



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

Volume 11 No. 1

Issue No. 44

JEWISH MIGRATION TO ST. LOUIS PARK

In the years immediately following World War II, the Jewish community of the city of Minneapolis was looking for a place to go in order to leave what was termed “the capitol of anti-Semitism in the United States” by author Carey McWilliams. How and why did they choose St. Louis Park? Researcher Jeff Norman and the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest are working on a project to document the post-World War II migration of the Jewish community from (primarily north) Minneapolis to St. Louis Park. Jeff has done a great deal of research and conducted many interviews with key people who were around during that time. One such interview was with Jeffrey Fine, son of Adolph Fine, who built many homes, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings (including Texa-Tonka Shopping Center) during those boom years. Jeffrey Fine says that his father built homes in St. Louis Park because he was a builder and there was a demand for them, and it was just a coincidence that he was Jewish. As a child, Jeffrey said he was never aware of any anti-Semitism in the Park. He says the Village was very accommodating and cooperative to all builders during that time.

So why did the Jewish community pick St. Louis Park over other suburbs to settle in? Perhaps it was just that cooperative attitude. From the very beginning, Park has had a welcoming attitude. One example is the commercial development along Excelsior and Minnetonka Boulevards. Shopping centers, gas stations, restaurants and bars were patronized by people from neighboring suburbs that didn't allow them. While there are examples of anti-Semitism and racism in early deed restrictions, after WWII Park became the home of many synagogues and two thriving Catholic churches. See our web page on Race, Creed, and Color at www.slphistory.org/history/racecreedcolor.asp

Another compelling reason was posited in an interview with former City Planning Director Bill Thibault. He pointed out that much of St. Louis Park was already platted and ready for development. The Lenox and Park Manor subdivisions had been platted in 1913, and had over 400 and 600 lots respectively, mostly undeveloped. While other suburbs still had mostly farmland, Park was ready, willing, and able to build houses right away.

If you have any insights into this topic that you would like to share with Jeff, feel free to contact him at Jeffnorman@sharedground.org Also see our web page on Jewish Migration at www.slphistory.org/history/jewishmigration.asp

GOOGLE YOUR RELATIVES!

Traffic on our Web Mail has been tremendous! People are searching for their ancestors on the internet and finding them on our web site. Some of them have provided valuable information that we've been able to add to our site. Here are some of the descendants of prominent Parkites we've heard from and some corresponding pages from our web site:

Joseph Hamilton: Gary Lundquist is the grandson of Joseph Hamilton's youngest child, Pearl, and filled us in on some family history. He and his cousin would like to hear from any descendants of Hamilton's other children. Hamilton was Park's first Mayor and an incorporator of the Village. www.slphistory.org/history/hamiltonjoe.asp

William and Edwin Martin: These brothers were both Mayors of the Park. William's son Paul Martin contacted us with information about his family. www.slphistory.org/history/martinwilliam.asp

Herbert Carleton was a Village councilman at the turn of the last century, as well as an insurance agent, realtor, and landlord. One of his descendants is working on a family history and is looking for any of his correspondence. www.slphistory.org/history/carletonherbert.asp

Kleve Flakne was Mayor in 1933, at the time when most of Park's street names were changed. Flakne's son Gary sent us a wonderful letter that tells of his father's professional and political life. www.slphistory.org/history/flaknekleve.asp

Alfred Hay owned the St. Louis Park Radio Cab Co. His daughter found him on our web site, and also found her grandmother, who operated Nonie's Chow Mein out of a gas station on Excelsior Blvd. for a short time. We hope she writes back with more information about them. www.slphistory.org/history/eb4825.asp

The Shaft-Pierce Shoe Co. goes all the way back to 1892. We heard from a descendant of one of its co-founders, but were unable to tell her any more than what was on our web site, which came from Norman Thomas's manuscript from 1952. We hope she writes back with more as well. <http://www.slphistory.org/history/earlybusiness.asp>

YELLOWSTONE TRAIL 100th ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Yellowstone Trail Association, which was headquartered in Minneapolis. The Trail began with 25 miles of road suitable for automobiles in South Dakota. It kept expanding, eventually reaching Yellowstone Park. Encouraged, founder J.W. Parmley of Ipswich, SD and his associates proposed "a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound." The Association did not build roads, but lobbied government entities for "good roads." Businesses in small towns along the way raised funds to improve their roads. As far as we can tell from a 1919 brochure published by the Association, the trail did run along Excelsior Blvd. through St. Louis Park.

The route was marked by yellow stones or black and yellow signs with the official circle and arrow of the Association. It was part of a system of colored markings on telegraph poles that was used before highway signs became common. Hopkins reports yellow-striped telegraph poles running through town, and presumably St. Louis Park had the same markings. To get on the Yellowstone trail, one took the Green trail to Lake and Hennepin and picked up the Yellow trail to Excelsior, Waconia, Granite Falls, Yellowstone Park, and Seattle. It was declared one of four military roads during WWI. For more information, see www.yellowstonetrail.org.

THIS 'N' THAT

WHERE WAS OAK HILL SCHOOL? We should know this, of course, but which corner of Walker and Quebec was the site of Oak Hill School? The houses at the northwest and southeast corners were built in 1951 and 1947, so they couldn't have been it. It could have been the northeast corner, which is now Walker Field. Or perhaps it was the southwest corner, where a series of duplexes were built in 1976. Actually, we don't know exactly when the school was demolished, except that it was 1974 or later.

www.slphistory.org/history/oakhillschool.asp

STREET NAMES: We have beefed up our web page on street names with all we know about how names were chosen and when they were changed. Our thanks to Gary Flakne, son of Mayor Kleve Flakne, who was on the committee to change the Village's street names en masse in 1933. Now we know that Joppa and Zarthan had to do with the Mayor's Masonic affiliation! If you know of any other stories or can solve any mysteries, please let us know. www.slphistory.org/history/streetnames.asp

WEB SITE NEWS: At the instigation of our best friend Rick Birno of the city's Parks and Rec. Department, the Historical Society's web site has been moved from a private host to the city's web space. This will ensure that it's safe (backed up every night) and will save us money in hosting fees. The site will look the same and we still retain exclusive control over content. Thanks to Rick, IT guru Clint Pires, and Justin at LOGIS for their support.

HOWLEY'S SNACK SHOP: Hey, you kids of the '50s, do you remember a place across from the old high school called Howley's Snack Shop? In 1952 it was heavily advertised in the *Dispatch* with cartoons of "Kilroy, Jr." The next we know of it is in 1956, when it was the H&H Café. Does anyone have any more information or stories about this place?

MORE CENTURY HOUSES POSTED: A little late, but we have now posted Park's houses that were built in 1912 to our web site at www.slphistory.org/history/oldestbuildings.asp If you own one of these houses (or one of the older ones), information about our Century Plaque program is located at www.slphistory.org/about/CenturyHouse.asp We would love to see more houses with plaques that recognize the historic nature of these homes.

BUHLER CORP.? While adding info to the web site from a 1971 list of businesses printed in the *Sun*, we came across the Buhler Corp., located at 8925 Wayzata Blvd. First, there is no such address, and second, if there was it would be well into Golden Valley! We would sluff it off as a mistake except that it was also mentioned in a similar list in 1964. Also, it had a whopping 775 employees, so it must have been a major company (it made food processing equipment). Peter May was the Executive VP. Was this company really in St. Louis Park? If so, where??

ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORY PLAY IS ON LINE: The kids from the Harmony Theatre Company and School have reenacted the play "A Journey Through Time: St. Louis Park" that they performed at the 125th Anniversary Celebration held last October. City Community TV staff taped the play in the High School's TV studio, and Scott Smith did a phenomenal job of post-production. The play is available on line at <http://vimeo.com/36176501> We shared the link with Gary Lundquist, and he said he thought his great-grandfather Joseph Hamilton would have enjoyed it very much!

ROBIN HOOD FLOUR: Anyone living in the Park from 1949 to 1968 can't forget the ancient (built in 1893) grain elevator off of Highway 100 that had a huge Robin Hood Flour advertisement painted on it. It was such an icon that the community leaders patterned its summer celebration on the theme for five years. Keith Meland has written up a history of International Milling, which owned the elevator during that time. We have posted Keith's piece at www.slphistory.org/history/intlmillingmeland.asp

THIS 'N' THAT, Continued

OAK HILL-PARK KNOLL PTA: Thanks to Betty Pickle for the donation of materials from the Oak Hill-Park Knoll PTA. Due to her foresight, we now have the minute book for the years 1952 (when Park Knoll was built) until 1963. She also saved the PTA scrapbook from the 1960-61 school year, which she made. The materials tell volumes about what the boom years were like; the PTA had almost 1,000 members, and Park Knoll alone had almost 700 kids in 1960. Like all PTAs in the Park in those years, they held carnivals and talent shows, heard speakers on civil defense and juvenile delinquency, and bought Christmas trees for all the classrooms. Even the yearly budget was presented with skits and costumes. The SLP Historical Society has similar scrapbooks for some schools but not others. If you know of any of these materials and would like us to conserve them for you, please let us know. www.slphistory.org/history/OakHillParkKnollPTA.asp

LIETZKE THE BAKER: There are several redevelopment projects going on around the Park this spring, and one of them involves a property on Minnetonka Blvd. just east of Ensign Ave. on Cobblecrest Lake. The house was built in 1936, we think by/for Louis R. and Louise Liezke. The 1930 census shows he was the proprietor of a bakery. He died in 1954, but there was a Clarence Lietzke who owned the Lietzke Bakery at the Westwood Shopping Center from 1964 to about 1984. Are there any Lietzke relatives out there with more information about this family? Louis and Louise's house was torn down this year to make way for six new homes. We have pictures of the house at www.slphistory.org/history/mtka8900-1020.asp

SWEDE PAINTER MYSTERY SOLVED: In a previous issue, we asked what the "Swede painter" slogan was that Fred G. Anderson used. Our City inspections department friend Manny Camilon consulted with Bill MacMillan, who worked there for quite a while: "The phrase 'Nobody knows more about paint than a Swede painter' was used through the mid 1970s. When FGA was bought out or incorporated with another company, the phrase was frowned upon by administration and was replaced with the phrase 'Hug a Swede' until the early 1980s." Thanks for clearing that up, Manny and Bill!

CHRISTY RELATIVES: Mary Lou Dennisson has found some advertising artifacts from C. Ed Christy's gas station, which was located at Wooddale and Lake Street, and she would like to give them to the Christy family. If you are a Christy descendant, please contact us and we'll get you connected.

POST OFFICE PUZZLERS: This is driving us crazy - exactly where was the Post Office that Ed Christy built in 1952? The address was 3425 Dakota and it is variously described as being on Dakota, Hamilton Ave., one block from Lake Street, and simply "behind the gas station." Is the building still there? The address doesn't compute today and the only other building on the block (the former Ibberson building) was built in 1958. How long was it there? Did the Post Office that opened on Wooddale Ave. in 1956 replace it or did they operate at the same time? Also, does anyone know the date that the Louisiana Ave. Post Office opened? The plaque on the building just says 1966. www.slphistory.org/history/postoffice.asp

SHOPPING CENTERS: At the risk of sounding like a broken record, thanks to Mark Toretzky for his continuing research into the history of the Westwood, Texa-Tonka, and Knollwood Shopping Centers. He has been scouring back issues of the *St. Louis Park Dispatch* and *Sun* newspapers for ads that list names of stores. Especially valuable are those that announce "Grand Openings" and "Going out of Business Sales," which enable us to place dates that the stores operated. Anyone remember the Red Key Restaurant? It was kind of an Olde English fast food place owned by Red Owl, located where the TCF Bank at Knollwood is now. It opened in 1970. And what about the Del Farm Food Store? It succeeded the National Food Store at Knollwood in 1968 – even its emblem looked the same as National's.

PASSAGES

The St. Louis Park Historical Society extends its condolences to the family of Barbara Jorvig, who passed away in February. At her service, her grandchildren eloquently spoke of a vibrant, artistic, and athletic woman who skied, rollerbladed, and played tennis with them. Our Bob is 91 years young and looking forward to riding his recumbent bike this summer!

We also say goodbye to long time member John Billman, who passed away on March 16. John owned the Park Funeral Home, which was started by his father Joe in 1940. John's friendly face graced the cover of the St. Louis Park Directory from the 1950s through the '80s. He was extraordinarily active in civic affairs and organizations, including the Rotary, Lions, American Legion, VFW, Shriners, Masons, Jaycees, and Scottish Rite. John was 92.

ALL YEAR CLASS REUNION PLANNED FOR AUGUST

Save the Date – Saturday, August 25 – for Park High's All-Year Reunion, sponsored by the St. Louis Park Public Schools Foundation. This epic event will take place at the High School, and there are tons of activities planned:

- Areas for each class to meet. To host a table, contact Joanie Brinkman at brinkman.joan@gmail.com
- Affinity tables where you can connect with people you shared activities and sports with
- Tour of the High School
- Visit with former teachers, coaches, and staff
- Silent auction – to contribute an item to auction, contact Judy Siegel at judyslp@aol.com
- Family Fun Run
- Talent show with a pep fest, bands, skits, comedy routines, dance numbers, reenactments of class plays (to participate contact Janice Feinberg at janicef2@comcast.net)
- Food for purchase

All of this will take place from 11 am to 2 pm, and the cost is only \$10 per alum (family and friends are free). This will give you lots of time to have your own class reunion afterwards, so CALL YOUR CLASSMATES (and your kids) now to save the date! Hotel specials and restaurant discounts are being arranged: check the reunion web site at www.slppsf.org for updates. And be warned – the words to Park's rouser have been changed; the mysterious "we know you've got sand" is no more.

MINNETONKA BOULEVARD, PART II COMING SOON

Our program on the history of Minnetonka Blvd. from France Ave. to Highway 100 was produced for the city's employee brown bag series last year and has been shown on the community TV station, available on Comcast cable. Thanks to Mark Toretsky's research, we have much more information on the western section of the Boulevard, which has been added to our web site. This includes info on Cliff's Drive-in, the hoppin' corners at Dakota and Louisiana, and Texa-Tonka Shopping Center. We hope to have Part II ready for production this spring.

DONATIONS

Union Congregational Church donated a church pew that probably dates to 1941.

Lynn Wallin donated a set of Robin Hood Days programs – love to see those Men in Tights!

Mark Toretsky donated items from the 2011 Parktacular, Talmud Torah dedication materials, and a picture of the original sign from Sol's Superette.

Carol Hartvigsen sent us a class ring from 1927. It has the initials LHS for Lincoln High School and belonged to her mother, Helen Hanke Borgeson. It appears to be hand crafted and is probably made of real gold. Real gold it is! Carol also sent us her mother's commencement program and a portrait of her mother from that time. Carol has been a terrific supporter of the SLP Historical Society and has donated many items from the historic Hanke family over the years.

Rick Sewall gave us a photograph of his ancestors, whom he has been diligently researching. The Sewall family was a large and important family in the early days of the Park.

Marie (Smith) Walls was a third grade teacher at Brookside School from 1957-1962. Marie donated ceramic plates that were made at the closing of Brookside and Park Knoll schools. The plates feature signatures of the teachers of those schools. She also gave us a framed watercolor of the Creosote Plant that was painted by Opal Olson, the elementary art teacher for many years. These items had been owned by Marie's aunt, Mabel Beck, who had served as principal at Lenox.

Chris Olson came by with a copy of a photo of the 40th Lane neighbors taken at a block party in 1969. All of the people were identified, too! 40th Lane is a wonderful one-block street just southeast of Miracle Mile.

JIFFY CAR WASH

Spring is here and it's time to give your car a good spring cleaning. We learned from Park Update that it's greener to go to a car wash than wash suds down the gutter. Our oldest car wash is Jiffy Car Wash, located at 3740 Kipling (just off Excelsior Blvd.). Jiffy opened on December 29, 1952 and promised a high-tech wash in 3 minutes for \$1.50. It was only the second car wash of its kind in the Twin City area. Built for \$65,000, it was made of geolite block from the Cambridge Brick Co. in St. Louis Park. At its opening, Minikahda Oaks resident Lewis E. Bender was listed as part owner. Charles Wilson was the Vice President and foreman.

In 1955, a 40x50 ft. addition was constructed, giving it a 150-ft. conveyor chain – said to be the longest in the northwest. In 1961, members of the Bender family made up the board of directors except for James H. Campbell, Vice President and General Manager.

Jiffy's second owner, Willford M. Johnson, another local resident, bought it in 1972 and installed new equipment. When Johnson retired to North Carolina in 1994, it was owned by Bill Berg, who took out the Standard (Gordy's) gas pumps.

In 1997 it was owned by Jeff Schweisthal. David and Joanne Knutson purchased Jiffy Car Wash from Schweisthal on April 13, 2001.

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 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
Our email address is history@slphistory.org

President: John Olson. 952-929-6156
jrocnwr@juno.com
Vice President: Barbara Reiss. 952-830-9676
Secretary: Kathy Johnson. 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Treasurer: Henry Solmer, 952-848-0340
hsolmer@comcast.net
Trustee: Robert Jorvig. 952-938-6559
rjorvig@comcast.net
Trustee: Don Schimmel. 952-890-7107
donaldkschimmel@comcast.net
Trustee: Faye Ross. 952-929-7423
faye.ross@yahoo.com
Trustee: Doug Johnson. 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Trustee: Jeanne Andersen. 612-396-6292
jeanneandersen@comcast.net
Trustee: Sue Ainsworth. 952-922-8394
Sha922@aol.com
Trustee: Madison White

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

As you can see, in this edition we've done as much asking for information as giving it. Please feel free to contact us by email, phone, or snail mail if you have any insights or stories to tell! Also please note that until April 17, our office hours will be Thursdays from 1-3. Then they will return to our 10 to noon hours.

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.

**ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ONE-STOP-SHOPPING FORM**

Annual Individual/Family Membership: \$20

**Business and Individual Benefactor Member Donation:
\$50, \$75, \$100 or other amount**

Name(s): _____

Address _____

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During winter months from _____ **to** _____ **:**

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Check all that apply:

_____ **I wish to join/renew my membership;** enclosed is \$ _____
(membership is on a calendar year basis)

All membership donations are tax-deductible.

_____ **I wish to purchase a copy of *Something in the Water*; enclosed is \$20.**

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

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www.slphistory.org/reecho/default.asp

_____ **I do not wish to receive the Re-Echo.**

Mail to: St. Louis Park Historical Society
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-2671

Our email: history@slphistory.org

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