



# RE-ECHO

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Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

Issue No. 52

## OLD NEWS

Ye Olde *Re-Echo* editor has been reading some Olde newspapers, finding some fun items from Park's past.

**1915:** For reasons not exactly clear, 1915 was a huge year in the history of the Park. Although some of the developments didn't last, others exist to this day. The *St. Louis Park Herald* was a short-lived newspaper that was only published from May to October, but it gives a wonderful picture of the kinds of things that were happening almost 100 years ago. The front page was full of War news and there were some serial love stories for the ladies and liver pill ads, but the rest was pure Park.

**THE DAN PATCH RAILROAD** came through the Park in 1915 – this is the one of our four major lines that runs north and south. Its original name was the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, and Dubuque Electric Traction Co., but its owner, Col. Marion Savage, soon renamed it after his famous horse, Dan Patch. No sooner did the electric line start up than it converted to steam, thus breaking its agreement to the people of the Village. An appeal to the State Warehouse and Railroad Commission fell on deaf ears, and those along the route had to deal with noise and soot getting on their clean laundry. The line is now called the Canadian Pacific, but for those of us who love our railroads and their histories, it will always be the Dan Patch.

**THE ST. LOUIS PARK STATE BANK** opened on August 4, 1915, located on Broadway (now Walker Street), across Dakota from what is now the Central Community Center. The building also housed the Post Office. The bank didn't last long, closing in late 1918/early 1919 and going bankrupt in 1922 amid scandal involving several other banks. The Village lost \$20.07. The building continued as the Post Office until 1937 and houses various restaurants until it was demolished after 1954.

**BROOKSIDE** had some key additions in 1915.

- The first iteration of what became known as Brookside Drug on Excelsior Blvd. and Brookside Ave. was a small stucco building. It was there in 1934 that Baby Face Nelson killed Park resident Theodore Kidder. The building was essentially replaced in 1953.
- Further down Brookside, on the Creek next to the Dan Patch tracks, Dana Thompson and his bride built Brookside Grocery Store, later to become Brookside Antiques. The little stucco building is still there but has been closed for years, its contents frozen in time like Miss Haversham's wedding.
- The two-story Victorian house at 4230 Vernon Ave. was built by a dentist named Backus. For decades it was owned by fix-it man Palmer Anderson, and by the time Palmer died the place was so run-down it was threatened with demolition. Fortunately, a man named Jim Fix bought it – and fixed it!

## 1915, Continued

**CLEAN UP YOUR PROPERTY** was the plea of the *Herald* and Dr. Watson. Also, the Botany Club at the High School was testing the purity of the water. (The Creosote Plant was still two years away.) The Village installed its first sewer system by putting a drain on Walker Street.

**MOVIES** had been shown in the Odd Fellows Hall, on the second floor of the Hamilton Building, since the 'oughts. On September 14, 1915, they were moved to a storefront in the Walker Building that was dubbed the Park Theatre (not to be confused with the Park Theater on Minnetonka Blvd. that opened in 1939). The ad promised "opera chairs, exits and a large isle (sic)." The first program featured a western, two comedies, and a Charlie Chaplin film every Tuesday, all for 10 cents. The next week the *Herald* reported "Charlie Chaplin has got them all agoing to the movies," and after a month it was reported that "public opinion of the movies is 'They are improving every time.'" Proprietors even installed a furnace "so there is no chance of anyone getting cold feet this winter." Read more early movie milestones at [www.slphistory.org/history/earlymovie.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/earlymovie.asp)

Poor **TB WALKER** was stuck with 7,000 residential lots after his plans for an industrial city collapsed with the Panic of 1893. Herbert Carleton was a competing realtor who insisted that Walker didn't have all the best lots. Carleton also urged the Village to restructure its street names, which were in mass confusion. This wasn't done for another 18 years. [www.slphistory.org/history/streetnames.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/streetnames.asp)

**AUTOMOBILES** were just rolling in, enough to merit a mention in the paper when someone bought one. It was also newsworthy when a "machine" got stuck and the owners had to walk four miles for a horse team to pull it out. Tom Johnson had his hands full taking all the neighborhood kids out for rides in his new Ford. Zeph Woods liked driving so much that he started a taxi service, with fishing and pleasure trips receiving the greatest consideration. Terms were reasonable: four people for one dollar per hour, or ten cents per mile on a long trip. Our web page on cars and bikes is [www.slphistory.org/history/automilestones.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/automilestones.asp)

**A BLIND PIG RAID** took place at a little tar shack near the Lake Street School house (in South Oak Hill). Although Park was officially "wet" that year (it went back and forth until National Prohibition in 1920), unlicensed beer halls occasionally popped up. Marshall Mack Pavey raided this one operated by Hugo (Dutch) Schutt and confiscated several cases of beer. Constable Bob Anderson felt sorry for Schutt because he needed clothes and let him go. Gunfire ensued, but "the fugitive had already taken to the timber." Anderson was described as "ex-Constable." Schutt was subsequently caught and taken to the county jail awaiting a jury trial. But wait! The next week he escaped, breaking the bars with a case knife. "He has not been heard from since he left, although we expect his return in the near future." At the end of September he was miraculously located by a citizen traveling through Dakota (didn't say which Dakota). Hugo eventually came back, served in World War I, became a Minneapolis cab driver, and lived to the ripe old age of 73. Yes, there's a web page on liquor in the Park: [www.slphistory.org/history/liquor.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/liquor.asp)

**THE 1915 SENIOR YELL** was "Walla ga zook, ga zook, ga zalla. Walla ga zook, ga zark. Seniors, Seniors, St. Louis Park."

**NEWLYWEDS** were greeted with a "Tin Pan Band" which made "a hideous racket until they were invited in and treated to cigars and fruit, after which they departed."

## 1925 - 1935

The *Hennepin County Enterprise*, despite its name, was primarily a Hopkins paper, but did have a column for St. Louis Park news. Although the boundaries of the Village were essentially the same then as they are now, news was always reported by neighborhood as if they were separate communities: Center (now Elmwood), often referred to as St. Louis Park proper; Brookside; Fern Hill; Oak Hill (pretty much anything west of present Louisiana); and the huge North Side, populated by a few people hugging Superior Blvd. (now I-394) and a lot of cows.

**MINIKAHDA VISTA:** After 70 years, the Hanke farm was broken up into subdivisions named for the adjoining Minikahda Golf Course. (The name Minikahda is a combination of two Indian words meaning "by the side of" and "water.") The 1925 ad promised that each lot (50 ft. or larger) had a graded street, ornamental trees, and electricity. Prices were \$350 to \$500, with \$10 down and monthly payments of \$7.50 to \$10 (no payments when sick or out of work). Today those lot prices won't even buy you a mailbox in Minikahda Vista!

**SCHOOL NEWS:** In September 1928 the paper printed a summary of the school system, listing all six schools, faculty and staff, and everyone's home address and telephone number. So if you didn't like your kid's teacher, you could go to their house and tell them so. Lenox School opened in September 1929, misspelled "Lennox" in the paper. Or are we misspelling it now?

**ZONING:** City fathers worked on an ordinance that would lay out districts for single and multiple housing, light commercial, and heavy industrial centers. Somehow they forgot that TB Walker had gone to a great deal of trouble to do this exact thing in 1892. The 1929 commission president said, "The work is complicated by the unwieldiness of St. Louis Park. There are nine square miles and five distinct centers of settlements. The 4,000 people living here are thus scattered all over the territory." Another comprehensive zoning ordinance would be passed in 1959, when there was exponentially more of everything here.

**MORE LIQUOR NEWS:** The end of Prohibition in 1933 apparently did not mean the end of bootlegging, and there was as yet no requirement to obtain a license to sell alcohol. The Village voted on this issue in December 1934, and the St. Louis Park Taxpayers Association printed an impassioned plea for citizens to "Vote For License!" The move was motivated more to allow the Village to collect money from licenses and fines than any moral objective. The motion passed and licenses poured like wine, especially along Excelsior Blvd., where the joints had been operating pretty flagrantly anyway.

**POLITICS** were a bit ugly at the end of 1934, with Recorder Herbert Carleton apparently under fire, according to his campaign ad for another term: "As to salary, when the village council has considered cutting my salary I retorted, 'You can cut it to \$1.00 a year and I will not resign.' All my salary besides costs of office and incidentals has gone for taxes. I am now more than \$1,200.00 delinquent in taxes. If this village does not prosper better than it has been doing of late years, then my property may not be worth the taxes against it. Therefore, please re-elect me Village Recorder." He was not re-elected.

**NORTH TO ALASKA:** Two St. Louis Park families were part of a group of modern pioneers who relocated to the Matanuska Valley in Alaska in April 1935. Under a New Deal program, each family would homestead a 40-acre tract, with the government providing a bungalow, machinery, some cattle, and a \$3,000 loan. Participating in this adventure were the Claude Hesse family of 6400 Minnetonka Blvd. and the Lawrence Rorrison family of 4018 Brunswick Ave. By 1940 over half of the population had left the valley, but our hardy Minnesota settlers were still there; Hesse eventually returned to Minnesota but Rorrison died in Alaska.

# 1955

Thanks to Manager Gary at Knollwood, the Society now has the 1955 bound volume of the *SLP Dispatch* newspaper – an important year since it was our first as a City vs. a Village.

## **KNOLLWOOD PLAZA:**

- **A cave-in** in 1954 at the construction site almost killed a plumber, and a fire and explosion caused an estimated \$4,000 damage. In February 1955 there was another fire, on top of the Powers building. Fortunately the bricklayers up there were not hurt.
- **Woolworth's** lunch counter opened before the Plaza was done so workers would have a place to have lunch. "Store presidents rubbed elbows with husky carpenters and plumbers at the counter." Imagine!
- **The Plaza Barber Shop** had telephones and two built-in ashtrays by each of the six green and chartreuse barber chairs. You could also watch your favorite program on their wide screen TV, or what passed for that in 1955.
- **Powers** had the only escalator in the suburbs when it opened.
- **Lillian's** generally sold bric-a-brac from all over the world, but one ad touted a process to decorate your toilet seat!

**PARK'S BUSINESSES** were organized into "neighborhoods" of a sort. "Park Circle" was at the confluence of Minnetonka Blvd., Highway 7, and Lake Street, and included Treasures Island, Giller Drug, The Lakeland Motor Hotel, The Milk House, and Witt's Grocery (later Lincoln Del). The "Heart of the Park" included businesses at Dakota/Lake/Wooddale.

**CHURCHES** sprang up all over: Prince of Peace, Cross of Christ, Westwood Lutheran, a major addition to St. Luke's, and the Christian Science Reading Room all opened. Ground was broken for Benilde Catholic High School for boys as well.

**JENNINGS LIQUOR STORE** sold the first Vodka available in the State of Minnesota. Manager Milt Strehlow was pictured with a giant bottle of Samovar Vodka. Who knew?

**CITIZENS STATE BANK** was robbed of \$10,000 and Bank President Burrill got off four shots with his deer rifle but the crook got away.

**THE POLICE DEPARTMENT** got four new 188 horsepower Ford Interceptor squad cars. Poor Chief Andy Nelson's official car was in such sorry shape that it sat in his yard and he used his own car. The Department also got money for a "drunk-o-meter" and it was the first year that they used radar to catch speeders. The fire chief got a shiny new red car; hopefully Andy got one too.

**AS CEDRIC ADAMS SAYS...** "At Long Last: The Cheese Center!" Opened October 19, 1955, featuring imported Hors D'Oeuvres for the Perfect Canape Tray, Assorted Cheese in Attractive Christmas Boxes - the Ideal Gift for Friends – Customers – Employees." Located at 7008 Highway 7 (now Park Vacuum). "Look for the Cheese Sign." Wish we had a picture of that!

**BABY CONTEST:** The first baby born in the Park in 1956 would win fabulous prizes, including prescriptions from Park Drug, cake from the Milk House, records from Don Leary's, crib sheets from Young-Quinlan, \$5 savings accounts from Park Plaza and Citizens State Banks, dinner for parents at McCarthy's, photographic equipment from Shink Drug, a tank of gas from Russ Mobil, milk for 30 days from Baldwin Dairy, and shoes from Lilac Way Shoe Store. Now who was the winning baby?

## OVER THE TRANSOM

We never know who will walk in during office hours or contact us by email with totally surprising photos and information. Here are some great things we've learned.

**THE FERN HILL STORE** has been located! We had a series of photos of it that were sent by Irene Knox many years ago, but had no idea where it was (other than that it was probably on Minnetonka Blvd.) Julianne Renner only had to ask her mom, Betty Jane Engebretson Renner, to find out that it was on the site that became the Park Theater! See photos of this rickety old building, taken about 100 years ago, at [www.slphistory.org/history/fernhillstore.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/fernhillstore.asp)

**STANLEN ROAD** was named after STAN Ecklund and LEN Swedlund, builders of many homes in St. Louis Park and the surrounding area. This tidbit comes from an interview of Mark Swedlund that Jeff Norman did in conjunction with the Jewish migration to St. Louis Park project. The interview has been posted to <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/jhs>

**JIM MCNULTY**, whose father developed the Westwood Hills Golf Course into housing, the Nature Center, Middle School, etc., revealed that his father seriously considered seceding from St. Louis Park and creating his own city of Westwood Hills. He speculates that his father wanted to avoid some of the controls and fees that he felt were burdensome. This fun fact also comes from one of Jeff Norman's interviews, also at the website cited above.

**MORRIS TUNICK** was one of our very early Jewish residents – a dairy farmer living where Highways 100 and I-394 would someday intersect. Descendant Milton Broude came in with wonderful photos of his family. Other early Jewish residents were Louis Berkowitz and Moses Dworsky, prominent businessmen in the nineteen-teens, and Berkowitz's son-in-law Maurice Silverman, who was a Prohibition agent! Max Lazarus, from Romania, was another dairy farmer here in 1920. Links to their stories are at [www.slphistory.org/history/earlyjewishfamilies.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/earlyjewishfamilies.asp)

**SUSAN SHALLMAN ANDERSON** came in with a bunch of slides and a couple of photo albums full of photos of her childhood in the Park. Particularly fabulous were her photos of Eliot School – both outside on the (extremely dangerous) playground equipment and inside on the stage. Her photos of the PTA dads performing in drag are hilarious – chances are that PTA dads don't do that anymore. See these priceless artifacts of the 1950s at [www.slphistory.org/history/eliotschool.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/eliotschool.asp)

**SARAH MONTPAISIR**, a school librarian in Zimmerman, Minnesota, contacted us to say that she had some of the books that had come from Eliot School. She was kind enough to send us a box of ten books from the 1960s and '70s, and one from 1949 that had actually been in the Lenox library. We thank Sarah for her efforts to find us and get these books back home!

**GOOGLING** has continued to help people find their relatives on our web site, including the granddaughter of Nick Phillips, who wrote to say that she has a scrap book of his, and she'd be willing to scan some pictures, etc. Phillips owned Lilac Way, the first shopping center in the area, so this is huge!

Other correspondents include:

- The son of the owner of the Swiss Chalet (in Miracle Mile years ago)
- The great niece of Al Lovass of Al's Bar
- The (presumed) son of Orlando Paske, the memorable one-armed Principal of Fern Hill School

## HERE AND NOW

**GOODBYE TO ANITA:** St. Louis Park High School lost a beloved family member this April when Anita Silber Deikel passed away at age 94. Anita was hired as a hall monitor at the school in 1971, a time when students were blatantly smoking inside the school. This feisty lady took on the task of at least trying to contain the activity to certain bathrooms, then to an outside smoking area, then off campus entirely. Despite this duty to enforce the rules, students loved her and she provided a smile or advice or a big kiss with her bright red lipstick if it was your birthday. She ruled the halls for 30 years, and will be fondly remembered by thousands of students.

**PRINCIPAL WAINIO:** Another loss to the Park school community was Richard L. Wainio, who passed away on March 19, 2014, at age 85. Mr. Wainio was a swimming coach, Assistant High School Principal from 1969 to 1977, and Principal from 1977 to 1987.

**TIPPI CORRECTION:** Conn LeGeros wrote to say that actress Tippi Hedren didn't go to Southwest High School as reported in the last *Re-Echo*, but to his alma mater, West High. He remembers that she was "skinny and pretty and nuts about me." Tom O'Meara, another West High classmate, also wrote with the correction, and when told about Conn's comments, he responded that "Conn is still a dreamer!" Tom also said that the Class of 1948 has annual reunions and that Tippi has hosted three of them at her Big Cat ranch in California.

**TUCKER'S TREEHOUSE** has taken a tumble. The famous seven-story structure suffered a setback when an April Fool's storm broke off a big branch. Builder Mark Tucker is ruminating the road to repairs – the treehouse hasn't been tapped for tours for a long time. The TV Show Treehouse Masters has been notified. See pictures and more at [www.slphistory.org/history/tuckerstreehouse.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/tuckerstreehouse.asp)

**CLASS REUNIONS:** We strive to post all class reunions on our website; if you have any to report, please contact us at [history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org) The link is [www.slphistory.org/about/reunions.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/about/reunions.asp) Thanks!

**HISTORIC SITE TO GO:** Mn/DOT is replacing the Minnetonka Blvd. bridge in conjunction with the widening of Highway 100, and that means that the Holiday station has to go. Many may remember the site as Cliff's or Jack Reed's Drive In ([www.slphistory.org/history/mtka5408.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/mtka5408.asp)) or Roger's Gas Station ([www.slphistory.org/history/mtka5430.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/mtka5430.asp)). It's amazing how many people are sentimental about Roger's! Holiday closed on March 31.

**VERNON AVE.:** Speaking of victims of Highway 100 expansion, our Highway 100/Vernon Ave. web page now features photos of many more buildings, past and present. Most of the houses on the west side of the highway south of Excelsior Blvd. are pictured, and there are some from the east side. If you lived in a house that was carted away or demolished and have photos, please let us know! The web page is [www.slphistory.org/history/vernonave.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/vernonave.asp)

**DONATIONS** received this quarter include many wonderful articles and artifacts from our buddy Manny Camilon and ace researcher Mark Toretsky. We also received a bundle of plat maps from John Karwacki of mfra Engineering Company.

**THE RE-ECHO** wants to reach as many people as possible, but if you want to get off of the mailing list or if you'd like to receive it via email instead of by hard copy, please shoot us an email to [history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org) Thanks!

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

**YOU ARE INVITED!** to come to the meetings of the St. Louis Park Historical Society. We have a tremendous amount to do and not enough people to help, so we welcome everyone who is interested in Park history. Our meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 pm; the May meeting is at Lenox and summer meetings are in the Depot at 37<sup>th</sup> and Brunswick. Come flex your history muscles!

**BUNNY'S** is the site of the next get-together organized by the Flashbacks of St. Louis Park Facebook folks. The date is May 31 at 7 pm – show your love for the Park and meet those people you've come to know through Facebook! Even if you're not on Facebook, come and meet these folks who remember growing up in the Park so fondly.

**DEPOT HOURS:** Each summer Historical Society volunteers open the Milwaukee Road Depot for the public to come and see this 1887 historic building. Hours this summer will not only include Saturdays from 1 to 4 pm, but we've added one Wednesday evening from 7 to 8:30 pm each month for those who can't make it on Saturdays. Come and visit us to do research, see some artifacts, or just talk Park history. The Depot is located at 37<sup>th</sup> and Brunswick Ave.

The schedule is:

- June 4, 7, (not on the 14<sup>th</sup> because of Parktacular), 21, 28
- July 2, 5, 12, 19, 26
- August 6, 9, 16, 23, 30
- September 3, 6, 13

**THE PARKTACULAR PARADE** is June 14 starting at noon. Why not march with us? We could all dress up in historic costumes – it would be fun! If it's hot you could be Tarzan, or if it's cold, Nanook of the North – not that we actually had ape men or Eskimos in St. Louis Park... Not sure this idea will fly with the SLP HS Board, but check our website to see. At any rate we'll also be at the Promote Yourself trade show from 2 to 6 pm with a tent set up in Wolfe Park, so come by and see some of our artifacts and chat about Park history – we'd love to see you! See all the activities at [www.parktacular.org](http://www.parktacular.org)

**THE YOU BETCHA FESTIVAL** will be on July 26 this year, at the West End. Unfortunately there will not be a Minnesota Legends concert as there was last year, but a Minnesota Acoustic Legends concert will be held at the Town Green in Maple Grove on July 28 - a rare opportunity to see some of Minnesota's best musicians, past and present.

**SALUTE TO THE MUSIC OF BOB DYLAN** is again coming to the Veterans' Amphitheater in Wolfe Park on Saturday, August 9 starting at 6:30 pm. Come early to get a good seat – it fills up fast! If you can't make it on Saturday, the show will also be presented in Maple Grove on Wednesday, August 6. This is a tremendous show, and some year Bob may actually show up! Donations are accepted for the Guitars for Vets Program; see [www.guitars4vets.org/](http://www.guitars4vets.org/)

**PINS FOR PARKINSONS:** SLP business history researcher Mark Toretzky is the organizer of this fundraiser for the Park Nicollet Struthers Parkinson's Center. The event takes place on August 17 from noon to 4 pm at Tuttle's, 107 Shady Oak Road in Hopkins. For more information go to [www.pinsforparkinsons.org](http://www.pinsforparkinsons.org)

The Re-Echo  
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The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to collect, preserve, and disseminate the history of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The archives of the Society are located in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37<sup>th</sup> and Brunswick) and at the Lenox Community Center (6715 Minnetonka Blvd.). Office hours at the Lenox site are Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment.

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