



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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IT'S THE CENSUS, SILLY!

Although I had searched the Census before (via Ancestry.com) for specific people, it finally occurred to me that I could browse through a Census of St. Louis Park page by page. And it was an eye opening experience to say the least. For those of you who have never done it, it is possible to see the actual handwritten pages that the Census taker filled out when going door to door, yielding a wealth of information. Residents' names, their relationships to one another, ages, places of birth, occupations – all of that and more is available to anyone with a computer and an Ancestry account. Here are just a few of the amazing things the Census reveals.

At the turn of the 20th Century, St. Louis Park was a boom town. [T.B. Walker](#) built factories, a streetcar to Minneapolis, the two-story Walker Building, and other infrastructure with the intent to create an industrial center wholly owned by him and his Syndicate. He built small houses for workers with families (referred to as [Walker Houses](#)); large houses, predominantly in the Elmwood neighborhood (then called Center); and hotels for single men. Walker's plans did not pan out, primarily because of the Depression of 1893.

However, what did happen is that [Monitor Drill](#), a company that made grain planters, came to town in 1892. Everything exploded. Although the company built some good-sized houses (called [Monitor Houses](#)), there were not enough places in town to house all of the workers needed to run this enormously successful business. Many of the people in the large homes took in boarders, and most of those boarders worked for Monitor Drill.

This is apparent in the Census as early as 1900. Although there is no location information, there are instances where people are listed as hotelkeepers or who have many boarders listed at their homes. The puzzle is to match up the names with the hotels and boarding houses for which we have information and/or photos:

www.slphistory.org/history/hotels.asp

- Henry Keller was listed as having ten boarders in 1900. The Kellers ran the [St. Louis Park Hotel](#) starting in 1899. It was across (what later became) Highway 7 from the Central school building.
- John and Mary Duff were listed with 18 boarders in 1900. They ran the [Belisle House](#), and/or the [Great Northern Hotel](#) (Brownlow and Lake Street).
- Horace and Catherine Haskall (from out East) were listed with 14 boarders in 1900. It appears that Horace's occupation was motor man.
- The [Commers House](#) (aka the Blind Pig) was not discernible in the 1900 Census, but there is a photo of it purportedly taken in 1901. It was removed to make way for the Dan Patch Railroad, which came through in about 1913. A Blind Pig was a place to get alcohol in this otherwise “dry” village.

Census, Continued

The hotels do not seem to be included in the 1910 census, but boarding houses were very common, with families taking in up to 10 men, overwhelmingly workers at Monitor Drill. Here are some unusual ones:

- Four houses had 7-10 residents each, housing men who had all come from Greece. Ted Ralles recalled that the railroads would come to Greece to recruit workers, but somehow they ended up at Monitor Drill.
- One house listed ten Belgians in residence.
- Andrew Pavey, possibly the first owner of [Freeland's Grocery](#), had 5 lodgers.
- The family of [Marie Hartmann](#) had six boarders in their Monitor house (now gone).
- John Hinkle had 23 boarders in 1910. The [Hinkle Hotel](#) is described as being in the same spot as the St. Louis Park Hotel - could they be one in the same?
- Lizzie Summerville, age 45 and from New Brunswick, was listed in the 1910 Census as a hotelkeeper having a whopping 56 boarders. Surely this was one of the big hotels, but which one?

Ben Brown, son-in-law of the Kellers, remembered that hotels, as well as private houses, were still primitive. The outhouse was in back, or you could use the "thunder mug" under your bed. Coal and wood-burning stoves were used for heating and cooking, and lighting was by kerosene lamps. Water had to be hand-pumped from an outside well. Each room had a pitcher and bowl for shaving, but Ben couldn't remember how the men took their (infrequent) baths.

Moving on to the 1920 Census, an unusual find is that there were two railroad bunk houses, one with 9 men and one with 6 men, all native Italians. They appear to have come to America at different times, and were section workers for the railroad. Could those bunk houses be the mysterious Skunk Houses at [6300 Cambridge](#)?

1930 was the first year that the Census collected street names and house numbers. The majority of the street names in St. Louis Park changed in 1933, but fortunately Lydia Rodgers provided us with a cross reference in the 1933 directory. The challenge is that many of the house numbers were also changed between then and now. Also, many of the houses that existed in the 1930s, particularly those in Elmwood, have been lost, many replaced in the 1950s. That neighborhood, in particular, had been built at the turn of the last century, and many 100+ year old homes remain. See our web page on Elmwood at www.slphistory.org/history/elmwoodneighborhood.asp for a street-by-street, house-by-house listing.

There were two things that stood out for me when scanning through the 1930 Census. First, in Elmwood the most prevalent employer was the Creosote Plant. Monitor Drill had moved to Hopkins in 1929, and the Creosote Plant had come to St. Louis Park in 1917. The other interesting thing was that almost none of the residents of Brookside worked at the Creosote Plant. Brooksidians tended to be clerks, and also included an architect, an insurance company owner, and an attorney – a female attorney at that. At that point in time, Brookside was almost considered its own separate town; e.g. 1922 ball scores were reported as Brookside vs. St. Louis Park (presumably Elmwood). Brooksidians took the 44th Street streetcar into downtown Minneapolis, while those in Elmwood took the Lake Street line. The area between the two neighborhoods wasn't platted until 1926, and most of those houses were built after World War II.

Regardless of which part of the Village you're studying, the challenge is to match up data from the Census, the directories, photographs, and city tax and permit records to get a feel for who the mainstay families of St. Louis Park were during its formative years and where they lived. There were many families that lived in the Park for decades. And in the 1930s, the Village of about 3,000 people all knew each other, worked with each other, and married each other's sisters. Some of their stories are included in Don Swenson's book *Something in the Water*, but there are many more stories buried in the documents and peoples' memories. *** **Volunteer Opportunity** *** We can supply family names if anyone wants to do some research on Park's early families.

ALL YEAR CLASS REUNION A HUGE SUCCESS!!

August 25 was the date of the much-anticipated All-Class Reunion, and it did not disappoint. Hundreds of Park grads from the 1930s up to the present gathered at Central and at the High School to find old friends, walk the old halls, and be kids again. The Historical Society had a table in the gym and we talked to many friends old and new. Thanks to Rick Sewall, who brought a scanner and scanned photos that people brought by. We accepted donations of artifacts (see Donations) and made contacts for future interviews. Meanwhile, 1974 Grad Sharon Isbin kicked off the Alumni Talent Show by playing three selections on the classical guitar. Another highlight was a lifesized photo of Anita Silbert, the High School hall monitor for decades. Anita was too frail to come, but appreciated the expression of love we all have for her. A GIGANTIC thanks to Joanie Brinkman, who spent the last 10 months planning the event and hoping that if she planned it, we will come! Over \$11,000 was raised for the St. Louis Park Public Schools Foundation (www.slppsf.org), which makes grants to teachers to fill in gaps in funding. Current Park students will receive books and other learning materials, and hundreds of Park grads were left with a precious new memory.

THIS 'N' THAT

KIDDIE SHOW: Back in June, Mark Johnson wondered if anyone remembered a Kiddie Review at the Park Theater. It was in August 1958 when Harold Field booked *Minneapolis Tribune* columnist Will Jones to emcee what was billed as a "kiddie revue," the first to be staged since 1931 when Field staged the original series of shows at the State Theater. For the '58 show, Field selected 11 children ages 10 to 14 from 160 applicants. 13-year-old ventriloquist Mark Johnson (Minneapolis) and his pal Rusty Hinges sang "Candy Man" Stan Freese (Edina) played "Hold That Tiger" on the tuba. Participants from St. Louis Park were singer Patty Feld, dancer Dean Rosen, acrobat Patty Tuttle, ballet dancer Judith Light, and pianist Marlene Sigal. The accompanist was the legendary [Jeanne Arland Peterson](#). See more at www.slphistory.org/history/parktheater.asp

BOMBS AWAY: Not a laughing matter then, but in the '50s and '60s some strange things happened in the name of Civil Defense. Instead of "duck and cover," school children huddled in hallways during drills, no doubt confusing the younger ones and scaring the daylights out of the older ones. Most extreme was when kids were marched to boxcars to practice for an evacuation. You could buy a bomb shelter at Dayton's. **Did you or anyone you know have a bomb shelter in St. Louis Park?** Read more on Civil Defense in the Park at www.slphistory.org/history/civildefense.asp

ANNEXATIONS: Did you know that St. Louis Park executed several "land grabs" in the '50s? Back then, if the owners of a piece of property in a township (in this case Minnetonka) petitioned to have their land annexed by a village or city (in this case St. Louis Park), the village or city could annex it without the approval of the township. One of those was Shelard Park, that node in the extreme northwest of the City. It turns out that the owners of that land wanted it annexed by the Park because they wanted to build the Oak Knoll Shopping Center at the site, and Minnetonka did not want to rezone it commercial. The annexation went through but the shopping center did not. Other than the Merry Hill Dog Kennel, Shelard was basically unoccupied until development in the early 1970s. Please contact us if you have more information on this. Our page on annexations and border changes is www.slphistory.org/history/annexations.asp

PARKS AND REC COMES THROUGH AGAIN: They may have called it housecleaning, but we call it a Bonanza! Rick Birno, our go-to guy at Parks and Rec, gave us a huge bin of photos and slides of the parks, some going back to the 1950s. Back in 2004, our previous go-to gal, Bridget Wynn Kienenberger, had given us a stash of photos and slides as well, in fear that they might be thrown out after she retired. It turns out that the two collections together provide us with a complete set of photos of the parks! The photos had to be taken out of their magnetic pages and remounted, but Bridget had carefully captioned each one, making it easy to identify and remount them. The photos end in about 1982. *** Volunteer Opportunity *** It would be great to get point-in-time photographs of the parks now. It would be a big job – the City lists 51 parks, not including all of the City's lakes. Our list of parks and public lakes is at www.slphistory.org/history/cityparks.asp *** Another Volunteer Opportunity *** Anyone game to take a look at and/or scan the slides? Hundreds, perhaps thousands of slides?

FLINTMOBILE COMES TO THE PARK?: Buried in the Parks & Rec stuff was this this fun item: In July 1986, the Flintstone family and their Flintmobile were scheduled to make appearances at Peter Hobart School and AAA Headquarters. Does anyone remember if this really happened?

THIS 'N' THAT

THANKS, MEMBERS!! We'd like to send out a big "Thank You" to all of our members who have supported us financially this year. Although you get no special perks from your membership (other than a tax deduction), you do it to show that you care about Park's history and want it to be collected and shared. With our web site, newsletter, office hours, and other services, we do our best with a small volunteer board to fulfill that mission. Membership is \$20 per calendar year. To join, send your check with a membership form, available at www.slphistory.org/about/default.asp under Become a Member. Thanks again!!

THE SLP MAGAZINE is on the streets! The free magazine launched its first issue in September. It is sent to residents of the Park on a rotating basis, but if you want to make sure you get every copy, sign up for a subscription at <http://slpmag.com/> It is free to Park residents and \$24/year to nonresidents. It contains information about places to go, things to see, restaurant reviews, and more. The publishers have asked the Historical Society to write a "Last Glance" column for the last page, providing a historical photo and brief description. Ideas for future Last Glances are welcome!

VAIL IN THE PARK: Mike Cloutier and his sister Judy Hoch came to see us at the Depot one Saturday, with pictures of the fabulous house their grandfather built at 37th and Sumter. Shoemaker John Kinsell had come from Poland, and somehow decided to build this large, flat-roofed clay tile home facing Highway 7 in the 1930s. See a photo of it being built at www.slphistory.org/history/sumter3647.asp Mike and Judy have fond memories of spending time there. In 1992 the house was purchased by State Representative Gloria Segal, who in turn gave it Vail Place for use as housing for the mentally ill. One of the residents started a fire in 1999 and sadly it had to be torn down. The site is now Vail in the Park, a seven unit permanent housing facility for the mentally ill.

TUNNEL VISION: We reported earlier that the notorious tunnel that was built to take school children under Highway 7 back in the 1930s was found and dug up by Mn/DOT when they built the Wooddale overpass. The ends had been blocked off by railroad ties, and after all the years underground, that creosote kept them in perfect condition. **Question: when was the tunnel blocked off?**

SPORTS FANS: Nominations are being sought for the 2013 St. Louis Park Athletic Hall of Fame. Athletes who have graduated from Park High in 2003 or before are eligible for consideration. For more information, contact Don Schimmel at 952-890-7107 or see www.gopark.org The link to the Hall of Fame is under General Info on the left.

AMANDA'S SHACK: Does anyone remember a woman named Amanda who lived in a small house on 25th between Lynn and Monterey back in the '50s? She reportedly dressed like a pioneer woman and may not have had running water.

OAK HILL MEMORIES: Bill Roberts and Earl Ames have been reminiscing about their boyhoods growing up in Oak Hill in the 1920s and '30s. They go so far back, they even predate Highway 7, much less Knollwood. That part of the Park was truly out in the country, and hunting was allowed west of Texas Ave. Earl's memoir is in the book *Something in the Water*, and you can read about Bill and his family at www.slphistory.org/history/robertsfamily.asp By the way, Bill came in and pointed out that the photos of Oak Hill School did indeed show two buildings – we just didn't see them. And in Marie Hartmann's notes, we find the date the school was demolished: August 28, 1975.

PARK'S EARLIEST JEWISH FAMILIES

One of the most interesting things that the Census revealed was the Park had at least two Jewish families as early as 1910 and two in 1920. The 1910 Census lists a Dworsky family. It is difficult to read the name of the father, but he was born in 1861 in Russia and came to the U.S. in 1890. He spoke Russian and Polish and worked at/owned a General Store. His wife Bertha spoke Russian and Yiddish. Also in 1910 was Morris Tunich, identified as Russian and speaking Yiddish, working as a dairy farmer.

In 1920, someone everyone knew was Louis Berkowitz. Louis owned a confectionary and grocery store, first in Hopkins and then on the SE corner of Minnetonka Blvd. and Salem Ave. Louis and his wife Marie were born in Romania and lived next to the store. The site of the store is now a car repair shop, but their house (built in 1912) is still there. The Berkowitz family lived in the Park into the 1940s.

Louis's daughter Dora married Maurice Silverman, who was born in Romania. In the 1920 Census, Maurice was listed as a District Court Clerk. In 1930 he was a Prohibition agent, and in 1940 he was an Investigator, Alcohol Tax Unit. The Silvermans lived at 2908 Salem, a house that was built in 1924 and is still standing. For more about these and other families, see www.slphistory.org/history/earlyjewishfamilies.asp

FLASHBACKS FRENZY (or, there goes my summer...)

In June, a Park grad named Gary Perna started a Facebook page with a simple title: "Flashbacks of St. Louis Park." He posted photos of the Park, past and present, and invited people to contribute their memories. Little did he know that almost 5,000 people would join in! Most of the photos he posted initially came from the SLP Historical Society web site, and many of those had just recently been contributed by Emory Anderson, who has been taking pictures of places around the Park since the '60s. We've tried to keep up with all the activity, gleaning information and photos to add to our web site. Also, we've posted some "mystery photos" (something we can't do in the *Re-Echo*) and the Facebook fans have helped to identify most of them.

One photo we haven't been able to nail down is that of what appears to be a street opening – since it shows a bunch of people cutting a ribbon in the middle of a street! A county road engineer is there, which might be a hint. A yard sign says "Elect Welter." The speed limit is 30. Someone thought the man in front was Mayor Lefler (1958-59). We're not sure where this picture even came from – a good guess would be from a stash the Department of Public Works gave us several years ago. You can view the photo at www.slphistory.org/history/mysteryphoto.asp The Flashbacks folks gave it their all, but to no avail. Please help!

One of the most popular postings to Flashbacks is a video contributed by Jeff Kleinbaum that he made of Sol Bukstein, who owned Sol's Superette, which used to be on Cedar Lake Road and Louisiana. In 1990, Jeff was soliciting greetings from local folks to his parents on the occasion of their wedding anniversary. He captured a minute of Sol giving his best wishes, complete with a prop herring and a signature song. The crowd went wild! Sol's was an institution for many Park Northsiders, and it was touching for them to see him again (Sol passed away in 1994). Jeff has generously allowed the Historical Society to post the video to our web site: just click on Sol's picture at www.slphistory.org/history/clr72407244.asp

DONATIONS

We received several donations at the All-School Reunion. Scott Coltrane surprised us with the gift of the 1905 Lincoln School class ring that belonged to his great aunt, Ruth Baston Waddell. This is a wonderful artifact, in perfect condition, and all the more special because it came from the Baston family.

www.slphistory.org/history/bastonfamily.asp

Earl Ames also showed up at the Reunion with goodies: Six *Echowans*, artifacts from his days in the Odd Fellows, a metal bicycle license from 1938, and a souvenir wallet from C. Ed Christy. Christy's gas station and sporting goods store was an institution at Lake St. and Wooddale.

Henry Liljequist gave us a Park High letter sweater and a DVD of the Class of 1943.

David Heim from Hennepin County gave us a set of 23 linen section maps. The maps had been scanned and were about to be tossed, and David went out of his way to make them available to local Historical Societies.

Anne Heller donated photos that had belonged to her uncle, Howard Williams, some almost 100 years old. The Williams family was legendary in Park history, and Anne has been a good friend to the Historical Society through the years.

www.slphistory.org/history/williamsfamily.asp

SCHOOL PHOTOS AND MORE

One of the best outcomes of the All-School Reunion was that the Historical Society was the recipient of 22 boards of pictures that had been made for a similar event in 1990. Most of them had been copied out of *Echowans* and gave a great overview of how high school changed over the decades. There were also photos of the elementary schools – these were undated, but were probably taken in the 1950s. They were rather faded, and three of them in particular were difficult to identify, so we left it up to the Flashbacks Facebook fans to decide. The three, Park Knoll, Fern Hill II, and Ethel Baston, were all built around the same time and had that same long, low profile. One perplexing thing was that one of the schools seemed to have a sort of dome on it, which nobody remembered. The consensus was that this was Park Knoll, and the dome was actually the top of the water tower nearby!

www.slphistory.org/history/parkknollschool.asp

One particular photo tops them all: an aerial of the Central building and environs that came from the 1954 *Echowan*. It shows the original section of Central that was built in 1914 at the western end of the property. Under the heading of Things We Should Know: **When was the 1914 building torn down? 1952? 1962?** It was replaced by the “new wing” which is now the home of Park Spanish Immersion. The photo can be found at www.slphistory.org/history/walkerstreet.asp

The aerial also clearly shows the old St. Louis Park Bank building that was directly west of Central, on Dakota and Walker. It was a long narrow building facing Walker Street. The bank didn't last long (1915-1919), but the building was used as a Post Office and “Pete the Greek” Ralles's restaurant. The building that is there now is a brick warehouse-y thing with one people door and 11 loading docks. It is now a maintenance building for the school district. Tax records indicate that it was built in 1952, but how can that compute? Of course, we don't know that the aerial was actually taken in 1954, just that it was in that year's *Echowan*. Did the bank building get torn down or is it somehow buried in the foundation of the brick building? See photos of the bank and the current building at www.slphistory.org/history/walker6400.asp

Yet another wonderful thing on the aerial photo is our would-be downtown, Walker Street, and in particular the Hamilton Building. We have very few photos of this building; it burned down in 1956 and was replaced by the Masonic Temple. But there it is, and it's huge! The Walker Building is still there, of course (both the two story and one story sections), but the buildings east of it don't look much like the buildings that are there now. Tax records indicate that most of the current buildings were built in about 1954. Pictures don't lie, but sometimes they don't tell the whole story either...

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:
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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 1916.

About This Issue

It's been a very busy – and fun! – summer, trying to keep up with Flashbacks, spending the wee hours with the Census, struggling to match people with places, and writing about Park history. I hope to do a little working, for pay, I'm afraid, so I won't be as active, but please feel free to call on me if you have memories to share or questions to ask. Jeanne Andersen

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*. Dues are \$20 per calendar year, tax deductible. 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.