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Take a journey through St. Louis Park's history.

P2 / AMERICAN RED CROSS

A photo of the St. Louis Park chapter of the American Red Cross is passed on through generations.

P1 / WALKER BUILDING

The walker building has a new owner, Sota Clothing Co.!

P7 / MEMBERSHIP & GIVING

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REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

Collect. Preserve. Share.

Volume 17.3 / FALL 2018

A RANDOM RAMBLE THROUGH 1954

BY BILL BEYER, FAIA

The year 1954 was a heady time for St. Louis Park. A special U.S. interim census pegged the expanding population of the village at 32,500 souls, up 50 percent from only four years earlier. The *St. Louis Park Dispatch* crowed that St. Louis Park now was the fourth largest city in Minnesota after Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, blowing past Rochester and St. Cloud. After failed votes in 1938 and 1949, St. Louis Park citizens finally voted in favor of a home-rule charter in December 1954, and graduated from village-dom.

Plans for new places for all those new people to shop were on the drawing boards, as well. Knollwood Mall drawings by Thorshov and Cerny Architects were presented over the boosterish caption, "Largest shopping center ever built in the Midwest." At 300,000 square feet, the claim perhaps remained true for a while. A few months later, news from Edina's groundbreaking for the 800,000 square foot Southdale Mall reached the SLP masses.

The *Dispatch* was in its heyday, too — already 13 years old and a feisty read. The editors leaned a little left, and opined on many issues of international character. Warning against the pending, and already ongoing, war in Indochina (Vietnam) a decade before LBJ started the bombings in earnest. Cheering the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision as restoring the clear meaning of the 14th Amendment. And worrying aloud about the scourge of Wisconsin Sen. Joe McCarthy's red-baiting.

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Courtesy Fitzpatrick—St. Louis Post Dispatch



ST. LOUIS PARK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS - 1919

World War I was a watershed event for the American Red Cross. It had expanded the mission of the International Red Cross beyond the care of war wounded to include first aid, water safety, and public health nursing programs. According to the organization's published history, the war caused volunteer participation to explode: "The number of local chapters jumped from 107 in 1914 to 3,864 in 1918 and membership grew from 17,000 to over 20 million adult and 11 million Junior Red Cross members."

The photo above, reproduced from an 18-inch by 48-inch original, shows about 80 members of the St. Louis Park Chapter in full nursing dress in front of the high school in January, 1919. The photo was provided by Marie Robinson, who identified the third woman from the right end as Mary (Marek) Ruzicka, Park resident from 1903 to 1930. According to Marie, "The 1919 Red Cross Branch picture was passed to daughter Helen, who passed onto her daughter Margaret (Stepanek) Robinson, of Hopkins. After her death in March

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WALKER BUILDING NEWS

Faithful readers of this newsletter know that the Walker Building, located just down Walker Street from the Society's offices, is one of the most historic buildings in St. Louis Park. It was recently purchased by Sota Clothing Co., which is converting ground and basement level spaces to manufacturing space, corporate offices and a retail outlet for its products. The contractor performing the renovation work and the architect graciously hosted St. Louis Park Historical Society board members for a brief tour of the construction progress before our last meeting June 5.

Existing second floor leased offices will remain under the plans, but the entire building will now be protected by an automatic sprinkler system, reducing the danger that this last remnant of T.B. Walker's legacy will be consumed by fire, as its various combustible neighbors sadly were. Eventually, the new owner hopes to restore the façade to its original look and has retained an architect with extensive experience adapting historic structures. St. Louis Park Historical Society has provided them with photos from 1924 for reference.

So, visit the new retail outlet when it opens (July-ish) and buy a T-shirt. Perhaps the business will be successful enough to afford historic façade restoration sooner rather than later.

www.sotaclothing.com



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings, Friends,

The only thing constant is change, and one big change for us this summer is that, after many years as the heart and soul of the Historical Society, Jeanne Andersen has chosen to step away from the day-to-day workings of the Society and to resign her Board seat. I have only been involved with the organization for the past four years, and so I know that I will not do all her years of service justice, but I am going to try! If you have additional recognition to share, please send us a note or write on our Facebook page!

One of the biggest legacies Jeanne leaves is 1,400 pages of stories on our website. Anyone who has visited our website and found themselves going down a rabbit hole of local history will appreciate the extent of her work. Her research was always thorough. Whether she was writing about the dog catchers of the early 1900s or a biography of TB Walker, every story was given attentive consideration and care. Journalists, authors and distant relatives reach out to us on a regular basis for additional information after stumbling across Jeanne's writings online, asking for any additional information we might have. Jeanne keeps file folders for hundreds of topics and is always updating her pages when new information comes to light. We are hoping she will continue to post new bits of history as she finds time to go through her files.

Jeanne was also instrumental in applying for grants to secure a microfilm reader and dozens of rolls of microfilm. As a result, all our local newspapers are easy to scan, print and even save to a computer. For those who enjoy reading back through the archives, you will appreciate this improvement in conducting research on a myriad of topics.

And I would be remiss if I did not praise Jeanne's excellent writing skills. She has written countless Re-Echo articles — not to mention editing, publishing and mailing it! — always with great skill, nuance and humor. For those of us who contributed additional articles, she was a prolific editor, keeping us honest with our grammar and spelling. I am sure she is catching my errors right now as she reads this letter!

Then, of course, there were the many years and hours that Jeanne organized, filed and sent membership letters, or wrapped up street signs for delivery, or answered emails and phone calls — while always passionately advocating for the Society.

So this change will mean a few more grammatical errors, some fumbled attempts at answering questions, and far less research and writing. But Jeanne's tradition of professionalism, attention to detail, care for our city's history, and the passion for the Society that seeks to preserve and celebrate it will continue.

To that end, we will be in need of help with some administrative tasks, managing the office on Saturday afternoons and writing articles. If you are interested in getting more involved, please reach out!

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

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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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ANNUAL MEETING OF ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2018 from 7-9 p.m.
at the Rec Center

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Each customer will receive a gift of one large and one small clear plastic container for retaining freshness after cooling.

You are warmly invited to visit the cozy, amazingly modern TRAV'L-BAKE, owned and operated by the McGlynn Bakeries — famous for home-made type breads—which, incidentally will be brought to the TRAV'L-BAKE warm—several times each day.



(All patentable rights in TRAV'L-BAKE production and self-service equipment are property of J. T. McGlynn, Minneapolis.)

(quiet)

Quiet as a mouse, quick as a bunny—that's the way to hang up your telephone when you find your party line in use. Other tips for good party-line service: space out

your phone calls, replace the receiver carefully, release the line quickly for emergency calls. Party-line courtesy is catching. Northwestern Bell Telephone Company.



Aerial photos, courtesy of the University of Minnesota Libraries' MHAPO website, show the Westling's land wrapped around a couple of prairie potholes, in 1947 and 1971. The smaller body of water is now Westling Lake. The south spur of the railroad was their eastern boundary, which we can all now enjoy on our bicycles riding the North Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

www.lib.umn.edu/apps/mhapo

a farm with his wife, Marlys, on the north side of Minnetonka Boulevard, just east of the Minnetonka border, in 1942. The St. Louis Park Historical Society website notes that the farmhouse, located at 8550 Minnetonka Blvd. or 2920 Aquila Ave., was built in 1874 and remains today as the city's oldest residence still standing.

In the pioneer days, the farm was about halfway from downtown Minneapolis to the sawmill on Minnehaha Creek at Minnetonka Mills, which had supplied timber for the first suspension bridge over the Mississippi on Hennepin Avenue. Still out in "the country," it was a likely spot for a rumored speakeasy during Prohibition, and was briefly licensed as the Belmont Tavern and Riding Stables when Prohibition ended in 1934.

The Westlings had previously rented farmland at 31st Street and Louisiana Avenue raising produce and chickens, and they farmed their new land as well, but must have realized their land could produce higher returns through subdivision and development, which they began in 1947. Over the next couple of decades, the couple built 65 homes for the rapidly growing St. Louis Park population.

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Inventive new stuff was everywhere. Burt McGlynn was half-a-century early on the food-truck fad, rolling out his bakery's "Trav'l Bake," a converted bus built to bake and deliver fresh bread and donuts throughout the city. Northwestern Bell placed a small ad reminding readers of the proper etiquette for telephone "party lines," a concept that cannot possibly compute in today's cell phone society.

All those new people and their burgeoning families also needed places to live, so a new breed of residential builders and developers did their best to cash in on the post-war Baby Boom demand. Ranch-style houses popped up everywhere on land that had been farmed or vacant through the Depression and WWII.

One such builder was Richard J. Westling, who had purchased

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In 2008 when they sold their own home, which had been buried amid multiple previous additions, the couple donated the drawings of many of the new homes they had built to St. Louis Park Historical Society. The Society retained the plans for homes that could be identified by address in their subdivision and donated a couple of hundred more rolled plans to the Northwest Architectural Archive at the University of Minnesota.

An afternoon spent unrolling a couple dozen of those drawings at University of Minnesota revealed some fairly conventional ranch house designs, but slightly more upscale than the tiny three-bedroom ramblers built by many other developers. Masonry fireplaces were a common feature; two-car, attached garages, formal dining rooms, separate family rooms, and two full baths were typical as well. One expanded kitchen plan was labeled “Living Kitchen,” suggesting that the family planned to spend a lot of time in it.

There were a couple of plans designated for doctors,

incorporating maid’s quarters, and one “U”-shaped ranch layout that featured an unusual 10-by-30-foot entry hall. There was at least one two-story plan, with a layout and facade common to hundreds of homes of that time. The Westlings even dabbled in apartment house design, an example of which stands just to the east across the North Cedar Lake Trail at 2948 Wyoming Ave.

I ran across at least three sets of sketches on different sites from around 1963 with plans for a 38-unit motel and restaurant development, which may never have been realized. The particular aesthetic treatment of the motel schemes suggested the Westlings were enamored of an early-American, quasi-colonial look. The most complete motel/restaurant blueprints included a front elevation with a classically treated, gabled porch supported by Doric columns, with a fan vent and a cupola/weathervane at the roof peak.

I suspect the motel project was never built because the final addition to the Westlings’ own 1874 farmhouse, facing Minnetonka Boulevard, had a certain familiarity.

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2018, the picture passed to her son, Paul Robinson of Apple Valley, formerly of Hopkins.”

The war ended only two months before the photo was taken, but the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918 picked up the killing with 7,521 Minnesota civilians dying of the flu in the fall of 1918. Of the 3,607 Minnesota servicemen killed in WWI, 60% had been killed by disease. As noted by retired Navy Chaplain David Thompson, “In other words, most of Minnesota’s war dead died of the flu ‘over here’ in the United States and never even got ‘over there.’”

Writing in the Spring, 2017 issue of “ALLIES” newsletter,

Thompson continued, “My friends were bragging about the heroics of their fathers in the Second World War. It caused me to inquire of my dad, who was from Paynesville, Minnesota, and who fought in the First World War. ‘What did you do in World War I?’ I asked. All he said was, ‘I survived the flu.’”

On top of all that war and disease, the Moose Lake-Cloquet Fire of October, 1918, destroyed 38 communities, killed at least 450 people, drove 52,000 citizens from their homes and destroyed property valued at \$73 million. The new Minnesota Red Cross chapters had a busy year.

If any readers can provide additional information on the St. Louis Park Chapter of the American Red Cross, or family flu stories from 1918 – 1920, please contact us.

SOLVE THE FALL MYSTERY PHOTO



Photo Courtesy Bill Sahly

This building was part of a sports-oriented business and opened its doors in May 1930. Today's use is very different from the original one. Can you name the current business and the location?

SUMMER MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED



HOFFMAN-CALLAN BUILDING

This peculiar round building was built in 1963. The building was commissioned by Elliott B. Hoffman (1912-1985) — described by his sons as a man with vision, energy and ideas. At age 17 he was a clerk for the Minneapolis Tribune. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1934 and worked as a salesman in 1936.

By 1938 he was the president of the Hoffman Letter and Printing Co. Sometime between 1942 and 1946, the name of the company became the Hoffman Printing Co. — it is unclear when he took on partner James Callan and the company changed names. Much of the company's work was printing materials for law enforcement associations.

By 1946 Hoffman had moved his family to St. Louis Park, and when he needed a new facility for his businesses, he cast his eye on the confluence of Minnetonka Boulevard, Highway 7 and France Avenue. Hoffman's son Jay describes his father as a futuristic person who wanted something different in his new building. Hoffman and Callan considered several architects and decided to work with Prairie School architect James Dresser, who had trained with Frank Lloyd Wright as a fellow at Taliesin from 1945-1947. Dresser designed "elegant and unique" buildings across the country, including the Minnesota Pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1964.

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're 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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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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PARK HISTORY TODAY

An official publication of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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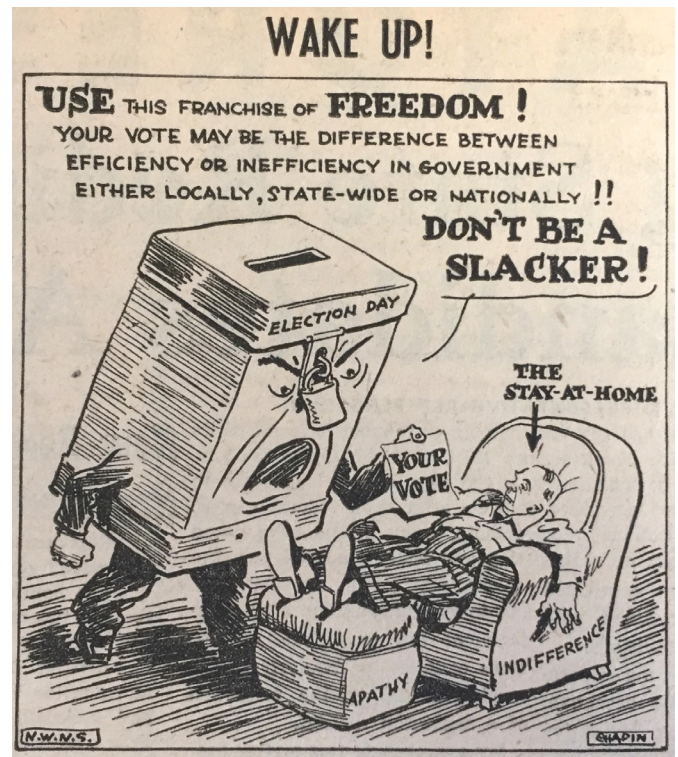
Thortage of Etheth!

It is well known that his singular sense of humor is what makes the American soldier tick, and we have often felt the same may be said of the "country," or weekly editor.

A small town editor up in the far reaches of the Catskills, in New York state, makes our point, we think, by way of an editorial squib of recent date. A printer's devil turned prankster took it upon himself to empty all the S's from the cabinet containing the type from which ye editor was wont to "stick" his newspaper, by hand. There was "hell to pay and no pitch hot" as the Irishman said the first week. By the time the next issue rolled around the editor had gotten hold of himself pretty well, although he did see fit to run the following apology on his front page:—

"Thome louthy thneaking thcoundrel hath thtolen into our compothing room and thkeedaddled with all our etheth. We muth therefore apologethe to our readerth for the inthipid appearance of thith Weekly Thentinel ath well ath latht weekth.

"We would altho like to thtate that if at any time in the yearth to come we thee thith dirty thneak in the grath about the premitheth we will thoot him tho full of holeth he will rethemble a thwith cheethe."



Voter turnout for our 2016 national election was about 60 percent — 139 million voted out of 232 million eligible. The editorial cartoon in the Aug. 12, 1954 *St. Louis Park Dispatch* suggests it may not have been much different in 1954. *Dispatch* editors had lively discussions on the editorial pages and urged "slackers" to vote, but they also indulged themselves in what then passed for journalism humor.