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50 and Fabulous: Learn more about our civic commitment to a lending library

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Join the Railroad Group and SWLRT on July 22

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Park High 40 Year Reunion plans in full swing

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Volume 17.2 / Summer 2018

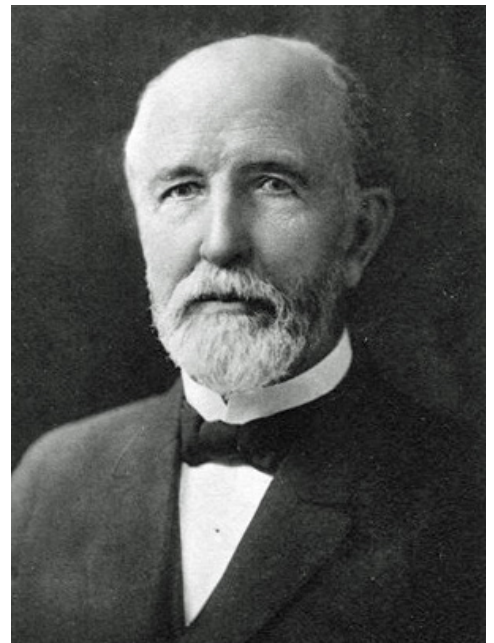


CENTRAL AND CIVIC MILESTONES THIS SPRING

ADAPTED FROM OUR WEBSITE BY INGRID MOE

As spring turns to summer and the season of graduations and reunions comes around, one's thoughts turn toward the passage of time and milestone anniversaries. While the state of Minnesota is currently reflecting on the year 1968 with an exhibit of that title at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, several St. Louis Park institutions will be celebrating 50th anniversaries this year as well, including Susan Lindgren Elementary School and the library building at 3240 Library Lane. While the building turns fifty this year, St. Louis Park's civic commitment to a public book lending institution is actually much older.

The St. Louis Park Village Council authorized establishment of a public library in January 1913. Nine directors were appointed to set the rules for safekeeping and handling of library materials, and, in August 1913, more than 2,000 people attended a village-wide carnival where nearly \$400 was raised to purchase books.



T.B. and Harriet Walker and the High School (Central: 1914 Building West Section)

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St. Louis Park Historical Society

Presents

Historic Milwaukee Road Depot Open House

**Sunday July 22, 2018
1-4 p.m.**

Learn about safety around railroad tracks from the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CP RAIL). Also, Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) will be there to talk about the line that will run through the community.

Or, just come and see the inside of the Historic Depot that opened in 1887. We'll have the telegraph set up and refreshments will be served.

The Depot is located in Jorvig Park, two blocks west of the intersection of 36th Street and Wooddale Avenue.



Hope to see you there!

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Happy Spring!

As I write this note, we are finally enjoying some spring weather after our record snowfall the weekend of April 14-15. If you no longer live in Minnesota, you can be glad you missed the roughly foot and a half of snow! In spite of the spring shoveling, the historian in me appreciated the new records we made and the chance to compare our April blizzard to other big storms like the Halloween Blizzard of 1991, or the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940. Of course, we now have the benefit of minute-by-minute weather modeling and a 24-hour news cycle to keep us all informed about impending weather. But if you had already put away your snow blower for the season, or didn't have a snow removal contract past March 31—like at my family's church the day of my daughter's First Communion—all the information in the world didn't help you get through that much snow!

But now spring has arrived, and we can start thinking about a fresh season of activities for the Historical Society. We hope you will stop and visit us at Parktacular on Saturday, June 16. We'll be there, getting the word out about our organization and reminding our neighbors about the fascinating history of our city. And, the Railroad Group is planning on meeting throughout the summer and hosting an open house on July 22.

In other news, we welcomed a new Board Member at our meeting last month. Bill MacMillan is joining us, filling one of the open Trustee spots. Bill graduated from St. Louis Park High School in 1967 and the University of Minnesota in 1973. He has served in leadership roles at many city organizations including Discover St. Louis Park, the American Legion and the Twin West Chamber of Commerce. Bill will bring a great understanding of strategic planning, membership and fundraising—all things with which we very much welcome his help! I am very thankful to have Bill's council and leadership as we look to turn the corner on our long-term goals.

I hope to see you at one of our events this spring. And if you have a story or item to share with us, please reach out. We are always looking to learn more about the city all of us love!

With 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

Visit online: www.slphistory.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.

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WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

The Society has had great success with its sale of replaced street signs, as generously provided by the City. In fact, there are only about 40 "name" signs left—the rest are numbered streets. It turns out that most homes in St. Louis Park seem to face avenues instead of streets—who knew?

One recent sale was to Matt Tucker, who bought four Minnetonka Boulevard signs for himself and his family members. You might not recognize his name at first, but

Matt is that youngster for whom his father built the famous Tucker Treehouse at Minnetonka Boulevard and Ottawa Avenue. Matt's grown and living out of state now, but like everyone who has purchased signs, he has fond memories of St. Louis Park.

If you think you might want a sign of your own, be sure to check the inventory at slphistory.org/purchase-a-slp-street-sign. Again, we thank the city for allowing us to use these signs as a much-needed fundraiser—they have literally paid the rent for the past three years!

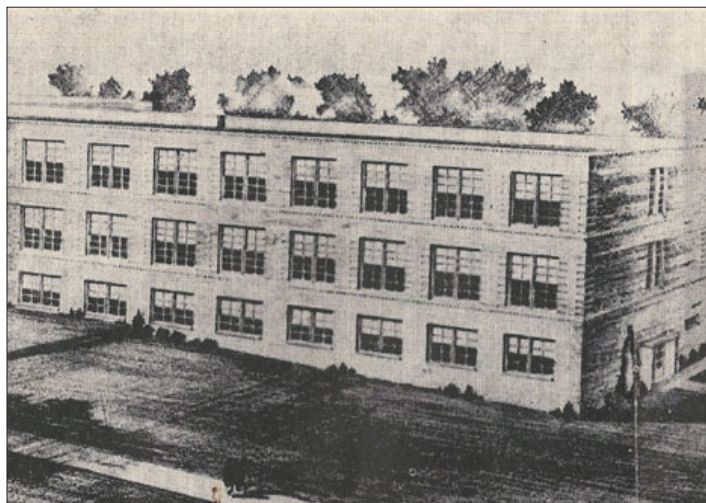


(Top) Central in 1938, courtesy Earl Ames, Jr. (Below) Central, conceptual drawing of East Wing as published in *The Echo*, November 1951.

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Initially, the library was located in the Brick Block on Walker Street, but moved into the new high school building (also on Walker Street) in 1914. Mrs. T.B. Walker donated funds to purchase 450 volumes that year and the Village Council's practice was to appropriate \$100-\$300 per year in support.

In 1918, Ethel Baston joined the library board and Alice Johnson, a member of one of the first graduating classes of St. Louis Park High School, became the librarian, a position she retained until retiring in 1947. By 1950, the library's connection with the high school necessitated a system of checking out books. Students, who had been on the honor system, were much better at checking out than returning, especially when it came to books on auto mechanics. The library moved into the new East Addition of the Central building in 1952 and had 2800 books (half of which were new) by 1956. However, the explosive growth in enrollment at the high school necessitated another move when the school informed the city that it needed the library's space for students. So, in 1960, the library returned to the Brick Block in rented space at 6509 Walker St. While this new space also allowed for an additional 8,000 volumes to be added to the library's collection, still more could be done. With support from the Women's Club, Helen Young, the library's Director, came before the City Council in February 1960 to lobby for a municipal library building.



It was eight years later, on April 21, 1968, that a municipal library building was officially dedicated. The St. Louis Park High School marching band, former mayor Kenneth Wolfe and Senator Walter Mondale participated in the opening ceremonies. As reported in the *Sun*, this new library building had a capacity of 50,000 volumes. Although dedicated on April 21, the library actually opened its doors a couple of months earlier –on February 8, 1968. Business boomed from day one. As noted in the *St. Louis Park Dispatch*, “1,476 books [were] checked out, compared to 600 for a normal Thursday.” And so it continues, up to today.



St. Louis Park Library, courtesy Emory Anderson

LIBRARY LANE LORE

BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

Ever wonder how Library Lane got its name? Obviously it begins at our library, but if the library was only built in 1968, why are the buildings on the street so... historic? The answer may not surprise those of you who have been in the Park for a long time, but it sure surprised me!

It turns out that while the Creosote Plant (1917 – 1972) was still in operation, Louisiana Avenue came to an abrupt turn at the northern border of the plant, veering to the southeast. When the plant was removed, the city could finally extend

Louisiana southward. On Nov. 20, 1980, the half mile section that runs from Walker Street to Oxford Avenue was finished, completing a nine-year project to run Louisiana Avenue all the way through St. Louis Park.

But now that Louisiana was straightened out, what to do with that bend in the road—the southeastern stretch between Walker and 32nd streets? The decision was made to name the orphan street after the public library. And just as the street's name was changed, the library's address changed from 3240 Louisiana Ave. to 3240 Library Lane.

ST. LOUIS PARK CLASS OF 1978: 40 YEAR REUNION PLANS IN FULL SWING



BY JANE PRATT HAGSTROM

The St. Louis Park class of 1978 is busy planning their 40th reunion. The reunion committee consists of Steve Grossman, Stuart Chazin (not pictured), Pam Kay, Ann Petri (not pictured), Cindy Banwell and Jane Pratt Hagstrom. They meet monthly at that Park landmark—Bunny's Restaurant. Though some of the chairs have also planned the 10th, 20th and 30th reunions, the internet has made this easier of late.

Join us at this year's reunion on Aug. 25, 2018 at The Lotus Restaurant in Uptown, Minneapolis. The festivities will include food, a live band made up of 1978 graduates, decorations and plenty of time to catch up with old friends. Visit our Facebook page: *St. Louis Park High School Class of 1978* to keep in touch and leave information on the invite list; be sure to register if you have not done so already. Come celebrate with your classmates and make this one a huge success!

SOLVE THE SUMMER MYSTERY PHOTO



Once this building sported an ASAP sign. Can you identify the building or the structure behind it?

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

WINTER MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED



The children in the photo are on the grounds of the smallpox quarantine hospital, also known as the Pest House. John O. "Jack" Johnson rented the caretaker's cottage when then Pest House closed in 1918 and his children were referred to as the "Pest House Johnson Kids."

Thank You New Members

Hari Kumar
Barbara Solberg

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

MEMBERSHIP & GIVING FORM

HELP US COLLECT, PRESERVE & SHARE.

Annual membership benefits include:

- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events and merchandise
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- Memberships are 100% tax-deductible

☐ Send me the *ReEcho* newsletter by mail -or- ☐ Send the *ReEcho* via email

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

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

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

☐ Individual Membership \$25 ☐ Family Membership \$35 ☐ Additional Amount

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-OR-

Become a member and renew your membership online via credit card or PayPal. Visit slphistory.org/shop.

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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SAVE THE DATE!

Visit us at Parktacular, June 16, 2018 between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

We'll be in Wolfe Park, 3700 Monterey Drive.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!