

# Kelley Farm Post

FRIENDS OF THE KELLEY FARM  
SUMMER 2015



*The big house at  
The Oliver Kelley Farm  
circa 2015.*

## Living in the Mansion...

*A Peek Into Nearly 150 Years on the Mississippi* by Mac Mack

There's a small mansion at the Farm, a big house that sits facing the Mississippi River, a wide body of water that would have been clearly visible from the front porch and windows 150 years ago. It's a huge house by the standards of today and especially of 1870. The house is the second house on the site, the first having been built in the 1850s and where Oliver Kelley lived when he was at the farm. It was later razed and the current house was built on the same site.

It was started in 1870 and finished, with some difficulty and two changes of ownership in between, by Oliver Kelley himself. Kelley never actually lived in the house but worked in and had moved his family to Washington, D.C. where he was employed part-time at the Post Office. His daughters, Frances and Julia, lived in the house from 1876 – 1888 and worked the farm themselves though there was a gardener to tend to the fruits and vegetables. During this time Kelley and his family, except the aforementioned two daughters, were living in Florida.

The house is of Italianate style. The ceilings are high, allowing heat to rise in the summer and to collect in the winter. All the front windows are tall and wide and the rest are tall as well, and wide enough to let a fair breeze drive through the house, a necessity before air-conditioning. The floors are wood planks, and there are a lot of them. The cellar is stone and is the size of the original house. There are several rooms down there, a root cellar, a work-room and, of course, a store-room. There are two stairways down, one from inside the house, near the kitchen, and one from outside. Both access the coolest part of the house in the summer and I dare say folks spent some time down there in the heat of the Minnesota summers.

It's a large house, from the outside and the inside. There are six rooms on the first floor though it appears that Frances and Julia used but four of the rooms on the first floor only. The kitchen, of course, and the pantry, as well as the bedroom and the office. Today the house is furnished as it was when



*Farm staff attend to daily activities in the big house much as Oliver Kelley's family and other inhabitants have for nearly 150 years.*

the two Kelley daughters lived there.

There are six bedrooms on the second floor but they weren't finished out until the early 1900's and were never used by the Kelley family. They are used for storage now and there are no plans to develop them. Oliver Kelley was a man of vi-

sion. He founded the National Grange and had entertained the idea of moving the national headquarters to the farm but that never panned out. He sold the farm in 1900 and the house was finished by the next family that moved in. With six bedrooms upstairs, I'm sure it was a pretty big family.

# Get Your Very Own “Friends of the Kelley Farm” T-Shirt!



Yes, you too can have your very own “Friends of the Kelley Farm” T-shirt! It is YOURS for the asking! (And a small fee charged for cost, shipping and the like.) Yes, for the miniscule sum of \$20, you can have a short-sleeve or long-sleeve T-shirt, or for a small extra fee, a sweatshirt with the “TEAM WORK” logo thereupon.

Be the first on your block, the first in your neighborhood, maybe even the first in your whole town, to have this wonderful piece of clothing, this great gift of gear, this marvel of T-shirt technology! The T-shirt will keep you cool in the summer and the sweatshirt will keep you warm in the winter! How could it be any better than that!

Do you see the smiles on these ladies’ faces? Do you know why they’re smiling? They’re smiling because they have their very own “Friends of the Kelley Farm” T-shirt!” It’ll bring a smile your face too, as you

proudly wear it to the farm, to school, or even the grocery store! Wear it here, there, and everywhere! The key is to wear it, and be proud when you do so. To wear one though, you need to have one first, and the way to have one is to get one. How, you might ask – and it is a fair question, how might you get one? EASY! Get one simply by contacting Tricia, our T-shirt specialist, at: [TMD2767@visi.com](mailto:TMD2767@visi.com)

We have some on hand and we may have to order it, but if you want one, you can get one. We’ll make sure of that.

Have you ever won a lottery? Well, neither have I, but I felt like I won a lottery when I got my very own “Friends of the Kelley Farm” T-shirt! You can feel that way too! Hurry up and get the feeling! Get with the program! Get on the stick! Get squared away! Get a “Friends of the Kelley Farm” T-shirt today!

# A Note from the Tower...

*by Bob Quist, Site Director*

The construction process for the new Kelley Farm continues. The entirety of the old visitor center has been demolished and carted away. The area is now a big mound of dirt that the white-tailed deer like to play on at night.

The bidding process began June 1st. By the end of June, the bids will have come in. A

contractor will be awarded the job and we will be finishing up contracts so the contractor can begin immediately after the Fourth of July Holiday.

In addition to the bidding/contracting process, several teams are working on fundraising, program development and stakeholder discussions.



*The Tower and temporary Visitor Center during construction.*



## SPREADING THE WORD

A mother from Elk River was asked why she had come to the Farm with her three children....

“My son, he’s in the 4th grade, wanted to come here on the first day of his summer vacation. ‘He loves it out here,’ she said.”

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In an email sent to the Friends of the Kelley Farm Board, Debbie R., a teacher at the Bancroft Elementary School in Minneapolis, wrote:

“A very special ‘THANK YOU’ for giving our kindergarten students the opportunity to visit a real working farm! We were learning about both plants and animals and this experience was a huge highlight for our students. THANK YOU!!!!!!”

# A Virtual Dynamo, Ann Bercher

## Assistant Site Manager *by Mac Mack*

There is a young woman working out at the Kelley Farm these days who is, in a sense, the Power Behind the Throne. More aptly put, I suppose, she should be called the Power Beside the Throne. She stands next to the throne, is the second-in-line, the second in command, ready to pick up the torch whenever the head honcho staggers, stumbles, and falls. She is waiting in the wings to fulfill her destiny, should she ever be called upon to do so. Until then she remains in the background, a bit off to the side, doing "other duties as assigned" until that time when called upon by a higher power to step into the light and do whatever she might be called upon to do, beyond the other duties as assigned.

That woman is Ann Bercher, the Assistant Site Manager of the Kelley Farm. She is a virtual dynamo. She is a tremendous bundle of energy packed into a tiny little package that's on the move a good deal of the time. She moves so much that she has moved from Iowa all the way to Minnesota!

Seriously, she was born in Waukon, Iowa, and was raised in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where she graduated from high school. As a kid she wanted to be a naturalist or maybe a rancher because it was outdoors, and she loves the outdoors, the beauty, the wonder, the sheer art of it.

Sometimes the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and this one didn't, because she traveled all of about 80 miles to the southwest of Cedar Falls to attend (and graduate from) Iowa State University in Ames. The rooted idea of being a natural-

ist (pardon the pun) led her to a degree in Landscape Architecture though the first few years free of the academic yoke found her working a plethora of jobs far from nature and its call, except for the one stint as a freelance landscaper.



*Photo by Tae Moudry*

A move to Minneapolis and starting a family put nature and naturalism on hold for a while, and when she returned to the working-for-hire world, she found that the variety gave her an eclectic occupation background. She knew someone who knew someone, so she was a church education director. She wrote school curriculum for a while and did some other stuff as well. Eventually though, she started steering towards nature once more and soon she saw a newspaper advertisement for seasonal work at the Kelley Farm. She applied for and was accepted as a Six month-Seasonal Interpreter at the farm, a position she held for some years before being taken on as full-time.

Persistence might well be her middle name because she is that, if nothing else. It didn't take her long to realize that she wanted to stay at Kelley Farm,

come heck or high water, and there was that too, whenever the Mississippi River would occasionally rise above its banks. She began volunteering at the Farm during the off-season, and did it for years, eventually applying for and receiving the position of Assistant Site Manager after Bob Quist took over as Site Manager in 2002. It was shortly after Bob came on board that a decision was made to close the Farm, something that struck a note of discord in several people directly (and indirectly) involved with the Farm, and who soon became directly involved in saving it. Through a MAJOR effort, enough funds were raised to, initially, save the Farm from immediate closure and eventually get it on its way to becoming a major site on the Minnesota historical map.

This "child of nature" (if I may be so bold as to call her such), has several other interests as well. Her world extends into the world of mystery and mysteries, which she might be found reading at the kitchen table while she's preparing a meal. Yes, Ann is a classic-trained chef and is multi-talented in other fields too. She quilts, she sews, she runs a container garden out back of her house and actually makes it work. As mentioned above, she loves nature but she loves other things equally so and does them all well.

More than anything, she is pleased with the progress at the Kelley Farm. "What's happening now is good," she says, and things are looking up. Things are good and getting better and, says Ann, that's a good thing!

## Upcoming Events

### The Useful Art of Pickling

Sat. & Sun., Aug. 15 & 16, 2015  
10am-5pm Sat.; Noon-5pm Sun.

### Threshing Weekend

Sat., Sept. 5, Sun., Sept. 6  
& Mon., Sept. 7, 2015  
10am-5pm Sat. & Mon.  
Noon to 5pm Sunday

### The Mighty Ox Team Driving Workshop

Sat., Sept. 19; 9am-4pm  
Reservations required. Call for details.

For more information or reservations for events  
**CALL 763.441.6896**

VISIT US ONLINE  
<http://sites.mnhs.org/historic-sites/oliver-h-kelley-farm>



*FriendsOfTheKelleyFarm.org*



*Like Friends of the Kelley Farm on facebook!*



## FRIENDS OF THE KELLEY FARM

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# Become a Friend of the Kelley Farm!

Inquire at the check-in desk when you  
come out to visit!

## Spotlight - Josh Fox *by Laurie Mack*

This issue's Spotlight took a sweep across the farm and found Josh Fox, a young man from Elk River, working out in the back. He took a few minutes out of his busy schedule to share a bit with us about himself and what gets him going. Born in Oley, Pennsylvania, he wasn't very old when he moved to Anoka, and has been in the area ever since. Moving to Elk River in 2000, he went first to Anoka-Ramsey Community College and from there to St. Cloud State University where he majored in History and Photo Journalism.

At St. Cloud Josh decided he would focus on Poland and Polish history and so, during his senior year, he spent a good deal of time in Poland, traveling (alone), touring, studying, meeting the people, learning

the language and as much as he could about the country. He even did his thesis on the Polish Solidarity movement, a major event in modern Poland.

History jobs seemed to be in short supply when he walked across the stage and out the door at St. Cloud State so he worked in various fields, mostly delivering pizza, construction and any other odd jobs that would tide him and (now) his family, his lovely wife and daughter, over.

Still, history kept beckoning to him and so, to satisfy that urge he looked for – and found a job at Kelley Farm. It was his-

tory and involvement therein, that he was looking for, and he found it here. These days he works out in the farm area doing chores, pulling necessary



maintenance on all facets of the Kelley Farm operation, and working with the animals.

Working with the animals isn't all fun and games, says Josh. A ram decided Josh needed counseling and did the counseling himself when Josh

offered a target of opportunity, his derriere front and center when he, Josh, turned away from the ram to shovel hay into the ram's stall. Josh quickly learned two things...don't turn your back

on a ram and, if you're going to do so, do it far enough away from a barn wall so that you'll land in the hay and NOT on the wall.

Josh, lover of history that he is, has become very involved in the Elk River Heritage Preservation Commission. The Commission's mission at the moment is to preserve the old "Tin Man" water in downtown Elk River and Josh is playing a leading role in that effort.

He loves the Kelley Farm because of its historical impact on the nearby communities. He likes the atmosphere, the industrious people who work there, and the people who visit, almost all of whom have some sort of an interest in history. Josh is a credit to the Kelley Farm and to all who serve the public there.