Renewal At The Minneapolis Athenaeum

by John Parker

A document in the Secretary of State’s office in St. Paul dated January 28, 1860, charters the Minneapolis Athenaeum “for the purpose of creating and maintaining a library in the town of Minneapolis,” making it one of the earliest library organizations in Minnesota.

In its earliest years it operated out of a bookstore owned by Thomas Hale Williams, who had previously served as librarian for the Providence, Rhode Island, Athenaeum. Williams continued as librarian after the Minneapolis Athenaeum moved into its own building in 1867. By that time it possessed 1,409 books, a library designed to provide quality reading material for the population of a frontier town that was steadily becoming more sophisticated. Subscribers and their families had the privilege of borrowing materials from the library. They provided funds for the purchase of books, and many donated volumes as well. One notable subscriber was Dr. Kirby Spencer, who bequeathed his entire estate to the Athenaeum at his death in 1870.

Eventually the growth of Minneapolis brought forth the call for a more public institution, and in 1885 the Minneapolis Public Library was established. The Athenaeum Library was taken into the new building, but with the understanding that it would have its own space, its own librarian, and its own funds for continued acquisitions. Times changed, and through years of depressed budgets and growing numbers of readers the Athenaeum bought books for the Public Library that were dispensed throughout the institution. So gradually the Athenaeum lost much of its identity as an independent corporate entity and came to be viewed as a department of the Public Library. Nevertheless, the Athenaeum librarian still kept records of these purchases, they were given special bookplates, and the more precious Athenaeum volumes were kept in a separately maintained collection.

With the appointment in 1987 of Edward Kukla as Athenaeum librarian and head of special collections at the Public Library, the Athenaeum began to focus its acquisitions on rare materials in five categories: fable literature, North American travel, Indians of North America, natural history, and the history of printing. More recently, the Athenaeum’s board of directors has sought to review the earlier purchases in these fields to see what strengths might be found there.

So accession records going back to 1880 have been examined — some 120,000 titles — and books are being selected from the five subject areas identified. These will henceforth constitute the Athenaeum library and will be housed on the fourth floor of the Minneapolis Public Library building.

This reassembled collection will contain outstanding holdings. Selections will be exhibited from time to time, and it will become the basis for other programs. Thus a century after it began to lose its identity, the Athenaeum is re-emerging, and in partnership with the Public Library it will again become a distinctive cultural asset to the community. Independent scholars should see this as a great resource.

President’s Message

by Dave Juncker

It wasn’t a great surprise, when the regional chairmanship of a national organization came my way last fall — with its responsibility to provide MIT (in Cambridge, Massachusetts) with fifteen local Educational Counselors willing to conduct a more than 120-hour interview each year. I had been a local and regional ‘EC’ for almost 25 years. I could handle it!

The “Loaned Executive” position to create and chair a 65 member committee to ‘maintenance’ and remodel a large, 70 year old church building suffering from benign neglect, was a task I thought

I could professionally handle during calendar ’96. Six teams would be established and my responsibilities would end in early ’97. Then MISF President, Ross Corson, called. He announced his acceptance of a new job in the Boston area, with a personal need to transfer the presidential reins immediately. I was surprised, but not shaken. Soon programming, advertising and newsletter co-editor/production surfaced and I was swamped.

As fall approached, my consulting

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...PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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business and the newsletter took a back seat. I got further and further behind, and more and more fatigued.

Performing a very high tech management maneuver, five spiral notebooks were purchased for use as phone logs for the eight different major projects I was heading. Finally, it felt as though a measure of control had been won, and the three-quarters foot high pile of messages and notes began to disappear.

I have needed help this fall and Curt Hillstrom, Lucy Brusic and Rhoda Gilman have stepped in to keep our organization moving. Thanks!

After reviewing the MISF books, notes, projects, and programs, it appears that the interim period before our annual meeting might best be used producing a good program for our members and a dedicated slate of board members for next year. The Works-in-Progress program has been very well received and should be continued. Two other programs are reviewed on this page: study groups are still going strong, and the long-awaited fiscal agency option for members is now up-and-running.

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Study Groups

JOIN A STUDY GROUP!

The “Philosophy”, “Religion & Culture”, and “Science & Humanities” study groups are alive and well. Curt Hillstrom has phone, topic, and time information. He can be reached at 823-5132. Immediately following the Family Values program October 5th, in downtown St. Paul, several guests and members of the panel (including non-members) showed an interest in forming an ongoing dialogue in a form similar to existing MISF Study Groups. Lucy Smith was charged with reviewing the panel presentation and proposing a possible new group. Here are the active study groups, their meeting times, and coordinators:

Philosophy: Mon 2 Dec
Coordinator: Bob Thimmish, 823-5132

Religion & Culture: one Monday/mo.
Coordinator: Curt Hillstrom, 823-5132

Science & Humanities: Wed 4 Dec
Coordinator: Ginny Hansen, 377-5960

Family Values: meetings t.b.a.
Coordinator: Lucy Smith, 698-9671

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Fiscal Agency

A MEMBERSHIP OPTION

MISF has received a grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission on behalf of member Gloria Morris-Grothe for a Works-in-Progress project entitled “Songs, Heroes, and Legends: The Cultural Side of Public Education.” A special nonprofit fiscal agent account has been opened at National City Bank to hold and disperse funds. On these accounts the bank waives normal fees (approximately $250 per year) and limits the account to five checks per month. The bank has extended this arrangement for an additional year to enable us to gain experience with this form of fiscal agency.

MISF is reviewing recommendations from former treasurer, Dave Megarry, concerning the number of fiscal agent grants we might handle each year, the amounts of managed grants relative to the MISF annual budget, and rules pertaining to standard IRS 1099 reporting forms.

We are happy to announce the availability of fiscal agency for MISF members. As the number of grants per year increases, different management procedures will become necessary. It would be a rather nice problem to face!
Member News

Outgoing Board Member Rhoda Gilman has just been elected to the “Honorary Council” of the Minnesota Historical Society. She also chairs the long range planning effort for the Board of the Institute for Minnesota Archeology.

Roger Sween has attained past president status of the Association for Continuing Adult Education (MACAE), while contributing the section entitled “Information Meets Conformation: A Dialogue” to the recent publication Doing and Reflecting on Adult Education: From Practice to Theory.

John (Jack) Parker has spent the year as President of the Minneapolis Athenaeum. See the article on page one.

Annual Membership Meeting

Dave Wiggins, St. Anthony Falls Program Manager at the Minnesota Historical Society, will be the featured speaker at the annual MISF Forum and meeting which will be held on Saturday, November 23rd. A brief, open meeting will be held at 9:30 am followed, at 10:15 am, by Mr. Wiggins’ presentation entitled: “Building on the Power of the Past: Recent Developments in History on the Minneapolis Riverfront”. The meeting and forum will be held at the Minnesota History Tour Office, 125 SE Main Street in St. Anthony (on the east bank of the Mississippi across from Nicollet Island). Under Mr. Wiggins’ innovative direction, tours of the historical areas downtown and along the waterfront by foot, bike, in-line skates, streetcar’, etc., are now available... AND... the stone arch bridge has been repaired and reopened. Hear about the next projects and battles in the saga of reclaiming our waterfront areas. Free parking is available nearby, on 3rd Avenue SE.

Have you recently landed an East Podunk article or book publication? Has your name appeared in the Strib (other than in an obituary)? Then send in your news!

NOTICE

Curt Hillstrom has received a call from the U of M Library alerting us to changes in the former copy machine cards some members have and use. It will be necessary to contact the library immediately to retain the value remaining in the cards. Contact Justine Smith ASAP at 645-0106.

Authorship Of Shakespeare Works To Be Discussed

The 20th annual conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society (SOS) will be held in Minneapolis, October 10-13. It is cosponsored by the Independent Scholars Forum, the Fine Arts Board of Plymouth Congregational Church, and the Minnesota Humanities Commission. The SOS was founded to advance knowledge of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and the appreciation of Shakespeare.

The three-day event features three sessions that are free and open to the public. The first, a debate on “Shakespeare, the Author and Meaning of Authorship,” is on October 10th at 7:30 PM at the Hotel Sofitel. The second, an introductory workshop, “Beginning to Question Authorship of Shakespeare,” is on October 12th at 9:00 AM, also at the hotel. A closing seminar on “Shakespeare and the Geneva Bible of Edward de Vere,” at which the main speaker will be Roger Stritmatter, is on October 13th, 1:00-3:00 PM, at Plymouth Congregational Church.

Stritmatter, a PhD candidate in comparative literature at the University of Massachusetts, is studying a Geneva Bible once owned by Edward de Vere and now in the Folger Library. He will describe ink annotations made by de Vere and consider their meaning as new evidence in relation to the case for the Earl being the true author of the works attributed to Shakespeare.

The free events have limited seating. Tickets may be secured in advance by registering for the conference or by requesting them on the day of the event at the registration desk, Hotel Sofitel. For further information, contact George Anderson, Chair of the ’96 Conference Committee, 1100 West 53rd Street, Minneapolis, 55419. (612) 823-2957 voice, 823-5649 fax.
## MISF Calendar for 1997

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