003
Vern Dotseth	763-559-3777	2000-2003
Myrtle Eckes	763-545-6168	2000-2003
Jim Garvey	763-559-3047	2000-2003
Delores Morris	763-535-8756	2000-2003
Joe Morris	763-535-8756	2000-2003
Joyce McCaughey	763-557-6948	2000-2003
Vern Peterson	763-559-2317	2000-2003
Gary Schiebe	763-473-4889	2000-2003
Harvey Schiebe	763-545-6127	2000-2003
Margerite Schiebe	763-541-7187	2000-2003
Mable Swanson	763-545-7705	2000-2003

# See you at the Old Fashioned Christmas



Merry  
Christmas

