



St. Louis Park Historical Society
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
www.slphistory.org
history@slphis.org
952-583-9893

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 13, 2016

SUMMARY: The St. Louis Park Historical Society (SLPHS) is hosting an Open House on Sunday, August 21st, from 1-4 pm at the Historic Milwaukee Road Depot, located at 37th Street and Brunswick Ave. (6210 W. 37th Street, St. Louis Park, MN 55416). Representatives from Metro Transit will also be on hand to share designs for the potential Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) route and station designs. This event will explore the past and future of passenger rail through St. Louis Park. Educational activities for adults and kids and light refreshments will be provided.

BACKGROUND:

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the railroad depot in any town in America was a central fixture of the community, and St. Louis Park was no different. With no roads to speak of, the residents of the Village depended on the railroads to get to Minneapolis or points west. The Depot of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (a/k/a Milwaukee Road) was built in 1887, the year after St. Louis Park was incorporated as a village. The Depot is said to be in the Eastlake style, named for Charles Lock Eastlake, an English architect and designer of furniture.

Passenger service ended in 1955 and the Depot was no longer needed by the Milwaukee Road. In 1971 the SLPHS was founded to preserve the Depot because of its significance to the Village's earliest years. The City bought the structure and, with the help of a Federal grant, had it moved to Jorvig Park. The building is one of two sites in St. Louis Park that are on the National Register of Historic Places, the other being the Nordic Ware tower.

St. Louis Park is unique because of its train history. The City itself was named after the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad, which ran parallel to the Milwaukee Road and is now the Cedar Lake Regional Trail. James J. Hill's Great Northern (now the BNSF) ran east-west through the North Side of the Park, and Marion Savage's Dan Patch (now CP Rail) runs north south. These lines were the lifeblood to small farming communities like St. Louis Park in the days before cars and trucks and highways.

An especially interesting development came in 1890, when wealthy lumberman T.B. Walker bought up 2,000 acres of the Village and replatted it, with specific areas for housing, commerce, and industry. The Industrial Circle was surrounded by railroad lines to ease the transport of raw materials and finished products. In 1891 Walker also built a streetcar line to Minneapolis. With four distinct train lines running through the city, train horns and crossing gate chimes have long been a staple city life.

And rail will continue to impact the city, as plans for the Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) are expected to once again bring passengers to and from Minneapolis and neighboring suburbs. The station proposed at Wooddale Ave. is nearly on the exact spot as the very first passenger depot in St. Louis Park. SWLRT continues to be debated in the legislature and its future is uncertain although significant development along the proposed rail line has already occurred and additional development is in planning stages. Wooddale specifically has car, bike and pedestrian traffic challenges that would be mitigated in part by the development of SWLRT.

Contact

Ted Ekkers

President, St. Louis Park Historical Society

952-300-0081

slphistory@gmail.com