



# RE-ECHO

*Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society*

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## PARK'S 125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION PLANNED FOR OCTOBER 16

The SLP Historical Society cordially invites you to the celebration of Park's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a gathering at the Wolfe Park Pavilion on Sunday, October 16. Plans are still in the works, but include food, music, and an entertaining program. Mark your calendar now! 1:00 to 4:00, with a program at around 2:00 at the Veterans Memorial Amphitheater, featuring not one but two Mayors. Watch our web site at [www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org) for details. All activities are free. Please come and celebrate with us!

### LENOX NEIGHBORHOOD AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*The following was prepared at the request of the Class of 1961 for their 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. Many of those who had attended Lenox Elementary School gathered for a tour of the school and lunch of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. See more on our web page at [www.slphistory.org/history/lenoxschool.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/lenoxschool.asp)*

The Lenox subdivision consists of 402 lots from Minnetonka Blvd. south, between Dakota and Louisiana Avenues. This is a huge area – the third biggest subdivision in the city where most are less than 100. It was platted in 1913 by Charles I. Fuller. Formerly known as “The Goodrich Home,” the land was initially purchased by George E. Goodrich when he moved to St. Louis Park by ox cart from Anoka in 1864. Like many of the Park's original settlers, George and wife Jemima were born in Maine. Purchase price at that time was \$10 per acre. The *Minneapolis Journal* reported that the subdivision was to contain 500 lots on 80 acres, and that if all went according to expectations, Minnetonka Blvd. would become a paved road.

Advertising from the 1920s tells us that a 40 ft. lot sold for \$350. The ad reads:

It is almost unbelievable, yet it's true! Perfect building sites. Many homes already built. Lenox faces right on Minnetonka Blvd, the main highway to Lake Minnetonka. Think of the future! Just a few minutes by auto from Lake Calhoun. Easily accessible. Just far enough out to enjoy low taxes. Here you can have your own yard and garden. Be your own landlord. Give the kiddies a proper place to romp and play, unmolested. Give your wife a “home of her own.” Cut down your living costs by raising your own garden products.

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## LENOX, Continued

Lenox Elementary School was built in 1925. At first, only three of the four original rooms were used.

Most of what we know about the early years of Lenox School comes from records of the PTA. The Lenox PTA was the first in the Park, starting on September 16, 1929 with 40 members. The group sponsored card parties, dances, and other fundraisers to provide the students and teachers with amenities that the school district couldn't afford. Members actually prepared hot lunches for students before the hot lunch program began; the cost was 2 cents. In the 1930s and '40s, the ladies canned fruits and vegetables for students' lunches. In 1947, 638 quarts of fruits and vegetables were canned by PTA mothers.

The school patrol boys were often mentioned as recipients of PTA funds. In 1937, the 12 boys received tickets to the Shrine Circus. In later years they received raincoats, mittens, and leggings.

In the '40s the PTA also sponsored the Bluebirds, Brownies, Boy Scouts, and Mohawks.

In 1946, 16 more classrooms were added to the school. Children attended Lincoln School while construction was underway. The school reopened in the fall of 1947.

1951 saw the first PTA Carnival, a popular fundraiser for many schools. Proceeds paid for 12 phonographs. The PTA also paid for pianos for the school. Clothing and toys were collected and sent to children in Korea.

In the years from 1954-1957, enrollment at Lenox surpassed 1,000 students as baby boomers overwhelmed the school system. During the '50s, no less than five new elementary schools were built in St. Louis Park: Fern Hill, Park Knoll, Ethel Baston, Aquila, and Cedar Manor. Peter Hobart and Susan Lindgren were built in 1967 and '68.

But the baby boom passed, and in the '70s the older schools started to close. Lenox was decommissioned as a school in 1972. It lay vacant for a time, and on September 27, 1979 it was reopened and dedicated as the home of the St. Louis Park Senior Center. It remains the property of the school district, which rents out parts of the building to businesses and organizations. For the past several years, the office of the St. Louis Park Historical Society has been located in the lounge area on the first floor.

## DEPOT MAKEOVER COMPLETE

Well, maybe not a complete makeover, but some wonderful improvements have been made to our old 1887 Milwaukee Road Depot. A beautiful new furnace has been installed that provides us not only with heat but air conditioning, which came in handy when we had our first meeting at the Depot on the 103 degree day. A ceiling was put in in the baggage room, along with additional and stylish lighting. Three walls were insulated and rotted boards were replaced. One of the baggage doors was made operational, and some new exterior paint spruced up the place. A historical moment occurred when workers uncovered a stash of whisky bottles in the area where the coal bin had been. The bottles, still covered with coal, had names like "Old Bison" Rye Whiskey and "Ten High" Straight Bourbon Whiskey. Perhaps the station agent liked to wet his whistle between trains? The work was done by the city, with \$3,880 contributed by the Historical Society. In order to have access, all of our boxes and artifacts had to be moved out, and when we moved them back we found things we had been looking for and things we didn't know we had! Thanks to the city, particularly Rick Birno, Rick Beane, and Don Drennan for coordinating this effort.

## AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT...

We owe a huge thanks to the City of St. Louis Park for so many things they do for the Historical Society. First and foremost is the use of the Depot, of course, which is city property in a city park. The city prints the *Re-Echo* for us, sends out special mailings, and allows us to use the Rec Center as our mailing address. They've provided us use of their freezer at our Ice Cream Socials, and produced programs to be shown on Community TV. They've allowed us access to all kinds of records, from the offices of the Tax Assessor, Permits and Inspections, and the City Clerk. We are so happy to have such a good working relationship with our city and appreciate all they do for us. Oh, and include that porta-potty at the Depot during the summer on the list!

## NEWS FROM SPACE

News about space, that is – space for the Historical Society. We are in dire need of a new building to consolidate our holdings, which are located at the Depot, Lenox, and at the homes of some of our board members. Our ability to acquire more artifacts, and even pictures and papers, is severely limited by our lack of space. Our dream is to build a new building at Jorvig Park, near the Depot. To that end, we appeared before the city's Parks and Recreation Commission with a copy of our Comprehensive Plan and a summary of our space needs. They recommended that we contact the school district to see if they had any room in their buildings that would meet our needs. The district responded that it did not have any suitable space. Our needs would include:

- At least 2,000 sq. ft., which would encompass space for displays, research and reference, meetings, storage, and programs
- Year-round climate control suitable for the preservation of our artifacts, especially our bound newspapers that date back to 1941
- 24/7 access, year-round. Our board members currently have keys to the Depot, but it is inaccessible in the winter.
- Parking for at least 2-3 cars during the day and more on evenings and weekends
- Cable or wi-fi access for our computer
- Accessible restroom facilities
- First floor accessibility
- Telephone capability
- Capacity to have U.S. mail delivered

Our Board members are all volunteers and none of us are knowledgeable about the world of real estate, so we would really appreciate some help with this effort. If anyone has any experience in conducting a capital campaign, we need you! Or, if you have other ideas about how we could obtain adequate space, please let us know. Call one of our Board members or email us at [history@slphistory.org](mailto:history@slphistory.org). Thanks!

## AL'S BAR: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

When Al's Bar was demolished, the developer of the Ellipse took the signs, hoping to use them in the new building. One was used, but the big brown ALS sign and two smaller neon signs languished in their yard until the developer decided that they needed to go. The Historical Society was contacted, but we had no place to store them. A call went out to two potential places: Nordic Ware, and the Belt Line Industrial Park. We are so gratified that both places *immediately* offered to store them for us. We are still working out the disposition of the signs, but are working to make sure that they are saved.

## THIS 'N' THAT

**PUZZLER:** Mary in Pine Island is trying to remember a slogan that Fred G. Anderson used for his paint and wallpaper shop. Something like “Nobody... like a Swede painter!” We’d love to hear from anyone in Anderson’s family or anyone who remembers this slogan. See our web page at <http://www.slphistory.org/history/andersenfredg.asp>.

**OUR NEW TREASURER:** In response to our call for a new treasurer, Mr. Henry Solmer stepped up and volunteered. Henry has been the treasurer of the Fern Hill neighborhood association and is recently retired from the Postal Service. He and his partner, Council member Susan Sanger, have been long-time members of the SLP Historical Society. Thanks, Henry, for your willingness to serve on our Board.

**ANNUAL MEETING:** Our Annual Meeting was held on September 6. At that meeting we enacted changes to our bylaws, most of which were to bring them up to date with the revised template provided by the Minnesota Historical Society. Other changes include a simplification of membership categories, and specific measures that would take place in the event the Society had to dissolve. The redlined and new versions of the bylaws are available on our web site at <http://www.slphistory.org/about/bylaws.asp>.

Also at our Annual Meeting we re-elected three Trustees for another three-year term. Thanks to Doug Johnson, Faye Ross, and Don Schimmel for agreeing to continue your dedicated participation on the Board.

**COLLECTIONS POLICY:** The Board has also revised its Collection Policy to conform with the template provided by MHS. The policy makes it clear that all items collected by the Society must have a clear nexus to the history of St. Louis Park. The policy is on our web site at <http://www.slphistory.org/about/default.asp>.

**ADDITIONS TO OUR WEB SITE:** In addition to the usual incremental additions to our web site, we have taken on the task of trying to name the stores at two shopping centers, as we have done for Miracle Mile and Westwood Shopping Center. Please look at our lists for the Texa-Tonka <http://www.slphistory.org/history/mtka8000.asp> and Knollwood <http://www.slphistory.org/history/knollwoodplaza.asp> shopping centers and let us know of any stores we’ve missed. Dates given are just the ones we know of – the stores may have been there before and/or after those dates.

**SPORTS HALL OF FAME:** The St. Louis Park Athletic Hall of Fame started in 2005 and inducts new athletes every other year. This year’s banquet will be on September 22 at the Doubletree, where 11 new names will be added. See the entire list at the bottom of our Sports page at <http://www.slphistory.org/history/sports2.asp>. Our Don Schimmel is a major organizer of this event.

**MINNETONKA BLVD. VIDEO:** The SLP Historical Society, the city’s CITE Program, and the Class of 1965 put their efforts together to produce a video about the history of the buildings on Minnetonka Blvd. east of Highway 100. Rollie Troup and Fred Anderson made the presentation to city employees, it was recorded by the city’s Community TV staff, and is now available for viewing on the web at [vimeo.com/25786777](http://vimeo.com/25786777). Rollie and Fred contributed their fond recollections of growing up on the Boulevard with enthusiasm and the program was well received. The history of the Boulevard west of Highway 100 will probably be ready early next year.

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

*The St. Louis Park Historical Society has no museum, only administrative space at Lenox and limited storage space at the Historic Depot. Until we find a suitable space to display donations, we will accept them as we have room to store them. We thank all donors for sharing their interesting information and artifacts.*

The Anoka County Historical Society sent us a copy of the book *The Story of the Suburbs in Anoka and Hennepin Counties*. The book is the product of a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage grant.

Our buddy Manny Camilon found some more cool stuff for us, including a Robin Hood Flour comic book and a matchbook from Ruby's Fine Foods. Anyone remember where that was? Hint: The Leaning Post.

Torah Academy kindly sent us a copy of their book *Torah Academy: Celebrating 65 Years*. The book is full of pictures, stories, and history about this important part of our cultural history.

Beverly Jean Brown Gaddy and her sister Mary Lou Brown Dennisson donated phonograph records of SLP High School Spring Concerts from 1954 and '56.

What a surprise to get a donation from England! Jonathan Brown found a postcard from the Ambassador Hotel in a book he had purchased and took the time and trouble to track us down and send it to us. Extraordinary!

Our friends at the school district gave us the two tea sets that they found when vacating Cedar Manor Elementary School. They had been purchased in 1957 by the PTA. A story about the tea sets was published in the *StarTribune* last year.

Judy Bartholome Burton donated her mother's programs from the Brookside (1939-1958) and Browndale (1958-1994) Garden Clubs. We now have records from three garden clubs.

Barbara Reiss gave us memorabilia from her father, Donald Fletcher, and her husband, attorney Herb Davis.

Tim Layeaux donated cookbooks and a double rosette and timbale iron from Nordic Ware.

Mark Toretzky gave us many of his personal items from Westwood Jr. High, sports memorabilia, a Party in the Park t-shirt, and copies of newspaper ads and articles about the North Side.

Not exactly a donation, but Joel Swanson came by with two Park Knoll yearbooks from the school's last two years that he let us photocopy.

Frequent contributor Keith Meland sent us a postcard from 1910 with an SLP post office cancellation and an envelope from 1897, also with an SLP cancellation. He also sent a photo of 4123 Brunswick taken in April 1957. That was the time that the house was owned by Andreas Papandreou, who was Prime Minister of Greece. His son George was born in Minneapolis and is the current Prime Minister of Greece.

Elbert Sutliff gave us an 8 x 10 of a men's fast pitch softball team from 1952-53. The team was sponsored by Jerry Longabaugh, and was runner up in the state championship. Members included Sutliff, Bud Malone and Police Officer Jim Dahl.

Eve Lee dropped off a picture of Miss Hazel L. Bradeen, who taught first grade at Lenox.

## 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 (37<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.slphistory.org)  
Our email address is [history@slphistory.org](mailto:history@slphistory.org)

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

We realize that this *Re-Echo* is peppered with web site links, but here's a Helpful Hint: if you read it online at [www.slphistory.org/reecho/default.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/reecho/default.asp), all the links are live and will take you right to the referenced part of our web site.

## 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.