



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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WALKING TOUR SCHEDULED

St. Louis Park is a collection of neighborhoods, and one of the oldest is called “Center” or “Elmwood:” west of Wooddale, south of Highway 7, east of the railroad tracks, and north of Excelsior Blvd. This area has a great number of the City’s oldest homes, including the remaining “Monitor” homes, built for executives of the old Monitor Drill Works of the 1890s. In conjunction with our Century Homes project, the St. Louis Park Historical Society is offering a walking tour of this historic neighborhood on Saturday, October 16, 2010.

Participants will meet at the Depot (37th and Brunswick Ave.) at 10:00 AM and walk through the neighborhood while Kathy Johnson of the Historical Society provides histories of many of the houses, including the house of Park’s first mayor, the Monitor houses, and the site of the building that served as Lincoln School and City Hall. The tour will end up back at the Depot.

The fee for participation in this tour is \$5, payable at the time the tour starts. There is a limit of 15 participants; to reserve your space, please call Kathy Johnson at 952-926-5040 or send her an email at drksj@msn.com.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

On August 10, the Board of the Historical Society met at the Pavak Museum of Broadcasting to begin the process of developing a comprehensive plan for the Society. We were very fortunate to have experienced nonprofit leader Laura Hillman in attendance, who led us through an exercise in which we identified our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. From that we crafted a Vision for the future of the Society:

- To be an integral partner with the City of St. Louis Park, local schools, community organizations, and the community at large, as we share the history of St. Louis Park, with an expanded active volunteers base and staff;
- To be housed in a facility conducive to the appropriate storage and exhibition of our permanent collection, as well as one that offers adequate space for programming and administration; and
- To be diversely funded through increased membership, grants, planned giving, contributions, and other funding sources.

Our next planning session is scheduled for Saturday, October 9, from 9 to noon. All members or others interested in the future of the St. Louis Park Historical Society are encouraged to come and participate as we identify the actions we must take to realize our Vision. The meeting will take place at 2914 Pennsylvania Ave. So.

THIS 'N' THAT

MEETING CHANGES: Please note these changes to our usual monthly meeting schedule. This year our meetings are scheduled for the Card Room (Room 109) at Lenox rather than the conference room to give us more room for visitors. Also, our monthly meeting in November has been moved from the first Tuesday (November 2) to the second Tuesday (November 9) due to Election Day. That meeting only is scheduled to take place in the basement. Other than that we will be on our regular first Tuesday schedule.

BEEHIVE PROJECT AWARD: The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota has awarded the City a 2010 Minnesota Preservation Award in the category of Education/Interpretation/Publication for St. Louis Park's Beehive project. Rick Beane and Rick Birno from the City traveled to the Winona County Historical Society on September 16 to accept the award. Congratulations!

COOPER THEATER CELEBRATION: The event at the new Cooper Irish Pub in the West End to celebrate its namesake, the Cooper Theater, on August 8, 2010 was a big success. About 50 people came, most of them former ticket takers, projectionists, and "usherettes" from the theater. Mike Varani, a former projectionist and "Keeper of the Flame," came with the log of all the films shown at the theater, and presented the Historical Society with a black brick from when the building was demolished in 1992. The SLP Historical Society provided table toppers with pictures of the theater (thanks to Steve Raymer for his photoshop artistry), and a book of pictures and articles. Thanks to organizer Niza Schear for a great event!

OTHER CINEMA NEWS: On September 5, aspiring filmmaker Hannah Shapiro, age 15, used the Depot for a scene in a film she is making about the Battle of Shiloh during the Civil War. She shot a group of friends (in costume, naturally) buying tickets at our ticket window. And although the Depot wasn't technically built until 1887, it was an "awesome" location according to our young auteur.

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS LIVE: On August 21, the Wolfe Park Amphitheater welcomed members of the band that backed songs on Bob Dylan's seminal album, "Blood on the Tracks" for a free concert. Two of the many featured musicians were Parkites Matt Fink and Dan Israel. The Amphitheater was literally standing room only, with about 2,500 attending. Original "BOTT" musician Kevin Odegard was the organizer and leader of the band.

BROWN AND WILLIAMS FAMILIES: Our inquiry about the whereabouts of Carol Brown brought results from Don Kruse, Beverly Lippka, Keith Meland, and Jan Bartel. Jan put us on to Mary (Williams) McElmurry, who we were thrilled to find, as she is a member of the legendary Williams family of old St. Louis Park. Mary's husband Robert was one of only two St. Louis Park firefighters (with Arnold Johnson) who lost their lives in the line of duty, at the Pizza House fire of 1971. We're hoping Mary will look through the file of letters that Stoge Williams wrote to Don Swenson and dig out some good stories only a real oldtimer would know.

GIGANTIC FLAG REDUX: The huge flag we mentioned that we found in the Depot last time is even older than we thought – it only has 44 stars on it, dating it from 1890 to 1896. And it really is gigantic, measuring 22 ft. by 13 ft. This is definitely bigger than anything you'll see flying over Perkins or a car dealer – or even a military fort. What could be the explanation??

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF HISTORY: Diane Sannes, a member of "The Brooklyns" (Center and Park) Historical Society, has been organizing monthly events for members of local suburban historical societies. The September program featured Donald J. Omodt, Hennepin County Sheriff from 1967 to 1994. Sheriff Omodt is doing an in-depth study of all the men who have served in that office, with the aim to write a book. He says there are some errors on our web page, so we're looking forward to hearing from him!

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Dr. Robert Erickson, social studies teacher at Central Jr. High, donated Central yearbooks from 1970 to the last one in 1980. He also donated two SLP Jr. High (formerly Westwood) yearbooks from 1983 and '87. In addition, he gave us a DVD of a Central staff reunion from 1990 and a homemade Central pennant. He told us that Central staff still keep in touch and keep the spirit of the school alive!

Roger J. "Ole" Olson worked for the Milwaukee Road, much of the time based in our Depot, for 39 years. He maintained the automatic train signals from Cedar Ave. in Mpls. to Hopkins from 1951 to 1991. He donated two items to the Historical Society: one was an Edison battery jar – a glass jar with a metal apparatus inside in which he poured water and caustic soda making a battery. About 12 of these would be put around each crossing signal for power. Mr. Olson also donated a special lamp that his successor, Milton Reeves, made for him at his retirement. It is made from a relay from a crossing signal, circa 1935-1940. The lamp has a switch that turns on two tiny crossing flashers!

What a surprise to hear from Myron C. Martin, grandson of Myron R. Martin, founder of the Martin Manufacturing Co., which made an engine-driven corn grinder from 1902 to 1925. He had found a large painting of the plant, which was located at the

present site of the Newport on Seven apartments, at 7400 Highway 7. He gave us a news article and invitation to the groundbreaking of the complex. He also had copies of a biography of his grandfather, written by his uncle in 1927. The Martin plant burned down in 1925 and was moved to Anoka. But the market for the grinder evaporated after farmers no longer had to grind their own corn. The company had been printing a newsletter, the Gristogram, and based on that went into printing until 1960. Myron C. also gave us a city map from 1917 that indicates street lights and fire districts. This may have belonged to his father, Wayne P. Martin, who was Mayor of St. Louis Park from 1921 to 1925. Not surprisingly, the street lights were concentrated along Excelsior Blvd., Lake Street, Minnetonka Blvd. east of Dakota, and in the Elmwood and Brookside neighborhoods.

William Roberts sent us a copy of the book of the 50th Anniversary Reunion of the Class of 1940, which took place in 1990. He said that the class has met every year since their 55th, and just had their 70th reunion this summer.

Steve Steuck provided us with pictures of the common area of the new Ellipse on Excelsior, which was designed with a beehive motif to reflect one of the Park's most distinctive landmarks.

CENTURY PLAQUES AWARDED

To date the St. Louis Park Historical Society has awarded three Century House plaques to the owners of houses that are at least 100 years old:

7504 Edgebrook is a so-called "Walker House," built in 1890 by T.B. Walker. It is in original condition, with its "front" door on the side, as they were built for some reason. Owner Barbara Addington was awarded her plaque at our meeting on September 7, 2010.

4939 Brookside was built in 1910. It is owned by Scott and Winnie Crosbie, who held an open house to show it off on August 1. About 100 people came for tours, and admission fees were donated to the Historical Society. Refreshments were donated by Byerly's.

5800 Cambridge was built in 1892 and is owned by Nancy and Richard Menzel. It was built by Luther "Deacon" Thomson. Nancy has written a piece about Thomson and her home that can be seen on our web site at slphistory.org/history/thomsonluther.asp.

To see if your house is at least 100 years old or to find out how to apply for a plaque, see our web site at slphistory.org/about/centuryhouse.asp.

WHO WE ARE

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 Mondays and Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment. Our mailing address is:
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Our email address is
history@slphistory.org.

We do not have a central phone number, but you may contact a member of our Board:

President: John Olson. 952-929-6156
jrocnr@juno.com
Vice President: Robert Jorvig. 952-938-6553
rjorvig@comcast.net
Secretary: Kathy Johnson. 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Treasurer: Megan Crosby. 952-933-1399
mcrosby@mrmf.org
Trustee: Barbara Reiss. 952-830-9676
Trustee: Don Schimmel. 952-890-7107
donaldkschimmel@comcast.net
Trustee: Faye Ross. 952-929-7423
fross@braunintertec.com
Trustee: Doug Johnson. 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Trustee: Jeanne Andersen. 612-396-6292
jeanneandersen@comcast.net

ABOUT THE RE-ECHO

The Re-Echo is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The Re-Echo was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of St. Louis Park High School since 1917.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The Re-Echo couldn't be produced without the help of many people, especially the gang that our Barb Reiss recruits to fold and prepare 800+ copies for mailing. Special thanks go to regulars Ruth Thorne, Barb Stallman, Betti Jean Hahn, and Del Strandberg. Thanks also to Reg Dunlap at the City, who works his magic to turn the publication into a pdf that we can email.

JOIN US!

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the Re-Echo. You don't have to be a member to receive the Re-Echo, but we need new members, especially active ones. Meetings are at 7pm on the first Tuesday of the month, and are open to all. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.
