

Poor fund at 100 and still paying

By ED ARNDORFER
Staff Writer

MANITOWOC — A fund that was started nearly 100 years ago by a former prominent Manitowoc businessman is still generating money to help the needy during the Christmas season.

The late John Schuette gave \$1,000 to the city in 1888 to set up the fund whose interest earnings were to be used for the benefit of the poor during the holidays.

Records show that Schuette contributed another \$10,000 to the fund in 1920 along with a \$200 donation from a Mrs. Wernecke. Other contributions included \$1,000 from the John Schuette Sr. estate in 1928, \$1,000 from Mrs. Edna Wilda in 1946 and \$100 from the Theresa Rank estate in 1955.

The Board of Poor Commissioners and the City Relief Department were responsible for distributing the funds for many years. City Clerk June Fetzer took over administration of the fund in 1969 after the Relief Department was dissolved.

The policy for years was to give amounts ranging from \$5 to \$35 each holiday season to general relief recipients who legally resided in Manitowoc.

In 1982 Miss Fetzer was advised by the Manitowoc County Social Services Department that there were 200 persons on the relief rolls and that it was too time consuming to determine the recipients who had legal residence in Manitowoc. It was suggested that the money be given to charitable organizations for distribution among the poor.

Miss Fetzer and members of the Common Council's Public Welfare and Utilities Committee decided to donate \$750 each to the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Salvation Army in 1982.

The list was expanded to include Catholic Social Services and the Manitowoc Family Service Association in 1983. Each organization received \$1,000.

The four agencies each got \$1,000 again in 1984 but because of declining interest rates the amount was decreased to \$750 this year.

Miss Fetzer has distributed nearly \$17,000 since she took over administration of the fund in 1969 in conjunction with the Public Welfare and Utilities Committee.

City Finance Director Robert Ziegelbauer has charge of investing the funds. The latest balance showed there was \$28,268.09 in the fund and that does not include 1985 interest earnings.

Miss Fetzer has developed a strong identification with the program over the years and regards her role as "carrying out the wishes of the original donor."

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