



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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HELP! WE NEED SOMEBODY!

The board members of the St. Louis Park Historical Society are extremely dedicated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of information about our city. We do our best to provide a service to the community through our Web site; newsletter; access to photos, yearbooks, and other materials; presentations to groups; research; and our many other projects. Unfortunately, there are only ten of us, and it seems like there are so many things we'd like to do but we just don't have enough time or manpower.

Many times people have asked how they can participate, and if you're one of them, here's your chance! If there's anything on this list that strikes your fancy, please contact us (contact info is on the back page) and we'll get you started. Thanks!

VIDEO TRANSFER: We have a number of VCR tapes that need to be transferred to DVD. Many of them are video yearbooks that have come from the High School, and we'd love to be able to post them to our Web site. The list is on our Web site at www.slphistory.org/resources/videoinventory3.pdf

AUDIO TRANSFER: While preparing his book *Something in the Water*, Don Swenson recorded his interviews with longtime residents on cassette tapes. Most of the interviewees, like Don himself, are gone now, but we still have their voices. If these could be made into mp3s we could post them to our Web site and people could hear these folks for themselves. Some editing may be required.

CITY PARK PHOTOS: Last year we put out a request for someone to take photos of all of our city parks, and Joanne Bongaarts came through, giving us both digital and prints of her tremendous photos. We need someone to simply mount the photos and place them in our photo albums. We'll supply the photo corners, paper, and page protectors.

WOODWORKING: We have an old wood and iron school desk that probably came from Lincoln School, and is very broken.

DISPLAYS: Often the suggestion is made that we use some of our artifacts to create displays in places around the city. If anyone is artistically inclined and has ideas of secure places to install displays, we could share some of our collection with the public.

PROGRAMMING/FUNDRAISING: Since our only cash comes from memberships, it would be great to increase our coffers so that we could preserve some of our artifacts and prepare for the new museum we hope to have someday. We've been approached by an appraisal company that has offered to hold an "Antiques Roadshow" kind of event for us. We'd need someone to coordinate this – find a place, set a date, work out the logistics, etc. - perfect for the event planner out there!

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HELP, CONTINUED

EBAY: There are some items in our collection that don't have a connection to St. Louis Park and could possibly be sold on ebay.

FAMILY RESEARCH: There are families that have been in the Park since before World War II, and we would love to know more about them. If yours is one and you've done research on your family, please share it with us! And if not, consider going online and finding out more about your family. We have names of other families we'd like to know more about, so if you like playing detective, this could be fun!

ORAL INTERVIEWS: Hand in hand with family research are interviews with longtime Park residents. It is important to do these before we lose these valuable sources of stories, memories, and information. We have a digital recorder that can be used to document these interviews.

BUSINESS RESEARCH: We are also interested in the history of the businesses in the Park, the older the better. It takes some perseverance to find the right person to talk to – perhaps you could start with a business you've worked for. We have lots of businesses on our Web site, but can always use more information and especially more photos. This goes double for those of you whose parents owned businesses in the Park in the past

ORGANIZATION HISTORIES: Are/were you a member of an organization? Look on our Web site or in our files at Lenox and see what we have, and if there's more to tell, find out the history of the organization. When was your Boy Scout Troop chartered? Who were the charter members of your Rotary Club? Were you in Y-Teens?

GRAPHICS: We could really use a professional-looking brochure that tells the story of what we do.

VIDEO PROGRAMS: The High School has a professional-grade TV studio just waiting to be used. Use our artifacts to create a program, do an on-air interview, write a play for the Harmony Theater kids to put on, make a "History of St. Louis Park" DVD that we can sell - use your imagination!

WALKING TOURS: One of our goals was to hold one walking tour each year, and we did one in the Elmwood neighborhood, but we need to do more. Do you know a lot about the history of your neighborhood? Get your neighbors together for a walkabout that traces the history of the area and notable residents. We can help.

GRANT WRITING: Legacy grant funds are available if we know how to apply for them. It would be ideal if we could get funding for a paid staff member! Do you have any experience in applying for grants?

MOSAIC RESCUE: When Brookside School was being made into condos, the developer gave the Historical Society the exclusive rights to remove the charming tile mosaics that were above each drinking fountain. This turned out to be very difficult, and many of them were broken or chipped in the process. They are stored in the Depot awaiting repair work, for anyone who wants to take this project on. Perhaps the one in the best shape (preferably the one with the train) can be restored and framed.

EYES AND EARS: Over the years we have taken point-in-time photos: Excelsior Blvd. in 2000 (fortunately before much of it was torn down), churches and synagogues in 2005, Minnetonka Blvd. in 2007, etc. These things change, though, and it would help us tremendously if people could keep an eye out for changes and send us pictures to put up on our Web site. They can be emailed to us at history@slphis.org.

Whew! That's a lot, but perhaps something strikes your fancy. St. Louis Park history is fascinating and fun, and you never know what you'll find. Thanks for any help you can give us.

THE BALLAD OF MYRT'S CAFÉ

For a very short time, the building that has been Beek's Pizza at Minnetonka Blvd. and Dakota for the last 56 years was a rowdy teen hangout in 1957. But let's back up.

Although the county says this building was built in 1940, a note on a city assessor's card gives the year 1894, which is much more tantalizing. Unfortunately, records prior to 1933 are very hard to come by.

What we do know is that from at least 1934 to the 1950s this has been a grocery store with a gas station, the latter at least until 1945. In 1934, the end of Prohibition, you could also get beer "on draught," a fine feature of a gas station, yes? In the 1950s it was Kent's Big 10 Groceries. Someone remembers that Park Drug Store was also at this location before it moved to the corner of Lake Street and Dakota, across from McDonald's and that you had to walk upstairs to enter. Inspection records from 1956 show that it was a dwelling and store, and the directory lists the Bee Line Diner.

On May 2, 1957, Truman and Myrtle Hedwall opened Myrt's Cafe. It was unusual in that it specifically welcomed teenagers; Mrs. Hedwall (wife of a Park fireman) said that "a jukebox, fountain service, and friendly atmosphere will make our place a wonderful place for Teen Agers to gather." The *Dispatch* opined that "It will be one of the few places in St. Louis Park – if not the only one - where youngsters will be welcome after the supper hour." At the Grand Opening, popular disc jockey Jack Thayer was on hand to sign autographs and hand out free records. A couple of weeks later an ad invited kids to bring their parents to Myrt's so they could see "where junior and miss spend their evenings." It added, "It really jumps with rock and roll, but rock and roll under control." In June kids were encouraged to bring their dads to Myrt's for Fathers' Day.

But in mid-June a huge brou-ha-ha emerged when a policeman told Councilman Gene Schadow that a highly elected official told the police to "lay off" enforcing laws at the teen hangout (re: drinking, smoking, curfew). In addition, scores of neighbors complained about the noise, fast driving, late hours, violence, drinking and general hijinks, including the impeding of traffic on Minnetonka Blvd. by kids jumping across on pogo sticks. 200 people signed a petition to close Myrt's, saying women were afraid to be on the street at night and they were afraid a riot might ensue.

The next week things cooled down, Schadow withdrew his charges as a misunderstanding by police, and some neighbors offered to help work things out. A letter to the editor from some teen customers defended their place, saying they had cleaned and fixed up the basement, rented the juke box, and created their own Board of Directors. They also said that they appreciated having a place "where we don't have to spend any money if we don't want to," which probably did not bode well for the economic viability of the place. And they alluded to another Park restaurant that received notoriety as a teen hangout last year that was shut down, and that if Myrt's was closed they'd just go somewhere else.

An August 1, 1957, article in the *Dispatch* said that Myrt's was remodeling to designate a cafe for teens in the basement and a restaurant for adults upstairs. Teens would require membership cards to enter. The new policy was said to eliminate many features which have caused some criticism in the past and provide for adequate supervision for the "rock and roll" group who prefer hamburgers. There was a large ad for Myrt's in the August 8, 1957, issue of the *Dispatch*, but that's the last mention of Myrt's in the *Dispatch*.

Meanwhile, Beek's Pizza was a local chain of sorts started by Charles Beekman in a converted fruit stand at 3836 Hiawatha Ave. in Minneapolis in April 1957. And although the awning on the St. Louis Park Beek's says "Since 1957," the first mention of Beek's in the *Dispatch* is a very large ad on July 3, 1958, touting the "new, exciting" Italian Garden with "ultra modern décor." There were pools and falls with tropical fish as well. From then on there was a small Beek's ad in the *Dispatch* every week.

So what happened between August 8, 1957, and July 3, 1958 at 6325 Minnetonka Blvd.? We'd love to hear from you 1957 teens and your memories of Myrt's!

SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The 2013 St. Louis Park High School Athletic Hall of Fame reception and dinner will be held on Thursday, September 12th at the Marriott Minneapolis West Hotel, 9960 Wayzata Boulevard in St. Louis Park. As in the past, Jeff Passolt, SLP Class of 1975 and Channel 9 anchor, is scheduled to be the MC for the ceremony. The public is invited to attend: Reservations should be made no later than Sept. 1st. A reservation form is available online at www.GoPark.Org and click on "General Info." Congratulations to this year's honorees!

Individual Honorees:

Gerry Brouwer (1963): Football, Basketball, Track
Ron Dachis (1967): Football, Track
Claire Goldstein Swanson (1995): Diving, Gymnastics, Synchronized Swimming
Frank Howard (1966): Football, Track
Roger Plantikow (1957): Basketball, Track
Bill Terriquez (1966): Football, Track
Steve Thompson (1967): Football, Wrestling, Track
Marc Trestman (1974): Football, Basketball, Baseball
Barb Gordon Williams (1989): Basketball, Soccer
Chris Wold (1982): Soccer, Basketball

Teams of Distinction:

1958 Boys State Champion Track Team
1986 Girls Class 2A State Championship Basketball Team

Lifetime Achievement Awards:

George Haun (1950) for his contributions to athletics generally as a SLP Parks and Playground Superintendent
Carole Banbury Schulman (1958) for her contributions to skating as a competitor and as a skating teacher and mentor

THIS 'N' THAT

BUNNY'S SIGN FOUND! The legend is that when Henry Aretz opened his tavern on Excelsior Blvd. at the end of Prohibition in 1934 he wanted to call it Aretz's Place, but when he went to buy a sign the sign maker talked him into buying a sign that he had messed up. Since the sign said Bunny's, that became the name of the bar. All this time we thought the erroneous sign was the one that was on the building in 2000 that said "Bunnys" - not Bunnies, not Bunny's, just Bunnys. Well, thanks to Eagle Eye Rick Sewall, we now have a photo that shows that the original sign was indeed shaped like a bunny! We were looking at a photo of something else, and Rick spotted the tiny bunny in the background. We've blown it up and posted it to the Bunny's page on our Web site at www.slphistory.org/history/bunnys.asp. This has increased our interest in the Aretz family, which may have actually lived in the building for awhile. Henry's son Harold also ran the Miracle Mile Liquor Store. If you are a member of the Aretz family, we'd love to talk to you!

THE BOYS (AND GIRLS) OF SUMMER: Discovery of a scrap book of clippings from the earliest days of Little League led to a project to document the various baseball teams through the years. Turns out there's Little League (Majors and Class A), Babe Ruth, Cubs, Pee Wee, Connie Mack, playground teams, softball (fast and slow pitch), not to mention town and American Legion teams! In a perfect world we'd have information and photos on all of those, but we'll take any and all info that comes our way. Our pitiful Web page is at www.slphistory.org/history/littleleague.asp. Baseball was incredibly popular, especially during the Baby Boom years when literally hundreds of kids played and even more were turned away for lack of facilities.

THE DOYLES OF ST. LOUIS PARK

Tom Mueller, a frequent contributor to the “Flashbacks of St. Louis Park” Facebook page, has shared the history of his mother’s family, the Doyles. Here are some highlights from this old Irish family.

Michael and Honora Doyle had 12 children, all born in St. Thomas, Le Sueur County, Minnesota. In 1909 the family moved to Minneapolis - Michael was apparently not cut out to be a farmer. Throughout the coming years, several members of the Doyle clan spent time in the Park. The sibling with the most connections to St. Louis Park was Neal:

Cornelius “Neal” Doyle was born in 1886 and came to Minneapolis with his family in 1909. In 1913 he joined the Minneapolis Fire Department, where he worked until 1951. In 1913 he married Mary “Mayme” Healow, and they lived in Minneapolis, where their first three children were born: Carol, Quentin, and Cyril. Sometime between 1923 and 1925 the family moved to 2612 Toledo Ave. in St. Louis Park. When Highway 100 was built in the 1930s the house had to be moved a bit to the east, but “they remained on practically the same property.” That house is now numbered 2616 Toledo. Neal and Mayme had three more children while in the Park: Beverly, Mary Lou, and Patricia.

Upon Neal’s retirement he became active at the VFW in St. Louis Park, which he loved. One great story starts with the time he was playing poker at the VFW with some of the carnies that had come to town for a fundraising carnival. Mayme awoke at 4am to find Neal missing and “walked in with ‘fire’ in her eye to match her red hair,” pulling Neal, son Cyril, and son-in-law Pete Mueller out of the club. The men were relieved – they were winning big and afraid to break up the game fearing retribution from the carnies. But even the tough guys were no match for Mayme. Neal died in 1958 and Mayme in 1971.

Just before World War II, Neal and Mayme’s daughter, Carol, and Neal’s brother, Leo, opened The Blossom Shop flower shop at 17th and Nicollet. When World War II came Leo and Carol went into war production in New Brighton and Neal and Mayme ran the shop until a buyer was found. Carol’s sister Beverly met husband-to-be Pete Mueller at the shop, which is good because now we have Tom Mueller! Pete served in World War II and in 1946 the young family lived in veterans’ housing at 3700 Highway 100, now the site of Burlington Coat Factory. Tom has shared rare photos of the Quonset huts used for temporary housing, which are posted at www.slphistory.org/history/veteranshousing.asp Pete was a member of the St. Louis Park Fire Department. Beverly and Pete’s children are Peter J., Thomas, Katherine, and Barbara, and their home was on Cambridge Ave. The Mueller family has strong, fond memories of growing up in the Park.

THIS ‘N’ THAT

PARKITES IN THE CIVIL WAR: In his history of St. Louis Park (see www.slphistory.org), Norman Thomas mentioned several men with connections to the Park who had served in the Civil War. The list was sent to Wayne Jorgenson, the author of the new book *Every Man Did His Duty; Pictures and Stories of the Men of the First Minnesota*. Mr. Jorgenson generously researched the names and provided us with information about the men. A new Web page has been posted at www.slphistory.org/history/civilwar.asp Since several of the men were from the Pratt family, that led to research that can be found at www.slphistory.org/history/prattfamily.asp Census records show that there were many, many Pratts in what would become the Park in 1865, but many seem to have moved away fairly early. Olivia Pratt was married to Joseph Hamilton, the Village’s first Mayor, but she died in 1864, long before the Village was incorporated in 1886.

HOLIDAYS IN THE PARK: The SLPHS has agreed to participate with neighboring historical societies, including Fridley and Richfield, in a holiday-themed “crawl” in which each group decorates a space using artifacts from a different decade. St. Louis Park will be using the 1970s as our theme. The details have yet to be determined, but we are looking forward to creating a nostalgic atmosphere for people to enjoy. If you have any vintage decorations to lend, let us know. And keep an eye on our Web site for more information.

WISH LIST

At the risk of asking for too much in this issue, here is a rundown of the materials we need to round out the collection. Specific inventories are on our Web site as indicated below.

SCHOOL PICTURES: We were very fortunate to get all of the class photos from Brookside, Ethel Baston, and Lenox when they closed, but no others; Park Knoll, Eliot, Fern Hill, Park Hill, Oak Hill are all missing. The folks on Flashbacks have been posting their photos, which is great! If you have photos from any of these schools, we would love to have scans of them, preferably at 300 dpi.

ECHOWANS: Thanks to some phenomenal donation activity, we have almost every *Echowan*! The only ones missing are: 1933 and 1935 (which may not have been produced in those years), 1943, 1982, 1993, and 1994. If you're looking to downsize and contribute to a good cause, consider the Society to preserve your yearbook for you. We can always use duplicates, too.

ECHOS: Our collection of *Echo* newspapers has really grown! The ones in the collection are posted on our Web site at slphistory.org/history/echoinventory5-13.pdf

PRIVATE SCHOOLS: It is important not to forget the city's private schools in our collection, which are now woefully underrepresented. It is particularly important that the records from Most Holy Trinity don't get lost. The Office of Archives and Records of the Archdiocese says: "We do have a few things from Most Holy Trinity, such as parish histories, some photos, including those priests who have served the parish, but for the most part the records and pictures have gone to Our Lady of Grace in Edina. Our policy is that the remaining parish records and artifacts should go to the parish in which they are merging. I would recommend that whoever is searching for records should either get in touch with the Archdiocese or Our Lady of Grace, Edina. From there we can scan or copy what we have." If anyone who went to Most Holy Trinity School is interested in collecting records for St. Louis Park to keep, this could be a good project.

PHONE BOOKS: These are hard to find, but here are the ones that we are missing. (Some of the same ones are missing in libraries all over town, so there's no guarantee all of them were issued.) 1943, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1960, 1988-89, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009-2010. Check Granny's attic!

MISS DOROTHY HENRY

Thanks to the quick thinking of neighbor Frank Motzko, some of the priceless mementos of dancer Dorothy Henry were saved from the trash haulers within minutes of their demise. Miss Henry and her son, John Stafford, Jr., had been living at 4200 Yosemite Ave. and both passed away within a short time of each other.

Dorothy got her start at age five at a Musical Misses Show Benefit at the Orpheum Theater in Minneapolis, where she performed a ballet number. She joined the Kiddie Review at the State Theater and was spotted by a New York producer. At 13 she was taking lessons in Chicago, and met up with Jack DeWinter aka Jack Stafford, a vaudeville dancer from Australia who had come to America in 1913. He was looking for a new partner and teamed up with Dorothy. She married Stafford at age 16 – her new husband was 20 years older. In her elaborate costumes, with her mink-covered dog Pierre, she performed all over the world, including the Palladium in London and in South Africa.

After earning dance instructor credentials in Chicago in the '40s she returned to Minneapolis to teach "ballet, tap, acrobatic, baton, and dramatic art; also health, carriage, and deportment" at her studio at 26-1/2 West Lake Street. She eventually opened several other branches. In 1958 and '59 Dorothy danced 5 miles on her toes on a treadmill mounted atop a float in the Aquatennial parade – with her dog Toto. She taught at her St. Louis Park home studio until age 90, and died in 2010 at age 98. We were able to save over 200 photos of her students, some recordings, awards, and also some artifacts from her son, who was a well-respected jazz drummer.

DONATIONS

The Historical Society is extremely grateful for all of the generous donations we have received since the last *Re-Echo*. This has been a phenomenal response and we can't wait to get our own museum so we can display these – and so many of our other artifacts – so that everyone can see them!

Constance Smith gave us her *Echowans* from 1996-98, in perfect condition.

Carolyn Charles, retired teacher and former *Echowan* advisor, gave us six *Echowans* and a bound volume containing three years of *Echos*.

Sharon Blair provided three *Echowans*, two years of *Echos*, articles about the triumphant 1962 Boys' Basketball tournament, and other mementos.

Mark Brothen came up with six *Echowans* and two Echowanes LP records. Richard Novak is working on translating the Echowanes to digital files so we can put them on our web site.

Lucille Thornsjo donated three *Echowans* that had belonged to her beloved son Brian, plus six buttons.

Reida Lazer-Chein donated six *Echowans*, including many we didn't have from the 2000s.

Anne Mueller really went above and beyond, donating an astounding 29 *Echowans*, many that she had inherited from Hattie Steinberg, journalism teacher and *Echowan* advisor for many years. They are even embossed with Hattie's name, which makes them extra special.

Todd Carlock mentioned on the "Flashbacks of St. Louis Park" Facebook page that he had bricks from Park Knoll Elementary School, and we persuaded him to send one to us – thanks, Todd! It will go with our collection that includes bricks from Brookside School and the Cooper Theater.

Carol Hartvigson is a descendant of the pioneering Hanke family. She paid us a visit and brought us a silver spoon connected with the 50th Anniversary of Christopher and Friedrika Hanke.

Mrs. Eunice Erickson gave us several items she collected as a teachers' aide at Eliot School.

Good friend Emory Anderson showed up at Lenox with a camera copy stand, which will come in handy at the Depot for taking pictures of oversized articles.

Tom Olson did it again – saw something we wanted on ebay and bought it for us! This time it was a very precious 1951 phone directory, in MINT condition!

Tom Mueller, a name everyone on Flashbacks knows, brought us a bunch of great items, including a 1909 railroad map, drivers' manual from Lydia Rogers, Parkettes poster he swiped in Germany in 1968 while in the Army, Color Ad Packaging Co. brochure with great photos, and items from Benilde. Tom also allowed us to copy his Doyle family history (see separate story).

Mark Toretsky continues to comb microfilm for business openings and closings, and gave us a needed 2006 phone directory.

Del Strandberg found some snapshots of Cronstrom's Heating and Air Conditioning on Excelsior Blvd., where he worked for 20 years.

Barb Reiss gave us an anniversary plate from Union Congregational Church.

Ruth Conley's father, Gerald J. Fenelon, was a custodian at Central Jr. High, and when he retired he was given a plaque and a door handle from the Central building. Ruth has donated them to us, plus letters to her father from Howard Buska and Stanley Wignes.

Robert Wilson, who grew up by Most Holy Trinity and who now lives in Thailand, paid us a visit and gave us a copy of his memoir, filled with great photos and stories.

And perhaps best for last, Mr. Emil Jakubic came by the Depot with the roller skates he bought at the Roller Garden in the late 1950s. They were in this wonderful metal case with the Roller Garden's name and address on them! So cool!

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 (37th 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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