

P1 / FEATURE ARTICLE

Love in Action: Learn more about the Park's most powerful pairs.

P2 / RECENT DONATIONS

Treasures from the vault came our way thanks to passage of the referendum and School District construction.

P5 / YOU'RE INVITED

Attend an upcoming board meeting or share an insight about your Park history.

P7 / MEMBERSHIP & GIVING

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REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

Collect. Preserve. Share.

Volume 17.1 / Spring 2018



POWER COUPLES OF ST. LOUIS PARK

BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

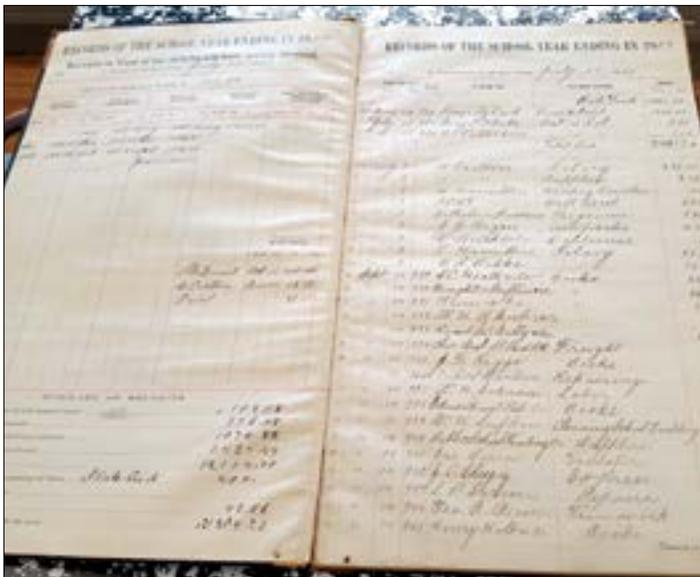
Since February is, among other things, the month when we celebrate love, why not look at some husbands and wives who have made a difference in the history of the Park? “Mom and Pop” operations were common in our city’s economic history; usually it’s “Pop” who makes the candy, sells the shoes, or butchers the meat, while “Mom” takes the orders, balances the accounts and handles the counter. But what

about couples who each take a unique role, whether it be in the same business or different endeavors? Let’s look at four key couples who have made important contributions to the history of the Park in these areas: food and entertainment, business, public administration and healthcare. We begin with Carl and Anna Reiss and the humble origins of their well-known restaurant.

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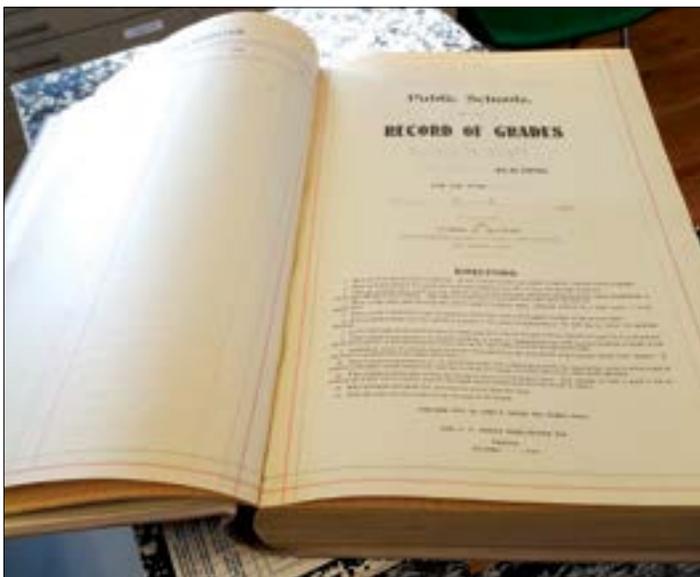
NEW TO OUR COLLECTION

As was made possible by the recently passed funding referendum, the St. Louis Park School District's office is being readied for construction to begin this summer. Their dust is our delight as we have become the caretakers of over ten large boxes of District records, artifacts and memorabilia—ranging from teachers' payroll records to principal's photo albums to the first school board minutes ever taken in the Village of St. Louis Park.



Here are memories of bygone days and milestones, captured in the Oak Hill and Park Knoll PTA scrapbooks.

For example, the district paid D.C. Heath & Co. \$24.80 for books in 1903.



Remember how teachers liked to remind you about your Permanent Record? These are from 1904.



We received five of these print blocks of St. Louis Park schools. Do you recognize these buildings? (Hold that thought – you may see these again as a mystery photo question!)

Several volunteers were on hand to begin the work of organizing and cataloging these items; certainly more help will be needed, so please contact us at history@slphis.org if you are interested in helping sort and list these treasures.

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings!

The past year was a record year of fundraising! Three marquee events and many individual donations have brought an additional \$24,000 to our Building Fund! Thank you to all who came out or otherwise supported this effort. We enjoyed a discussion with Thomas Friedman; an insightful evening with Lisa Napoli, author of a book about Joan Kroc and McDonald's; and we put the "fun" in fundraiser at Copperwing Distillery where we explored Prohibition and where to get a good drink in St. Louis Park through the years. When not planning these events, the Board was busy throughout the year trying to find a permanent home for the Historical Society. Because things have been so fluid, we have not provided updates about this journey along the way, but I want to share one now.

While we don't have any good news yet on our future home, we have had some productive discussions with our City leaders. About a year ago, the Walker Building, the oldest commercial building in St. Louis Park, went on the market. We spent the winter meeting with Council and staff to share the importance of the building and our interest in seeing it saved. There was a City Study Session in the spring at which Council expressed strong interest in seeing the building controlled by the City. Unfortunately, days after that session, a private business put an offer on the building. Over the summer, we assumed we had missed our opportunity, but this fall, we learned that the offer had fallen through. We then reconnected with City staff to see if they could assist in funding the purchase. As a result, there was another City Study Session in November where there was again interest in a solution that would result in City control of the building. Unfortunately, the building's owner accepted another offer from a different private business, and we expect this buyer to close on the building in February.

So we are in limbo again, but hopeful that a new business will take care of this wonderful building in its next chapter. The silver lining is the great dialogue we've had with a variety of City leaders, and the new energy felt around the entire Historic Walker-Lake area. The vision is to bring the area back to its origins as a hub for the next generation of civic and commercial leaders in St. Louis Park. If you live in St. Louis Park, one way you can help is to contact your Council member to express your understanding of the significance of the entire Walker-Lake area and ask that they support the Historical Society, the arts, and local business in that area.

With best wishes for the new year and Park pride,

Ted

CONNECT WITH US

Stop by: 3546 Dakota Ave. S., Suite C
St. Louis Park
Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.,
and by appointment

Call: 952-583-9893

Email: history@slphis.org

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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society collects, preserves and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today* is an official publication of the Society.

Editor

INGRID MOE

Writers

TED EKKERS

INGRID MOE

Contributing Writer

JEANNE ANDERSEN

Designer

LARA DUFRESNE

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CARL AND ANNA REISS

In 1925 Anna and Carl Reiss purchased what was known as the "Waiting Station," which was where the St. Louis Park streetcar turned around and went back to Minneapolis. The Waiting Station served many purposes: a confectionery, radio store, pool hall and gas station. The Reisses sold the property during the Depression, but repurchased it in 1937, expanding it to sell beer and food. Remarkably, it had no kitchen until 1940, so Anna cooked the food at home and somehow managed to transport it to the Waiting Station. Its proximity to the Creosote Plant made it a popular lunch stop, and Anna Reiss's cooking helped fuel the working men of the Park in those hard luck days. Eventually the building became a fancy family restaurant, known as Reiss's. Though Carl Reiss died in 1967, Anna remained involved as hostess up until her death in 1979.

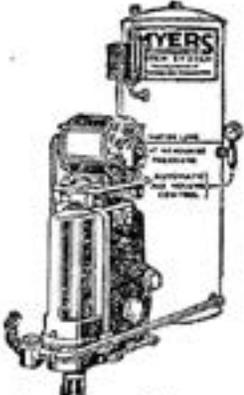


ED AND GERTRUDE RENNER

In the days before St. Louis Park could build a functioning water system, most homes had individual wells. Beginning in 1911, The Max Renner Well Company served the Park to accommodate this need. In 1933, Max's son Ed left the business to form his own: The E.H. Renner Well Company. Ed's sons Tom and Eddie took over the company in 1947, and Tom's twin sons now run the company in Elk River. Meanwhile, Ed's wife Gertrude was an active volunteer with the Community Fund during the Depression, becoming a paid director of relief efforts for Hennepin County in 1938. In 1944, she became City Clerk Joe Justad's Secretary. She worked for the City for over 35 years and walked to work every day. (Her grandson jokes that she referred to the walk as "uphill both ways.")

BISHOP AND LYDIA ROGERS

While not actually a Bishop, Bishop McClure Rogers was a sign painter by trade, a skill he learned from his father. A divorcé, he met and married fellow divorcée Lydia Rogers in 1925, and they moved to the Park. In 1933 the couple started publishing the Park's first directory. The project started when FDR wanted a list of the unemployed in preparation for the WPA. The Village chose the Rogers to take the census, and they went door-to-door gathering the information. Lydia also sat on the committee that changed and standardized most of the Village's street names in 1933. Bishop drew the maps included in the directories. When Bishop died after a fall in 1938, Lydia continued to publish the directories until 1959. In addition to producing directories, which would grow exponentially in



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volume during the Park's tremendous postwar growth, her professional services included maps, mimeographing, mailing lists, typing and printing. As a notary public, she served as a State agent for drivers licenses and automobile transfers from 1948 to 1978. Before the *Dispatch* was launched in 1941, she also wrote a column about Park news in Hopkins' *Hennepin County Review*. Anyone who knew Lydia Rogers will never forget what an institution she was in the Park.

DR. ROBERT GREEN AND DR. ELLEN FIFER

Dr. Green was one of the original 11 doctors who started the St. Louis Park Medical Center, which has grown into the Park Nicollet Clinic we know today. All 11 were WWII Veterans who had been working at the Veterans Hospital, each with a different specialty. The *Dispatch* reported that they were all married, all trained at the U of M, between the ages of 30 and 34 and had a total of 25 children. The doctors pooled their Veterans' benefits in order to obtain a construction loan, and the first building was built at 4959 Excelsior Blvd. (since replaced by the present Wells Fargo Bank building.) The St. Louis Park Medical Center opened for business on July 2, 1951, seeing five patients and making \$16. Dr. Green later married Dr. Ellen Z. Fifer, who worked with school nurses and volunteers to provide health care to school children, including eye tests, diphtheria-whooping cough-tetanus inoculations and testing for lead poisoning. She was appointed the City's first public health officer from 1959 to 1966 and served the Park at a critical time, when the scourge of Polio was killing and maiming young people at an alarming rate. Assisted by a legion of volunteers led by Min Himmelman, Dr. Fifer oversaw the inoculation of thousands of men, women and children against Polio and other diseases. Thanks to these two extraordinary physicians, St. Louis Park remains a mecca for local health care.



Original building of the St. Louis Park Medical Center.



Founding staff. (l-r) Front row: George Lund, Wyman Jacobson, Sewell Gordon, Robert Green, David Anderson. Back row: Richard Webber, Robert Giebink, Alex Barno, John LaBree, Arnold Anderson, Donald Freeman.

Founders of the St. Louis Park Medical Center, 1950.

WELCOME ALL

Everyone is welcome to attend board meetings. Board meetings are typically held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at 3546 Dakota Ave. So., Suite C. (Please note that our office is on the second floor and there is no elevator.) Next board meetings: March 6, April 3 and May 1. Minutes are posted on our website at slphistory.org/meetingminutes.

And we invite you to read about the Society's mission at slphistory.org/purpose.

SOLVE THE WINTER MYSTERY PHOTO



These children from the 1920's are smiling happily in potentially dangerous territory. Can you name the place where this was taken?

We'll recognize the first five folks to come up with a correct answer and draw names to come up with a winner!

AUTUMN MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED



Nearly buried by snow on Excelsior Boulevard, the drivers of these automobiles braved the aftermath of the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940 by walking across the roofs and seeking shelter in local drinking establishments, including Al's Bar.

We had so many correct responses come in across different formats that we took the top twelve and placed them in a hat. Congratulations to Judy Erickson Rys, our winner! Honorable mentions go to Dan Bell, John Fitzgerald, Mary Hagar, Chuck Heinecke, Sylvia Hitchcock, Mary Jane Hurd, Deborah Lee Johnson, Ted Meland, Curt Rahman, Char Rohlik and Steven Steuck.

WHAT'S YOUR PARK STORY?



Do you have a St. Louis Park story to share with our readers? We would love to hear from you! We're looking for articles, stories, reminiscences and photos.

Submission Guidelines

- Articles are relevant to the St. Louis Park Historical Society audience
- 1,000 words maximum
- Articles are published at the discretion of newsletter staff and may be gently edited to accommodate space limitations
- Submit your article to slphs.newsletter@gmail.com — include your name, email address and phone number

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Are you interested in becoming more involved at the Historical Society? We looking for members who want to contribute time as a Society board member. For information about time commitment, expectations and community, visit slphistory.org/volunteer.



St. Louis Park Historical Society

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Please contact me about volunteering with the St. Louis Park Historical Society

I have items to donate to the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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-OR-

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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and share St. Louis Park's rich and unique history. The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Your dues and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Questions? Contact us at 952.583.9893 or history@slphis.org.



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Stuart "Bud" and Mary Storm

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Note: We have returned to a calendar year dues cycle as called for in our bylaws, so all memberships will come up for renewal as of January 1, 2018. Dues received in November and December 2017 will count for all of 2018.