

Cathy Osterman - Northfield Historical Society Executive Director:

The last several years have seen a wave of social movements across the US from Me Too to Black Lives Matter. These national movements have affected Minnesota with a goal to change society as a result. One does not have to look hard to see how these movements have been embraced in Northfield.

The Northfield Historical Society has not been oblivious to social changes. It may seem that NHS only has one story to tell, but that is untrue. We hear and see what is going on and we are involved, just in our own way.

NHS has taken action in light of recent social movements. Visible changes can be seen in the way the story of the 1876 bank robbery is told. Yes, the facts are still unchanged, but the voices heard and those identified in the story is what has changed. There are now details on recent immigrants, the Black hero who defended the town, and the women and children who were impacted by the events that day. The story even begins with details on the land and the Dakota people who were in our area long before the robbery began. These voices and perspectives make a familiar story more reflective of the community that we share.

It is a challenge to find stories about the ordinary individuals who were swept into the events of September 7<sup>th</sup>. Historical research builds a story from evidence and facts and many of the stories and perspectives we would like to tell are unknown. To speculate or report on things that are unknown is a disservice to the story and the people we seek to represent. Also, the past is not static. Our collective understanding and interpretation of the past changes through analysis and discovery of new evidence. Surely there are more stories. They just have to be found. What NHS has done is make a start, and like every good social movement, the change has to begin somewhere.

If you haven't visited the Northfield Historical Society recently, make a point to do so. Look for a detail or find a voice you have never heard before and try to see yourself reflected in the actions and reactions of the townspeople on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1876. The seven minutes that the robbery took shaped the town and the people living in it. *All* of the people living in it.