

The 1932 Clover Valley PTA

John Schifsky

The cover (12" x 14") of the faded blue album is titled in gold lettered script: *Clover Valley P.T.A. School 92 French River Minn. District 13*. There is an envelope attached to the inside cover with a name and address in elegant, flowing, Spencerian script: "Return to Miss Maxine Esterly, Two Harbors, Minn." The first page (heavy, black construction paper is used throughout) follows, and the phrase "MAY 1931 TO MAY 1932" appears in letters carefully cut from gold paper.

On the reverse of the first page is a Certificate of Merit from the National Congress of Parents and Teachers which recognizes the "Publicity Recordbook" of "Clover Valley French River Parent Teacher Association was selected as one of eight books to represent Minnesota at the Convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers held in Minneapolis in May 1932." The reviewing committee commented: "A good book, attractive, good write-ups."

Clover Valley Elementary/High School #92 was built in 1929 and its first graduation was in 1933. The Clover Valley P.T.A. held its first meeting in May 1932; Anton Martinson was the president of the association. Thirty-one individuals initially signed up, as documented on the album page headed "May". Short newspaper columns with headlines documenting that meeting have been carefully cut out and placed on the page. The columns appeared in both the *Duluth Herald* and the *Duluth Tribune* on May 18, 1932. The reporter notes the meeting featured, among other things, "children of the junior and senior high school (who) exhibited sewing accomplished during the year. Dresses and pajamas were modeled by the girls."

The pages which follow are each headed with the name of the month in gold capitals. An example of the handwritten notes inviting parents to attend P.T.A. meetings, small "Board Meeting" announcements, and the notices which appeared in the Duluth newspapers have all been glued to blue construction paper rectangles, creating a matted effect highlighting each text. Each item is carefully labeled and dated in gold handwriting.

February's page includes an example of the handbill announcing P.T.A. Carnival Night which was scheduled for Saturday evening February 27 and featured Amos and Andy's lunch room, Uncle Abe and David's general store, a fish pond, vaudeville, and dancing. Admission was 5 cents which entitled the attendee to a chance on a door prize. All are encouraged to come and admonished: "REMEMBER THE KIDDIES WE ARE RAISING FUNDS TO EQUIP THEIR PLAYGROUNDS." Prior to that evening the ladies of the Clover P.T.A. gathered and sewed aprons and made caps for the carnival.

P.T.A meetings generally included talks or performances. In March, Dr. R. L. Burns told those who attended "What Modern Parents Owe Their Children." In April, Duluth East Junior High Principal Mr. Meldahl spoke on "The Wise Use of Leisure." His talk was accompanied by, among others, Miss Rose Skogstrom doing a reading, Mr. James Springer a saxophone solo.

The May meeting was devoted to music: the Glee Club, directed by Murlen Tomling sang; the Bethesda Sunday School Orchestra played and a vocal solo, saxophone solo, and drum selections were featured. Officers were elected for the coming year; Anton Martinson returned as president and Catherine McCurdy as vice-president.

The Clover Valley P.T.A. School 92 album includes pages devoted not only to the school years 1931 - 1932 but also the next four years, through 1935 -1936. For the most part each year is documented in the same way as 1931 -1932; the year begins in May and a single, black construction paper page is devoted to notices about activities of each month's meeting, as well as newspaper articles, and notices sent to parents and P.T.A. members; all of these items carefully glued in place with brief explanations below in gold writing. There are four more P.T.A albums similar in format to this one; they are at the Town Hall. They are from 1937 – 1938; 1945 – 1946; 1947 – 1948; 1949 – 1950; 1972 – 1973. These albums not only offer an interesting window into past values and interests, but also document an ongoing commitment to community education, a foundational value.