



# RE-ECHO

## A NEW ERA

There are so many new developments to report, where to begin? We're entering into a new era for the Historical Society, and the future looks bright!

### MEET OUR NEW BOARD!

At our Annual Meeting on September 2<sup>nd</sup> we held elections for an unprecedented number of board openings, and now we have no less than seven new board members! Here's our entire board, with new additions denoted with an asterisk:

#### OFFICERS:

- President Ted Ekkers is a Marketing executive at Target; he and his family live in the Minikahda Vista neighborhood (see his letter on Page 3).\*
- Vice President Bonnie Burton's family has deep roots in the Park: her great-grandfather, Robert Johnson, built many houses here and ran a family Rock Garden on Excelsior Blvd. in the 1930s! Her background is in municipal finance and real estate, and she is a competitive ballroom dancer.\*
- Secretary Claudia Johnston-Madison has a long history of civic service, as a member of the Planning Commission and co-chair of the Minikahda Vista neighborhood steering committee.\*
- Henry Solmer is in his third year as Treasurer and provides us with wonderful service!

#### TRUSTEES:

- Sue Ainsworth has been a Trustee for several years and coordinated the move of our office from Lenox to Dakota (see Page 2). Sue is also a local artist.
- Jeanne Andersen has been a Trustee for 12 years and concentrates on writing and research for our website and the *Re-Echo*. She grew up in Brookside and graduated from Park in 1975.
- Bob Jorvig, at 94, is our go-to guy for information on the early history of the Park! His career was in urban redevelopment in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Jorvig Park is named after his father, Torval Jorvig, a long-time member of the Village Council.
- Dale Lapakko graduated from Park High in 1964 and has recently retired from 40 years as an international sales manager for three different companies.\*
- Paul Linnee was born and raised in the Park, and has a long list of relatives from the Park, including a Justice of the Peace and our own Bob Jorvig. He has a police background and is an expert on 911 systems. Paul is also a 1964 graduate.\*
- Jeff Liss went to Park schools K-12, graduating in 1968. He has been a copywriter/producer in the advertising industry and a teacher. Jeff is also an award-winning photographer.
- John Olson has been a member of the Historical Society since he was a teenager! He recently served as President for the past 12 years, and his particular interest is in railroads.
- Jim Robbins recently retired from the insurance industry. He is particularly interested in Park schools, which he attended K-12.

## **WE HAVE MOVED!!**

Due to renovations at Lenox Community Center, our eleven-year tenure there has come to an end. In response to our plight, Society member Curt Rahman stepped up and offered us a wonderful office space at an extremely reasonable rent! We are very excited about our new home, which is located at

### **3546 Dakota Ave. So., Suite C**

It's a beautiful space overlooking Highway 7, just west of the Central Community Center and a stone's throw from Historic Walker Street. We actually have our own door (which we didn't have at Lenox), and very nice restrooms (which we certainly don't have at the Depot!). The building is available to us anytime, days, nights, and weekends, which is another advantage over Lenox. One drawback is that the office is on the second floor, and there is no elevator; we explored the possibility of installing a chair lift, but it isn't feasible. But for now, this is an exciting new opportunity, and we thank Curt for his generosity. We also owe many thanks to the School District for hosting us these many years. For a map and photos of the new space, see our website at [www.slphistory.org/about/dakotamove.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/about/dakotamove.asp)

## **ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORY CENTER?**

As excited as we are about our new office, we are hoping that it is just temporary as we search for a site for a bona fide museum. We would need at least 4,000 square feet, all on the ground level, with adequate parking and in an area of the city that is reasonably central. There are 90 boxes of records that the City is holding for us, waiting for the time that we have room for them. In them are photos of every house that existed, taken in 1954 and 1960! Nordic Ware is storing one of the Al's Bar signs for us, and the Depot is full of artifacts that are packed away, waiting for the day they can be displayed.

Our dream location would also have enough space to host special events. In the past we have held Ice Cream Socials at the Depot, but they have been challenging without the benefit of running water! They were also totally dependent on nice weather, as the Depot can only hold so many people at a time. To have a facility where we could host presentations, parties, and fundraisers would indeed be a dream come true!

In the past we have worked with the City's Parks and Rec Department to formulate a plan to build a building, but it turned out to be too expensive and did not meet our needs. There is actually a perfect, historic building now on the market, but unless someone has recently won the lottery and can come up with \$350,000 to buy it and another \$250,000 to renovate it, it will likely slip through our fingers. Actually, funds to renovate a historic building may not be too difficult to find, but grants do not generally cover the purchase of bricks and mortar.

One of the tasks of our Board will be to launch a long-range fundraising campaign that will allow us to obtain a History Center that will serve as a place where Park residents can come to do research, a destination for tourists, and a place where those of us who grew up in this – the most interesting of all the suburbs – can come to share their memories.

## **A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Greetings,

In September of this year I was given the opportunity to serve as the new President of the St. Louis Park Historical Society for the next three-year term. I am writing to introduce myself, share an exciting development, and ask you to support the Society in its work.

My wife and I moved to the Fern Hill neighborhood almost ten years ago. We loved our 1930s home, the neighborhood, and this town and enjoyed discovering the history of all three. After nearly eight years in Fern Hill, we moved to the Minikahda Vista neighborhood and began learning the history of a new home and neighborhood, as well as that of the community school where our son is a first grader, and our daughter will be a kindergartner next fall.

The Society has also moved! When we lost the use of our former, free space in the Lenox Community Center, a generous Society member stepped forward and arranged for us to lease a new space at a very favorable rate. It will house our office and reference collection. We will also be able to host small events there. With the opportunities this move brings comes a challenge: our rent for this space represents a new expense, and one that the Society will struggle to support in future years with our current revenues. To that end, please think of us on November 13<sup>th</sup> on "Give to the Max" day, and as you plan your year-end giving, know that all contributions are tax deductible.

We also have plans to increase our programming and we hope to build our community and support. If you are not yet a member, I encourage you to join!

Your financial support is important, but we are also always in need of volunteers interested in donating their time and expertise. Right now, we are looking for members interested in helping build our website, writing for our website and our newsletter, managing a new social media presence, planning events, researching/writing grants and staffing the new office. Please reach out to me, or any board member, if you want to learn more about these opportunities.

The St. Louis Park Historical Society Board has several other new officers and trustees who have already provided valuable help and guidance as we plan for the Society's future. I am grateful to them, and to past Board members. We are grateful for your interest and support and hope to see you at a Society event soon!

Warmest regards,

Ted Ekkers  
President

## **NEW TRUSTEE NEEDED**

Due to a resignation, there is still one opening for a Trustee on our Board. This would be for a two-year term. Duties of Trustees can be found in our Bylaws, which are on our website at [www.slphistory.org/about/bylaws.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/about/bylaws.asp). If you are interested in joining us, please fill out the application form, also on our website at [www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org). Applications are due by November 7.

# DONATIONS

*We've had so many great donations coming in – thanks so much to everyone who has given St. Louis Park-related items to the Historical Society. Remember, your trash could be our treasure, so if in doubt, don't throw it out! Give us a call and we'll be glad to relieve you of your relics!*

Bruce Andersen donated four Homecoming buttons and a PARK button of his sister's from the Class of 1961. We've got quite a collection of buttons going, and could use a volunteer to inventory them.

Kirk Brown of Minnesota Rubber found some copies of the 1959 city zoning ordinance and sent them along. Minnesota Rubber started out in a storefront in the Walker Building, grew into a huge plant where the Village in the Park townhouses now stand, and is now part of a global company.

Donald Arthur brought in a wonderful photo of the SLP Village Band from 1904, mounted in glass.

William Daly's father took a drawing class years ago from Park artist and sculptor Evelyn Raymond, and William donated a drawing that Miss Raymond had given his father.

Margit Detchons sent in school photos from Brookside and Park Knoll; Class of 1968 graduation programs; Echo newspapers from 1966-68, and a confirmation photo from Union Congregational Church from 1965.

Peter Georgas donated a poster from a school play performed in 1947!

Mrs. Laura Hanks gave us items from her husband, Mayor Lyle Hanks, including documents regarding Tucker's Treehouse and a photo of the 1992 groundbreaking of a Park Nicollet building.

Charles Hutchinson parted with his Class of 1948 reunion books from 1996 and 2008.

James Kaplan sent in a 1963 Homecoming button: Tucka Tonka Team Away!

Paul Linnee donated two homecoming buttons; a Class of 1964 20-year reunion book; four issues of the *Echo*, 1963-64; and a newspaper article about Cris Gears. Paul also found us a truckload of free furniture for our new office!

Bette Danielson, on behalf of NordicWare, came to our rescue once again and provided storage for the

furniture Paul found for us, holding it until moving day at the end of October. What would we do without Nordic Ware and Bette?

Faith Schway, Miss St. Louis Park 1970, is the daughter of Rosalie Kiperstin, who wrote for the St. Louis Park Sun in the 1960s. Faith allowed us to copy a book of articles that her mother had written for the paper in 1962.

Angela Nelson, who works at Central Community Center, came to Lenox with an amazing find: an Eliot School PTA Scrapbook from 1958-59! We have almost nothing from Eliot, and this was an especially elaborate scrapbook, so this was an incredible addition to the collection!

Julianne Renner, mindful of our furniture needs for our new office, found us a perfect office chair!

Lucille Thornsjo donated a Human Rights Award plaque that was presented to her and her husband Orly in 1999 for their work with Brian's fund. Read about Brian's Fund on our website at [www.slphistory.org/history/briansfund.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/briansfund.asp)

Mark Toretzky brings in new items almost every week! Included are photos he took of the Highway 100 bridges; articles on Knollwood Plaza; a map he made of the Cedar Lake Road & Louisiana Ave. businesses; and a Prayer Book from B'Nai Emet Synagogue.

Steve McCulloch of Linsk Flowers found some retirement programs for Mayor Lyle Hanks and School Superintendent Carl Holmstrom.

Vern Wigfield brought in three photos and a plat map of the Depot area.

And that Donor Extraordinaire, Manny Camilon, brought in a 1931 planning map; 1907 Brookside brochure, and the piece de resistance, the minutes of the Brookside Improvement Committee, 1914-1920, donated by Mrs. Shirley Bolmgren. Manny, what a guy!

## WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Opportunities for volunteers are legion: Please contact us if you are interested in participating in these or other projects with our Board:

- Inventory of our Artifacts
- Staffing expanded office hours
- Conducting oral interviews with Park seniors
- Preparing PowerPoint presentations on the Society and Park history
- Organizing Fundraising events
- Conducting research on Park families, places, or events

## MEET OUR REGULARS

You've met our Board members, but there's another group of regulars who stay behind the scenes to aid and abet the Society's work:

- **Rick Sewall** spends a lot of time with us just researching his family, which takes a lot of his time since there are a LOT of Sewalls in Park's history! Along the way he's picked up lots of Park history, as he comes to office hours almost every week and to the Depot during our Summer Saturday hours. Rick's specialty is looking at the backgrounds of photos and seeing things we've never seen before.
- **Emory Anderson** is our staff photographer, and has been taking pictures of the Park since the 1970s. You'll see his name on countless photos that have been posted to our website. Emory comes to office hours and takes pictures to post to Facebook, and people just love them! Best yet, they post their memories of people and places that in turn can be posted to our website.
- **Mark Toretsky** has infinite patience, and can look through microfilm for hours looking for ads from Park businesses. He also searches through old phone books, trying to pinpoint the dates that businesses came and went. Mark is also a volunteer for Parktacular, and shares mementos of each year's celebration.
- **Al Hartman** has become a regular at office hours whenever he can, sharing his encyclopedic knowledge of all things Park. He also came to the Depot this summer to leaf through old issues of the St. Louis Park Dispatch, taking pictures of interesting articles and posting them to Facebook. He specialized in articles about mailmen – appropriate because he's a letter carrier!
- **Julianne Renner**'s family goes back many generations in the Park, and she's been sharing information that you can't find in the newspaper, mostly from her mother, who graduated in the Class of 1943! Julie's also shared old photos, particularly of homes on Minnetonka Blvd., including a family home where Tucker's Treehouse is now.
- **Jeff Kleinbaum** is in the process of transferring some of our old VCR tapes to DVD, a tedious task since it has to be done in real time. Jeff also rescued bricks from the demolitions of Eliot School and Most Holy Trinity Church, and they are now cozily ensconced in our "Brick Box" with their cohorts from Park Knoll and Brookside Schools and the Cooper Theater.
- Former Board member **Don Schimmel** continues his project to document Park High basketball statistics, searching high and low for score sheets. Don makes sure the Society gets a Park High *Echowan* every year, and it's due to his efforts that we have nearly every one. (We're missing 1993, 1994, and 2005, by the way.)
- Former Secretary **Kathy Spence Johnson** has continued to enter items into the PastPerfect database, and was extremely helpful during our move to the Dakota office.
- **David Kopperl** is in the process of scanning our school photos, which include those of Brookside, Lenox, and Ethel Baston. David has provided this service for other historical societies and is greatly qualified, having worked for Kodak in Rochester, New York!
- Our teen student **Jesse** is facing a huge task: this summer we had hundreds of slides of our parks scanned, and Jesse is working to put them back in order and identify which scan goes with which slide. This could take awhile!

## **GIVE TO THE MAX ON NOVEMBER 13!!**

There are two ways to become a member or renew your membership. Included with this copy of the *Re-Echo* is a membership form that you can fill out and mail in with your check. Please be sure to send it to our mailing address, 3700 Monterey Drive, 55416. *We do not receive mail at the Dakota address.*

The other way to join or renew is online, through GiveMN. Conveniently, GiveMN's annual Give to the Max event is coming up on November 13. Non-profit organizations can receive bonuses if they exceed certain thresholds, and donors can receive prizes as well. To learn more about Give to the Max, see [givemn.org/gtmd2014](http://givemn.org/gtmd2014). And to donate to the St. Louis Park Historical Society, visit our page at [givemn.org/organization/St-Louis-Park-Historical-Society](http://givemn.org/organization/St-Louis-Park-Historical-Society) (there is also a link on our Home Page at [www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org)) Thank you in advance for your support for our work!



## **YOUR LAST RE-ECHO?**

We hate to see you go! But if you're not a current member of the St. Louis Park Historical Society, this is the last issue of the *Re-Echo* newsletter you will receive in the mail. We wish we could continue sending the *Re-Echo* to everyone who loves to read it – members and non-members alike. But rising costs have forced us to trim our mailing list and offer the newsletter as a benefit of membership with our organization. Join the St. Louis Park Historical society NOW, and you'll to continue to receive this fun and informative publication! Note that the *Re-Echo* is always posted to our website, and members can also request an email with the copy attached. Copies will continue to be available at City Hall, the St. Louis Park Library, Park Shores, TowerLight, and at our office at 3546 Dakota Ave., Suite C.

## **MEMBERSHIP CHANGES FOR 2015**

This is a critical time for the Society financially. For the first time we are now faced with the cost of moving and paying rent, and as always our only source of income comes from memberships. Therefore we find it necessary to raise the amount for dues. The rate for individuals is now \$25, and family memberships are \$35.

The good news is that we will be tracking dues in accordance with when they are paid instead of on a calendar basis, so if you pay in August, your membership won't be due again until the next August instead of January. Also, for a limited time, new members will also receive the book *Something in the Water: The Village of St. Louis Park, Minnesota 1945 and Earlier*. We will also be exploring other incentives for membership. And please note that your membership does not only provide us with much-needed income, but it demonstrates support for our organization that we can then show to the City and other potential funders.

## I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN... PARK!

It wouldn't be a *Re-Echo* without a tale from the past, and this one's a doozy! It's got it all: wealth, poverty, fire, funny zoning, little old ladies, The Pest House, and *Murder* - a perfect Halloween story.

It starts with an email the Society received from Jane Grunklee, who owns a house on 31<sup>st</sup> Street that was built in 1903. Seems the house next door, which was also 100+ years old, had been demolished and was being replaced by a 13-unit apartment building that was to be just feet from her house. Although there was probably nothing we could do, I accepted her invitation for a tour of the neighborhood.

Now, the first time I'd ever been to Manhattan Park was in 2000, taking photos of Park's 100+ year old houses. It took several tries to find it, as I kept ending up in Minneapolis. This micro-neighborhood consists three blocks: 31<sup>st</sup> Street between France and Inglewood Avenues, wedged between Highway 7 and the railroad tracks, within the city's Triangle neighborhood. The Manhattan Park subdivision was platted in 1887 by Theodore F. Curtis, who went on to build the Curtis Hotel downtown. For a time there was a tiny Manhattan Park School, built because Lincoln School was almost two miles away - a long walk in Minnesota winters. The notorious Pest House was only a block west, between Joppa and Lynn.

The neighborhood is a strange mixture of single family homes and small apartment complexes. Intrigued, I went to City Hall and looked through permits and inspections records for the buildings. (Unfortunately the tax records are in storage.) Patterns appeared. First, it seemed like many of the old houses had been occupied by the same families for decades, ending with an elderly widow who could no longer keep it in repair. When the widow died the house was in ruins and the decision was made to demolish. Starting in the 1960s, most of the homes were replaced by small apartment buildings. Three of them look exactly the same, but otherwise they vary greatly in appearance. How single family homes came to be replaced by apartments is a head-scratcher.

As for early residents, many of them worked at the Belco grain elevator, just south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street stretching along all three blocks. The Belco is probably most famous for its demise in a huge conflagration in 1977. Although there were rumors that the fire went out of control because Minneapolis and St. Louis Park equipment was not compatible, former Chief Luke Stemmer said that it was just a lack of water to the area. People lined up on Highway 7 to watch the grain burn for hours. An enormous, modern apartment complex sits at the Belco site today.

Another curiosity was that in the 1930s, three of the houses were owned by two people named Gilberson and Easthagen. On a whim I googled the names and found references to a murder in some out-of-town newspapers. A trip to the library revealed a huge scandal from 1944 that knocked Hitler off the front page! Turns out that Nellie Gilberson and Minnie Easthagen were two middle-aged Kindergarten teachers who lived together for 20 years in a house in Morningside. Minnie had a debilitating illness and Nellie was her caregiver. They had gone down to the Mayo Clinic, but before they saw the doctor there was a fight in their hotel room, and Nellie found that she had strangled her dear friend Minnie. She panicked, took a cab back to Minneapolis, told her doctor what happened, and he called the hotel in Rochester. Sure enough, there was a dead woman in the room. Nellie went on trial, was found not guilty by reason of insanity, and sent to the state hospital. There I lose track of her until she apparently died in 1962. I went to see their house, and the owners were outside so I told them the story. They thought it was pretty cool - as long as the murder didn't happen in the house!

There's much more about the tiny enclave of Manhattan Park, including pictures of all the buildings, on our website at [www.slphistory.org/history/manhattanpark.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/manhattanpark.asp)

*Jeanne Andersen*

The Re-Echo  
St. Louis Park Historical Society  
3700 Monterey Drive  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
TWIN CITIES MN  
Permit No. 30308

---

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to collect, preserve, and share the history of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. Our office is located at 3546 Dakota Ave. So., Suite C. Archives are stored in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37<sup>th</sup> and Brunswick). Office hours at the Dakota site are Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment.

Our mailing address is 3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Our Web Site is [www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org)

Our email address is [history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org)

President: Ted Ekkers	952-300-0081	<a href="mailto:tedekkers@hotmail.com">tedekkers@hotmail.com</a>
Vice President: Bonnie Burton	952-454-4620	<a href="mailto:bonnieburton@comcast.net">bonnieburton@comcast.net</a>
Secretary: Claudia Johnston-Madison	952-270-4481	<a href="mailto:claudiajohnston@comcast.net">claudiajohnston@comcast.net</a>
Treasurer: Henry Solmer	952-848-0340	<a href="mailto:hsolmer@comcast.net">hsolmer@comcast.net</a>
Trustee: Robert Jorvig	952-938-6559	<a href="mailto:rjorvig@comcast.net">rjorvig@comcast.net</a>
Trustee: Jeff Liss	612-710-5718	<a href="mailto:jeffreymiliss@gmail.com">jeffreymiliss@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Jim Robbins	612-816-7256	<a href="mailto:jamesprobbins@comcast.net">jamesprobbins@comcast.net</a>
Trustee: Dale Lapakko	952-212-5736	<a href="mailto:dlapakko@gmail.com">dlapakko@gmail.com</a>
Trustee: Paul Linnee	612-866-0206	<a href="mailto:paul911@aol.com">paul911@aol.com</a>
Trustee: Jeanne Andersen	612-396-6292	<a href="mailto:jeanneandersen@comcast.net">jeanneandersen@comcast.net</a>
Trustee: Sue Ainsworth	952-922-8394	<a href="mailto:Sha922@aol.com">Sha922@aol.com</a>
Trustee: John Olson	952-929-6156	<a href="mailto:jrocnr@juno.com">jrocnr@juno.com</a>

# ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

[history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org)  
[www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org)



## MEMBERSHIP AND GIVING FORM

I would like to become a member at the following level:

Individual Membership: \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership: \$35 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Benefactor: \$50 \_\_\_\_\_

Business Benefactor: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional amount (*please specify*) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal Member: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual membership benefits include:

- New members receive the book *Something in the Water: The Village of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, 1945 and Earlier*.
- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events and merchandise
- Newsletter and Society mailings

---

Send me the *Re-Echo* newsletter by regular mail \_\_\_\_\_ or electronically by E-mail \_\_\_\_\_.

Please contact me about volunteering with the St. Louis Park Historical Society: \_\_\_\_\_.

I have items I would like to donate to the St. Louis Park Historical Society: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Send this form with your check to:**

**St. Louis Park Historical Society  
3700 Monterey Drive  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-2671**