

EXPLANATION

- Section Line
- Bound up Lot Line
- Wagon Road
- Hullroad
- Creeks & Springs
- Ranges
- Churches
- School Houses
- Adjacent Lands owned by same party connected by a link, thus
- Post Office
- Coal, Iron or Zinc Mine
- County Bridge

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

Scale: 2 Miles to one inch.

# Les Nouvelles Historiques de Le Sueur

## Author John Eggers appearing at Genealogy Center July 4<sup>th</sup>

The public is invited to drop by the Le Sueur County Historical Society's Genealogy Center in Elysian, Minn. on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The Center, located at 301 NE 2nd St. will be open that day from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

The Society is excited to have author, historian and educator John Eggers as our guest at the Center that day. Dr. Eggers has written a variety of books dealing with education, as well as historical titles like "Livin' in the 50s Memories"; "Bullhead Days"; "Tetonka Tales" and "Remember To Hug Your Grandma."

Eggers will be on hand to sign copies of his books and hopefully share a story or two.

Also, work on the Elysian School Museum building is underway. As much as we would love to give everyone a peek at the progress, the school is a construction zone and safety is a must – keep a safe distance!

**Continued inside on page 2**



SUMMER, 2023

## The Vice-President's Corner...

Our President Bill Stangler has been on an extensive Mission Trip to Guatemala and in his absence I will attempt to fill you in on the continued progress of the restoration of the Red Brick Elysian Schoolhouse Museum. I'm sure you are aware of the very sizable grant LSHS recieved from the Minnesota Historical Society and the subsequent additional funds from the Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation to begin this multi-year renovation.

We expect work to begin early this summer and hopefully wind up by late October or early November this fall. The Le Sueur County Historical Society was awarded a very sizable grant to begin the work of a three part restoration and refurbishment of the 1895 Schoolhouse. This first step is important to get a new waterproof roof and secure the leaking belltower for the protection and safety of the artifacts inside.

1. The soffits and rain gutters will be rebuilt and restored to functionality.
2. The bricks near the top and chimney will be replaced to match existing as needed.
3. The entire roof will be replaced with new shingles and a new technology barrier that adds an extra layer of drainage and air circulation to ensure extended life of the new roof covering.

The work will continue through the summer months so you might want to drive by to see what progress is being made.

The work being undertaken this year will have minimal impact on the interior contents of the museum. Volunteers will have limited access to the artifacts during construction.. The building will be secure during this renovation process. We are asking our members and friends to help us organize the large storage sheds on the Elysian campus. Volunteers are the lifeblood of organizations like ours so if

### July 4th *continued*

If you haven't had a chance to visit the genealogy center before, the July 4th event is an excellent opportunity to tour the facility and see all of the fascinating history packed into a small package.

you feel like rolling up your sleeves and helping please contact one of the Board Members.

There are several of our Board Members who have gone beyond their typical duties to make this flurry of activity happen. Ruth Collins our able Secretary worked many hours behind the scene to secure the grant through the Minnesota Clean Air and Water Initiative. Beside her work with LSHS she has completed her doctoral dissertation work so we can now officially call her "Dr. Ruth". Bonnie Reak, our mainstay LSHS Treasurer has kept our Book-keeping and finances in order and worked tirelessly with Ruth to update and revise the financial status of our organization through this whole process. Let them know you appreciate their work on our behalf with a Thank You when you see them.

We would also like to thank our Le Sueur County Commissioners for the continued financial support and the generous funding of our Technology Committee for the purchase of new and much improved equipment for the Genealogy Center. This is a big boost in our capability to bring the latest innovations to Le Sueur County Historical Society.

If anyone has questions please feel free to ask our Board Members.

— Dean Milton Pettis

Join us on the

**4th  
of  
July**

Le Sueur County Historical Society's  
**Genealogy Center**

301 NE 2nd St. - Elysian, Minn.

**OPEN 11 am – 2 pm**

★ **BOOK SIGNING** ★

Author, Historian and Educator

**John Eggers**

will be on hand  
to sign copies of his books.

**AND IT'S FREE!**

## Ottawa Historians present Doug Ohman July 8

The Ottawa Historians are hosting an evening with author, photographer and historian Doug Ohman at the Ottawa Town Hall on July 8 at 3 p.m.

Ohman has supplied photographs for a number of books such as "Barns of Minnesota," "Libraries of Minnesota," and "Schoolhouses of Minnesota." He has also contributed photographs for a number of other books featuring Minnesota state parks and historic family resorts.

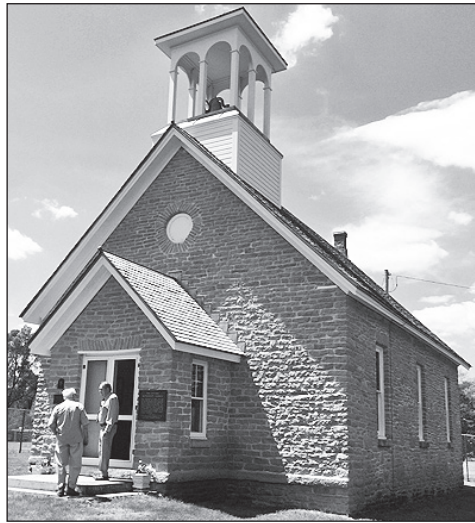
# Ottawa Church is available for event rentals

Now that the Ottawa Stone Church in Ottawa Minn. has returned to its historic glory, the landmark is being made available for social gatherings such as weddings, reunions or similar events.

A rental application must be made to the Le Sueur County Historical Society for review. To receive an application contact the Society via email at [info@lesueur-countyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueur-countyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.

Rental of the church and grounds for an entire day (8 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.) is \$150. A damage, cleaning and key deposit of \$250 is required for all rentals. Late cancellation fees may apply.

The renter is responsible for any and all damage



to the facility occurring during the term of the rental by the renter or by guests. The renter is responsible for cleaning the facility and grounds after the event. Smoking is prohibited in all Le Sueur County Historical Society facilities. No open fires, including candles, are allowed in the Ottawa Church or on the property.

Other rules and guidelines for renting the church are included on the application.

The church is one of seven native limestone buildings left in the village and is listed with all seven others on the National Registry of Historic Places and are also on the list of Minnesota's Ten Most Endangered Properties.

## LCHS annual meeting was entertaining and informative

Members of the Le Sueur County Historical Society gather once a year and the 2023 edition took place on April 18. The annual event featured a healthy mixture of reporting and members' input.

LCHS Board Member Bryce Stenzel led the meeting and kicked things off with a refresher of what occurred at the 2022 annual meeting. He then recapped some of issues and accomplishments which LCHS had encountered during the past year. Some of these include the bell tower dedication of the Ottawa Stone Church, improvements made to the District #57 school and reopening the exhibit during the Le Sueur County Fair. The school was also opened in honor of the Le Center Fire Department's 125th anniversary.

LCHS Secretary Dr. Ruth Collins gave a thorough presentation on the Elysian school building project and fielded questions from the audience.

Discussion between the board and membership continued as the floor was open to questions. A number of members expressed interest in the Society's overall plans

for the Elysian school and the timeframe for opening it back up to the public. One member asked if because of the money being put into the Elysian school, would the Society's headquarters and main focus stay in Elysian. Another member expressed a preference for the Society to be more centrally located in the county.

The next item on the agenda was election of board members for the next two years. There were five board seats open and six candidates: Bob Burgess, Ruth Collins, Ron Greenwald, Dean Pettis, Bonnie Reak and Bill Stangler. Thirty-eight votes were cast. Incumbents Collins, Greenwald, Pettis, Reak and Stangler were all returned to the board.

Board officers will also remain the same with Stangler appointed president; Pettis, vice president; Collins, secretary; and Reak, treasurer.

The meeting concluded with an interesting presentation on the hamlet of Marysburg by Larry Korteum.



There will be familiar faces on this year's Le Sueur County Historical Society board of directors. Pictured are (front, left to right) Michael Fredricks, Rich Bennet and Bonnie Reak; back row (left to right) Paul Malchow, Dean Pettis and Ruth Collins.

# Work has commenced on Elysian Museum

*Schmidt Foundation grant allows project to proceed as planned*

Things are looking up at the red brick schoolhouse on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> St. and Frank Ave. in Elysian, Minn. ... literally.

The 1935 three-story building is undergoing major renovation of the bell tower, roof, facia, cornice and gutters/downspouts. This involves mortar work, repairing damaged masonry, reinforcing roof supports, new shingles, and painting surfaces in the roof area.

During the time cost estimates were formulated, the grant application was written and evaluated, and the Minnesota Historical Society approving the \$297,079.00 grant, inflation had brought actual costs for the project roof high. It appeared only a portion of the original project would be



This rendition of the Elysian school was rendered by Le Sueur artist Lucille Sunderman and donated to the Historical Society.

completed.

Thanks to the efforts of LCHS Board Member Ruth Collins, the Society was awarded an \$80,000 grant from the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation. This enormous gift will allow the work originally planned to be completed.

Work on the project is expected to commence in July and the board hopes to have the project completed by Thanksgiving.

This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

There are still artifacts being stored in the Elysian museum that need to be secured for the construction. Contact the Society if you would like to help with this project.

Watch for our new website: [www.lesueurcountyhistory.org](http://www.lesueurcountyhistory.org)

## Tri-City students tour District 75 schoolhouse

The sound of children once again filled the District #75 schoolhouse on May 9 as sixth graders from Tri-City United learned about education of yesterday.

Bette Traxler, a retired Le Center schoolteacher, told the children what school was like before computers, when students in grades kindergarten through 8 shared a single classroom. Traxler's mother once taught in a similar country school.

In true school-marm fashion, Traxler put the visitors through their paces — quizzing the children on subjects typical for that time period.

The one-room schoolhouse is located on the Le Sueur County Fairgrounds. Thanks to generous donations, the structure received a new roof and a fresh coat of paint last year.



The Society hopes the Tri-City visit will be just the first of many student visits. “We hope the visit will foster a new interest in Le Sueur County history,” said Board Member Dean Pettis, “and the next generation will continue the work of the Society.”

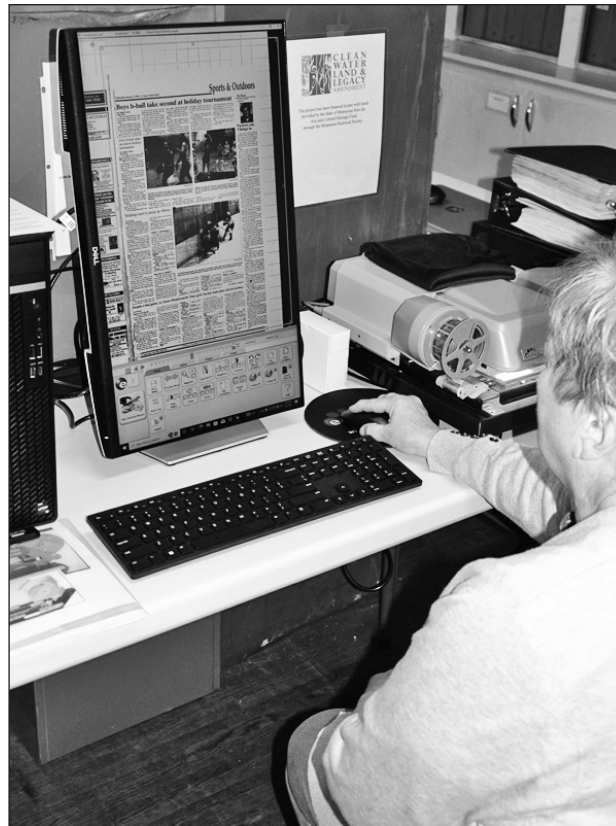
# Come and explore the Genealogy Center!

The Le Sueur County Historical Society's Genealogy Center is open for another season. The Center, located at 301 NE 2nd St. in Ely-sian, Minn., has proven to be a valuable resource in re-searching family histories.

LCHS received good news in 2022 with a \$9,875 grant from the Minnesota Historical Society. The funds were used to purchase of a Micro-film scanpro printer/reader/ scanner for the Center. Patrons can view archived newspapers from throughout the county and print selected items much faster than the old equipment would allow.

History enthusiasts are encouraged to volunteer at the Center. Many current volunteers enjoy researching Le Sueur County history for others and learning a few new things themselves. Along with doing research, volunteers are needed to file obituaries, organizing files, scan photographs and make copies.

The Center is open every Friday and Saturday through Sept. 16 from 1-4 p.m. Two volunteers are needed for each day. If interested in being involved, contact LCHS via email at [info@lesueur-countyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueur-countyhistory.org) or call (507) 267-4091.



LCHS volunteer and Genealogy Center organizer Sally Olson shows off the new equipment recently purchased thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society.

The list of historic resources at the Center includes church histories, cemetery records and maps, birth records, marriage certificates and indexed obituary clippings from newspapers. At the Center you can find old plat books, maps, and town history books and files. Some family histories which have already been compiled can be found at the Center as well.

A user fee of \$10 is charged, but the fee is waived for LCHS members. If you wish to have Center staff assist with research, there is a fee of \$10 per hour. Document scans and copies are 25 cents each.

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

On the LCHS wish list is a new printer/scanner compatible with the current system. Along with being more en-

ergy efficient, a new printer would allow us to scan larger items and print in an 11x17 format.

If you've never been to the Genealogy Center, stop by during the open hours or catch us at the 4th of July Open House. Bring a friend!

## Ottawa Stone Church open to visitors Sunday afternoons

Volunteers recently spent the morning readying the Ottawa Stone Church for another season of visitors. Helping out with the cleanup were Kathleen and Dick Peterson, Chuck Olsen, Bonnie Reak, and Brandon, Deanna and Ruth Collins.

The church is open to the public Sunday afternoons from 1-4 p.m.

New this year, the Society is also making the church available to rent for small private gatherings. Contact the Society at [info@lesueurcountyhistory.org](mailto:info@lesueurcountyhistory.org) for more information.



# History Highlight: Le Sueur County Poor

By Sally Olson, LCHS Genealogy Center Director

From the earliest days in Minnesota, the care of the sick and the poor rested upon county and township governments. In 1864, a revised state poor law explicitly named the county as the only unit fit for poor relief and required county boards to maintain poorhouses; or make other suitable arrangements for their charges.

In Le Sueur County, when the board decided to designate a farm it already owned as the county poor farm, the *Le Sueur Courier* (Jan. 2, 1868), approved: "The Board, we think, made a good move in resolving to inaugurate measures for the improvement of the county farm. It should be managed so that in a few years it will be able to support such poor as the county has on its hands in a comfortable condition and add very slightly to the general expense."

Actually, the term which appears in the board proceedings was not "comfortable" but "inhabitable," and the preparations for opening the home would not seem to assure many comforts: "Commissioner Hielscher

was authorized to procure, for the use of the poor on the county farm, one table, two chairs, two towels, one pail, one small looking glass, one broom, one dipper."

In a newspaper listing of county expenses for the year 1869/1870, Richard Walsh was paid \$252.77 for boarding the poor on the farm. It was agreed to pay Michael Grady \$125 to dig a well on the poor farm, and Thomas Furlong was paid \$50 to build a privy.<sup>1</sup> The following year Mr. Walsh was paid \$850 to board the poor. A Dr. Humphrey charged \$17.50 for his poor farm services, and a couple of gents were paid to haul lumber, lime, and rock to the farm several times.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1870, John Nightingale was paid \$5 to "carry" Thomas Hughes, a pauper from Waterville, to the farm. That same issue mentioned that two proposals to rent the poor farm were opened:

Samuel Dennett proposed to take care of the county poor and board them for \$3/week with free rent of the farm, and Richard Walsh proposed to board, wash, and mend for the poor of county at the rate of \$3.50/week with free rent of the farm.<sup>3</sup>

In proceedings reported in the newspaper in January 1872, 14 people made proposals to take care of the poor of the county for a range of \$1.50 to \$3.00 per person per week. Amenities mentioned in the proposals included lodging, board, washing, tea/coffee/molasses/meat/vegetables, and care during illness. The contract appears to have gone to Michael Sheehy, the lowest bidder.<sup>4</sup>

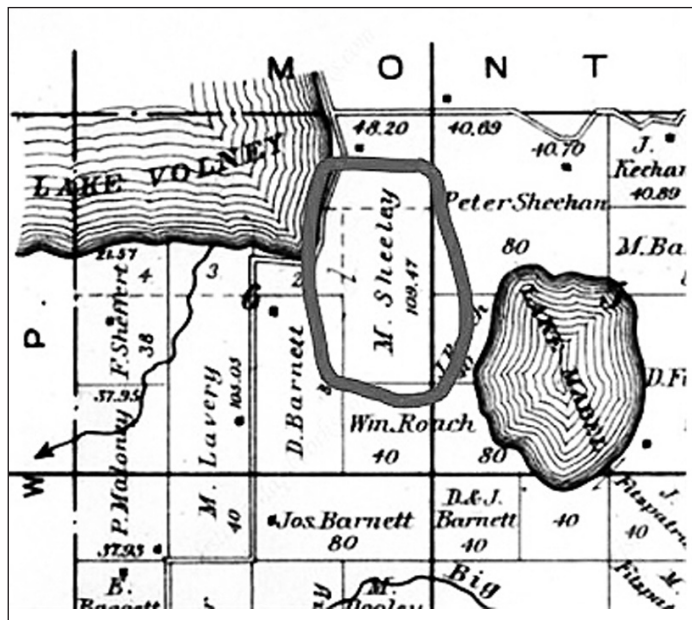
There was some controversy that Mr. Sheehy was chosen over Mr. Walsh (who bid \$3.00), as Mr. Walsh had been running the poor farm already. At that time the poor of the county was made up of three old men, aged 75 to 90, and three other persons deemed "idiotic."<sup>5</sup>

**Notice.**  
The County Board of Le Sueur County  
are now ready to  
**LET THE COUNTY POOR FARM**  
And will receive applications, under seal,  
for the same until January 7th, 1869, at 12  
o'clock noon.  
Such proposals may be sent to the County  
Auditor, at Le Sueur, marked "Proposals  
to take Poor Farm."  
J. W. GISH,  
Chairman Board Co. Com's.

# Farm operated into the 1870s

In the 1870s Michael Sheehy (formerly of Limerick, Ireland) and his bride Mary Cleary moved from a homesteaded farm in the county to Section 6, on the east side of Lake Volney, where he managed the county poor farm for 12 years. At that time, he purchased the farm from the county and continued to operate it until his death in 1913.<sup>6,7</sup>

By 1873, at least 20 counties had established poor farms. During the following years, new emphasis was given to change the poor farm management from the county to townships. Between 1875 and 1889, when a general law was enacted which permitted counties to change from one system to the other at the option of its voters, 20 counties obtained special town plan laws. Adoption of the town system did not prevent a county



from operating a poorhouse. Le Sueur County was one of a handful of counties that promptly closed their poor farm on obtaining their special laws.<sup>8</sup>

Before the time when the county courthouse was built by the county in Le Sueur Center, the building and land being used for that purpose were owned by a private company (several businessmen led by L.Z. Rogers of Waterville). When the county found itself housed in a building and on property belonging to

that group, and after the county built a jail, a sheriff's residence and a stable for the sheriff's horses, they decided to acquire the property. A deal was struck with the Le Sueur Center Land Company (incorporated in 18769) agreeing that the county should pay the land company \$5,000 plus the title to the county poor farm, a total of 160 acres of land, in exchange for the title to the block that the courthouse stands on today.<sup>10</sup>

**PROPOSALS FOR POOR FARM.**  
**AUDITOR'S OFFICE,**  
 Le Sueur, December 4, 1871. }  
 Sealed proposals will be received at the Auditor's office until the 5th day of January, 1872, at 2 o'clock P. M., in accordance with the following resolution passed by the Board of County Commissioners at the September session, 1871:  
**Resolved.** That the keeping of the Poor of the County be advertised for four weeks previous to the January session of 1872 to be given to the lowest responsible bidder. Bids to be given to the County Auditor in sealed envelopes, to be opened on the fourth day of the January session, 1872, at 2 o'clock, P. M. The use of the Poor Farm and buildings thereon to be given to the person taking such contract.  
**J. FRANK QUINLAN,**  
 County Auditor.

Le Sueur Courier — Dec. 6, 1871

- 1 — "County orders issued from March 1, 1869, to February 28, 1870," *Le Sueur Courier*, March 30, 1870.
- 2 — "County orders issued from March 1, 1870, to February 28, 1871," *Le Sueur Courier*, March 29, 1871, and "Proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners," *Le Sueur Courier*, June 29, 1870 and September 21, 1870.
- 3 — "County commissioners' proceedings," *Le Sueur Courier*, January 19, 1870.
- 4 — "Proceedings of the Commissioners," *Le Sueur Courier*, January 17, 1872, p. 4.
- 5 — "Chankaska answered (editorial)," *Le Sueur Courier*, July 3, 1872, p. 1.
- 6 — Gresham, W., "History of Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties, Vol. 1," p. 377.
- 7 — Michael Sheehy Obituary, *Irish Standard*, March 8, 1913, p. 9
- 8 — McClure, Ethel. An unlamented era: County poor farms in Minnesota, *Minnesota History Magazine*, December 1963, p. 365+.
- 9 — Le Sueur Center Land Company, OpenIncorporates.com, incorporated August 7, 1876 (inactive).
- 10 — "County History," Le Sueur Co. Minnesota website, accessed May 28, 2022.

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*The mission of the Le Sueur County Historical Society is to collect and preserve the story of Le Sueur County — telling its history through historic sites, a research center, collections, exhibits and educational programming.*



Le Sueur County  
**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 123  
Le Center, MN 56057

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

## **Join us for a work day at the fairgrounds' log cabin July 15 at 10 a.m.**

The Le Sueur County Historical Society's Heritage Center on the Le Sueur County fairgrounds has been a popular stop for hundreds of fairgoers over the years. As we prepare for the 2023 Le Sueur County Fair (Aug. 17-20), the Society is looking to give the attraction a fresh look.

Join us at 10 a.m. on July 15 as we prepare the new displays. There are jobs of all sizes and abilities which need to be done: Packing artifacts from last year's display, bringing new artifacts in, some lifting and carrying, and general cleaning and tidying up.

Buckets, rags, step stools, step ladders and two-wheel carts would come in handy if you can bring them, but most of all we need helpful hands.

This is an opportunity to meet fellow Society members and create a good impression of the Society's work to the general public. Please consider lending us a hand.

Thank you!