

THE CENTER PIECE

Winter/Spring
2019



Brandon History Center, 105 Holmes Avenue, P. O. Box 514, Brandon, MN 56315

Website: www.brandonmn.com - Email address: brandonhistory@gctel.net - Phone No. 320-524-2260

Who Was Martin Stowe?

Have you ever wondered how the lakes, rivers, towns, and streets in Douglas County were named? Mike Cleary, who lives on Stowe Lake near Brandon and regularly drives past Stowe Avenue in Brandon, decided he would re-search the name "Stowe." His curiosity led him to the 1920 publication of Minnesota Geographic Names on the Minnesota Historical Society website. This 700-plus page reference book contains information on the origin and historical significance of just about every name in the State of Minnesota. He learned that Stowe Lake was originally named "Stowe's Lake" after Martin Stowe who homesteaded on this lake.

Mike found out that perhaps the reason Martin Stowe has a lake and a street named after him is that in addition to being one of the early settlers in Brandon Township, he led a very interesting and productive life as a Civil War veteran, farmer, storekeeper, township clerk, village founder and postmaster, state legislator, gold miner, husband, and father.

Martin was born in Massachusetts in 1830. At the age of 21, he enlisted as a private in the Union Army at Chicago, Illinois. He served during the Civil War and was discharged in Texas as a quartermaster with rank of captain in late 1865.

The following year, Captain Stowe came to Douglas County, Minnesota, and homesteaded 262 acres in Section 18 of Chippewa Township (now Brandon Township) on the southwest shore of the lake that was later named after him, Stowe Lake.

He eventually owned a total of 456 acres in Brandon Township. The land he homesteaded on Stowe Lake includes Burros Lane where Sidney Burros had his resort and where Lenny and Patty Taylor now live. His homestead also included what is now the Stowe Lake Waterfowl Production Area west of Brandon.

Martin married Addie Noble, a school teacher, in 1870. Addie had two children from a prior marriage; and together, she and Martin had four additional children.

He owned a store in old Brandon, served as Brandon Township clerk from 1873 to 1878, was postmaster in Brandon from 1872 to 1882. After the railroad came through and the town was relocated to its present-day site, Martin was one of the first to move his business to new Brandon. Martin was instrumental in the incorporation of the Village of Brandon in 1881. He was the first state legislator from Brandon and was elected twice to one-year terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives during 1875 and 1876. He served as Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee and as a member of both the Railroads and Claims Committees.

Seeking adventure and greater fortunes, Martin moved his family to Hailey, Idaho, in 1882, and purchased the Merrimac gold mine above Ketchum, Idaho. He died nine years later on June 6, 1891, from injuries suffered after being thrown off a horse. He is buried in Hailey, Idaho. After his death, his wife Addie moved to Los Angeles, California. His children continued to live out West as they had no remaining ties to Brandon, Minnesota.

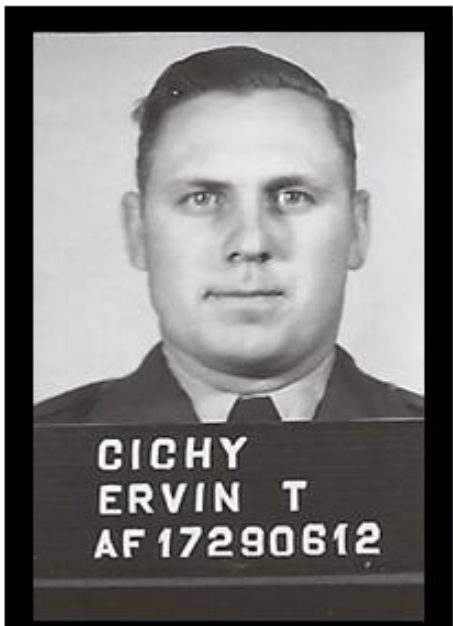
Continued on next page

Martin Stowe – cont'd

It is obvious that Martin Stowe was a very ambitious and industrious individual who contributed so much to the communities in which he lived. We are grateful for the vision and foresight of our forefathers such as Martin Stowe.

Unfortunately, we have found no picture of Martin to include with this article. See related article on page 3 (*A Little Minnesota History*).

Veterans Corner



Ervin Cichy

Ervin Cichy enlisted in the United States Army during the Korean Conflict. He started his military training at Kelly Field, now Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio TX. Ervin then became a part of the United States Air Force, the 607 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron in Korea and at the Great Falls, MT, Airbase where he also learned to fly small aircraft. His primary training was as a diesel generator and vehicle maintenance person at the mobile radar site.

Ervin achieved the rank of Airman First Class and received an honorable discharge. He is pictured below by a directional road sign near the Great Falls Air Base where he was stationed.



Ervin returned to the Brandon area and worked for many years at Frank's Standard.

He and his wife Shirley lived in Brandon after their marriage in 1975. Ervin passed away on May 19, 1997. He was interred at St. Ann's Church Cemetery in Brandon.

He was a member of Alexandria VFW Post 36 and Brandon American Legion Post 278.

The American Legion Poppy

Did you ever wonder why Veterans Day is always on the 11th and does not change? World War I ended on the 11th month on the 11th day on the 11th hour.

One day a man selling poppies asked a lady if he could reposition the poppy she was wearing. He told her she should wear the poppy on the right side; the color red represents the blood of all who gave their lives; the black, the mourning of those who didn't have their loved ones return home; and the green leaf represents the grass and crops growing and future prosperity after the war destroyed so much. The leaf should be positioned at 11

Veterans Corner - continued

o'clock to represent the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, which was the time World War I formally ended. He told the lady he was worried that younger generations wouldn't understand this and that his generation wouldn't be around much longer to teach them.

So for those who do not know, the 11th day of the 11th month (November) is Veterans Day. We not only remember those who gave their lives in World War I, but in all wars. The poppy has a lot of meaning behind it, so when you see our local Legion Auxiliary out selling poppies, remember to honor the fallen.



Ronald Lorsung

Ronald Lorsung was born on December 26, 1934, in Millerville, Minnesota. On June 1, 1952, he entered the United States Navy and was sent to Boot Camp in Illinois before being stationed on the USS Intrepid CVA #11 as a Gunner during the Korean War. He served his country for eight years and was honorably discharged on June 1, 1960.

After his marriage to Martha Town, they lived in Alexandria. Ron was a member of the

Alexandria Elks Club, Millerville Legion, and the Alexandria VFW.

Ron died on January 28, 2017. He was survived by his wife, Martha; four children, four step-children; several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Mass of Christian Burial was held on February 2, 2017, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, with interment at St. Mary's Cemetery. Military honors were provided by VFW Post 936, VVA Post # 235, and the Minnesota National Honor Guard.

A Little Minnesota History

A little Minnesota history should complement our article on Martin Stowe. The Minnesota Secretary of State website provides us with interesting information on the original constitution and the legislative branch of Minnesota state government.

Pursuant to enabling legislation of the U.S. Congress of February 26, 1857, authorizing a constitutional convention to draft a constitution and to form Minnesota state government, Republican and Democrat delegates were elected by the people for the job.

Apparently there was so much bitterness between the two political parties that the delegates refused to meet together in the same convention, resulting in separate sessions in different rooms of the capitol building (below).



Continued on page 4

A Little Minn. History – cont'd

The political atmosphere was so hostile that the two bodies never met together. The final work was done by a conference committee made up of five conferees from each of the conventions. On August 28, 1857, the conference committee report was adopted by both the Republican and Democrat conventions. When it came to signing the Constitution, each convention signed their own copies rather than signing the same one. They were not willing to have their signatures together on the same document.

The finished constitution had to be accepted or rejected in an election by the Minnesota voters, which was held on October 13, 1857. The ballots used in the election were printed to provide only for affirmative votes; if a voter wanted to reject the constitution, he/she had to alter the ballot and write in a negative vote. It did pass with 30,055 votes in favor and 571 against.

Then after that ratification vote, the constitution had to be sent to and approved by Congress. Guess what! Both copies were in the hands of Congress for approval; but when the bill for the admission of Minnesota into the Union was passed by Congress, the Republican copy of the constitution was attached (as historians have reported). Lots of political haggling went on before we even became a state! Minnesota was admitted to the union on May 11, 1858, and finally had a constitution that structured Minnesota government.

The original Minnesota constitution provided that state representatives were elected for one-year terms and senators for two-year terms. That is why Martin Stowe served two one-year terms.

It wasn't until 1873 that an attempt was made to increase the terms of office for the legislature: two-year terms for representatives

and four-year terms for senators. The amendment had to be voted on by the people. It failed. But again in 1877, an amendment was presented to the people, which passed making two- and four-year terms respectively.

Leadership Alexandria Visits BHC



Leadership Alexandria participants visited the History Center this past fall. For more than 25 years, Leadership Alexandria has trained existing or emerging leaders who work and/or live in the Alexandria/Douglas County area. This nine-month program, sponsored by the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and the West Central Initiative, provides an opportunity for participants to develop leadership skills and learn more about the Douglas County area. The Chamber of Commerce is committed to building a stronger community, one leader at a time.

Sessions include learning about local history, educational systems in the area, local and state governments, businesses in the area, and professional growth opportunities.

We at the History Center are thankful for the opportunity to share our resources and rich history with Leadership Alexandria.

"The More you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future."

Theodore Roosevelt

2018 Annual Meeting

The Brandon History Center annual meeting was held on Monday, October 8, 2018, at the History Center office. The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m. by President Ruth Plaster. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the minutes of the 2017 annual meeting and treasurer's report were approved.

Reports were given by board members on their areas of responsibility.

Election of board members was held. Florence Bitzan, Marcia Bolin, Ruth Plaster, and Mike Cleary were elected. Welcome to our newest board member, Mike Cleary.

After the annual meeting was adjourned, a board meeting was held to elect a president and vice president. As a result, Ruth Plaster was elected as president, and Florence Bitzan was elected as Vice President.

Meet your new Board members:



Front Row: Deb Shea; Ruth Plaster; Florence Bitzan

Back Row: Marcia Bolin, Janet Nelson, Karen Thoennes, Mike Cleary

The next regular meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2019.

Thank You to

Carol Ramler for her \$50 donation

Class of 1947 for their \$25 donation

American Legion Auxiliary for their \$300 donation

Tara Bitzan for her \$200 donation

Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce for their \$300 donation

Eileen Hintzen in memory of Audrey Kloehn, \$50 donation

John Peterson in memory of Vernon and Millie Peterson \$200 donation

Kay Larson in memory of Doris Hoplin \$50 donation

And thank you to all who volunteer their time at the History Center. In addition to our board members, we have some very faithful volunteers.

Membership Information

Due to lack of space in some of our recent newsletters, we have not included membership information. Feel free to share this information.

Annual memberships are \$10 for individuals; \$15 for family. Single life memberships are \$150.

In addition to renewing your membership if you are an annual member, you may want to consider making a charitable contribution of \$100 or more to the History Center. Because we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, contributions are tax-deductible. Your gift will be recognized by name engraved on our contributor plaques which are on display at the History Center.

Brandon History Center

105 Holmes Avenue, P. O. Box 514

Brandon, MN 56315

E-MAIL: brandonhistory@gctel.net

BOARD MEMBERS:

Florence Bitzan

Marcia Bolin

Mike Cleary

Janet Nelson

Ruth Plaster

Deb Shea

Karen Thoennes

We're on the Web! Visit us at:

www.brandonmn.com

Our Mission Statement

To collect, preserve, and display articles, pictures, and memorabilia from Brandon, Millerville, and the surrounding area for future generations.

To assist in the preservation of the Historic Brandon Auditorium and other local historic sites.