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Memories of Eliot School,
followed by more Eliot and Eliot
PTA stories.

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Depot Lighting Event.

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"Footsore Teachers End Tally;
Eye Tuesday Bell" When school
start was "frightening."

P6 / GUEST ARTICLE

Another Park Growing Up Story;
Fern Hill School.



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PARK HISTORY TODAY

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Volume 18.3 / FALL 2019

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In this back-to-school issue, we feature guest articles sharing girlhood memories of Eliot and Fern Hill Schools in the 1950s and 60s. We are grateful to Shelley Hendrickson and Rebecca Bender for their fond remembrances and photos.
– Bill Beyer, FAIA

MEMORIES OF ELIOT SCHOOL

BY SHELLEY KALLBERG HENDRICKSON

When my parents purchased a lot on Idaho Ave So in 1948 one of the greatest appeals was that Eliot Elementary School would be built on Cedar Lake Road between Idaho Ave and Hampshire Ave. They had little money, but big dreams for a permanent family home.

Like many new home owners then, they built a basement home first but planned to "build up" when resources were available. Idaho Ave was called "gopher town" by many because of the numerous homeowners who also lived under ground at the time.

My older sister, Pam, started Kindergarten in 1951, but had to attend Brookside Elementary since Eliot was still unfinished. By the time I started Kindergarten in 1955, Eliot School was completed and ready for the swell of baby boomers within its boundaries.

While the first day of school has always been exciting for both children and parents alike, perhaps it was even more of a momentous event before daycare and preschools ever existed. In 1955 my mother took a photo of the neighborhood girls lined up across the street from my house. I am at the end of the line wearing a dress my mother sewed for me. Such an eventful day it was for us to be starting school in the AM or PM class.

In Kindergarten we learned to tie a shoe, print our names, recognize and spell the names of colors, play nicely with others, and follow directions from the teacher. Even with all



this learning, we still had time for a nap on our resting rugs before we were excused for the day. I just loved my kind and patient teachers in the early grades and would catch myself accidentally calling a teacher "mom." I don't remember that any were unconsciously called "dad" since there were no male teachers at that time until the upper grades.

In my early years at Eliot, we practiced civil defense drills where we learned to "duck and cover" from shattered glass

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in the event of a nuclear attack. These drills were very frightening to my classmates and myself. Some people built “bomb shelters” in their back yards and many buildings in St. Louis Park were designated as “fallout shelters.” There was a national fear of the Cold War and communism during this time in America, so I was especially glad when the duck and cover drills stopped.

In 1st grade we learned to read from a giant book about Dick, Jane, Sally and Spot. By 2nd grade we had our own “Think and Do” workbooks, other primary readers and once a week, the librarian, Miss Stone, encouraged us to check out a book for a week to read at home. By 3rd grade we were reading, writing, and doing math. Many of us were also learning the value of saving money. It was voluntary, but most weeks my dad would give me a dollar for the envelope that was sent to Farmers & Mechanics Bank (F&M) where they started a savings account in our names. F&M was a large downtown bank that valued young future customers.

By 4th grade we were adept at writing in “cursive,” long division and giving oral reports. Special teachers came in occasionally for art and music projects. Throughout the years our special physical education teachers, Mr. Holmes and Mr. Cavaleri were available to check our fitness levels and skills. Twice a year, Mrs. Moberg, the school nurse, pushed her height and weight scale into the rooms to record our growth. One year, I recall a boy, also recorded everyone’s weight as the nurse announced it for the teacher to record. Well, this student, who was not as clever as he thought, got in major trouble when he used this information to bully classmates about their weight. I’m sure that never happened again.

Like most kids, I loved our playground with its giant slide, swings and teeter totter. The blacktop then was hard as concrete, yet, I don’t recall many serious injuries. The playground was used for recess, physical education and even had supervised activities in the summers. My younger sister, Marsha, who started school in 1960, was strong, athletic, and a tether ball champion in the summer. She could arm wrestle boys who were years older than herself.

In those days, there were no leashing laws for pets. They enjoyed the Eliot playground as much as the kids. I remember dogs frequently got into the school to sniff out where their boy or girl might be hiding. This was a delightful interruption for pupils, but alas, the teacher would always call a custodian or other staff to escort the 4-legged intruder out of the building.

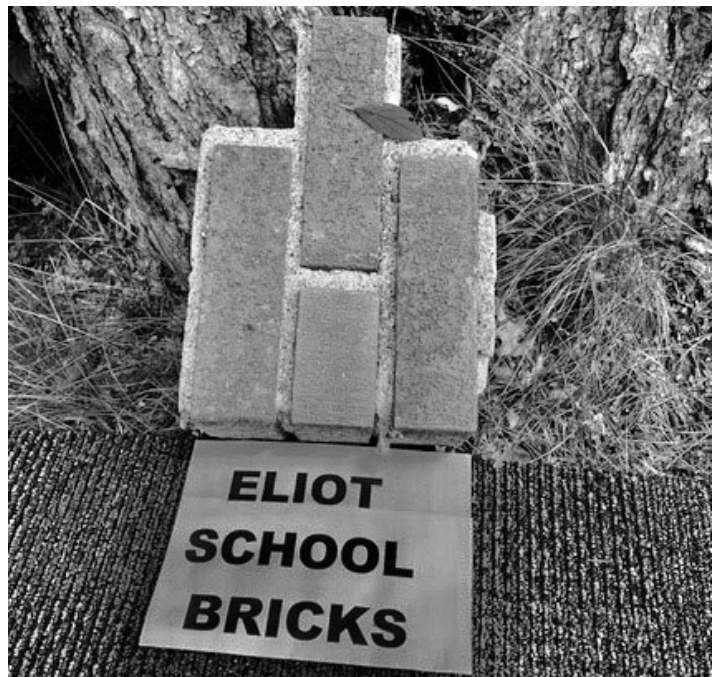
By 5th grade we could participate in band. I learned to play the clarinet and by spring, Mr. Gronseth arranged for us to give a spring band concert for our parents and others. Years later, my dad confided in me about our first 5th grade band concert. He said the band sounded “just awful,” but we told you the concert sounded “real good.”

In 1960, John F. Kennedy won the presidential election against Richard Nixon. America adored President Kennedy

and glamorous first lady, Jacqueline. We now had our own “royal” family in the White House, but it would not be long enough. As 6th graders we were anxious and ready to attend Westwood Jr. High in the autumn. We were changing; the world was changing, way more than anyone could have imagined in the next six years when we would graduate high school.

Fast forward to 2014. Three of our grandchildren have attended Aquila Elementary School. While I witnessed Eliot being demolished, I asked a workman if he would give me a brick from my school.

After getting permission, he presented me with a chunk of four bricks that would have been trashed. Now, only my memories, bricks and photos are all I have left of my alma mater. Eliot School once stood tall and proud just up the street from where my parents built a home, and raised three daughters who wouldn’t have far to walk to school.



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

September brings the start of a new school year for most students. This year, our schools in St. Louis Park will begin to feel a bit different from when they all first opened 50-60 years ago. The Park Spanish Immersion elementary school is moving this year, out of the Central Community Center building where it has been since its conception in 1996 into Cedar Manor, bringing a building which first opened as a school in 1957 back into the education fold. Meanwhile, construction is happening at all of our other schools as they receive major upgrades such as a performing arts space at the middle school, updated classrooms in the elementary schools, and renovated lockers and athletic facilities at the high school. These and other updates are the result of the \$100 million bond referendum that passed overwhelmingly in 2017, which you can read about on the school's website.

The back-to-school season is a time to reset and get off to a fresh start and that is what we are trying to do at the Historical Society. We experienced some technology challenges with our email and voicemail earlier this year which left many questions unanswered. If you were impacted by our challenges, we are sincerely sorry! We are discussing ways we could hire or find a volunteer Executive Director to assist an existing dedicated—but small!—group of volunteers trying to stay on top of the Society's administrative work. This role would manage the day-to-day administration of the Society including managing the collection, answering emails, and staffing the office. The person in this role would also push forward on our mission to educate and share more of our stories through exhibits, refreshing the website, and developing public programs. We remain committed to a more permanent home for the Society, so the person in this role would also spearhead that search and leverage the funds we have been building for it over the past few years. In the meantime, we will be keeping up with the collections, answering emails, publishing this newsletter, and working on interesting projects to share with you.

Come join us for our fifth annual Holiday Lighting of the Depot on Saturday, December 7th starting at 5:30pm. And, keep an eye for information about a new booklet about the history of our city being written by board member Bill Beyer.

Thanks as always for your support, and please stop by one of our various events, office hours or open houses this year to say hi and renew your love for all things St. Louis Park!

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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NORTH SIDE AND ELIOT SCHOOLS, 1885-1977

FROM OUR WEBSITE, AS COMPILED BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

As the Village of St. Louis Park doubled in size, additional schoolhouses were added for the north side of town, which was physically isolated by the Great Northern Railroad.

The Pratt School had been built in 1859, twenty-seven years before the Park became a Village, and served the more heavily populated south side of town. In 1885, just before the Village was formally incorporated, the North Side School was built at Cedar Lake Road and Hampshire Avenue in the "Falvey District." It was a one-room wooden structure, eventually sold for \$150 and removed. Louisiana Avenue was then called Falvey Street after the early pioneers of that name.

Bids were received for building a new building on May 6, 1912, and classes began in December 1913. This brick-clad frame structure was destroyed by fire on April 2, 1926; a bond issue for the new building was immediately passed.

Three versions of the northside school; renamed Eliot when the 1926 version, below, was built.

In the years before the advent of the PTA, mothers banded together to raise funds and provide their children's schools with items the school board could not or would not provide. The



Three versions of the northside school; renamed Eliot when the 1926 version, below, was built.



Northside Mothers' Club formed in about 1923, changing its name to Eliot as the new school was built. The stated purpose of the club was "to study the welfare of the pupils of North Side School and of the young people of this community who might be helped by the club."

The Mothers' Club concerned itself with a variety of needs, the most important of which was providing the students with a hot lunch. It appears that they made these lunches themselves, but were continually lobbying the school board to provide such lunches and were still doing so in 1930.

The new school was proposed to be renamed Highcroft, but was changed to Eliot on petition of residents. Speculation was that it was named after Charles W. Eliot (1834-1926), President of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909. There were apparently many schools in the U.S. named for him. Expanded multiple times to meet baby-boom demands, and closed in 1977, Eliot was used as a community center until it was finally razed in 2014, replaced by the Siena Apartment complex.

ELIOT SCHOOL PTA

In 2014 a staff member at the Central Community Center found an Eliot PTA scrapbook from 1958-59 and donated it to the Historical Society. Since we have so few Eliot artifacts, this was an important discovery! It appears that it was the first that the PTA had put together, and it is quite elaborate.

Thanks to another generous donation, the Historical Society has in its collection Eliot Elementary School PTA Directories from 1954 to 1967. There are also several years of teacher rosters. We only have one student yearbook, from 1977. If anyone has any more to donate, we'd appreciate it! Those Eliot PTA dads sure knew how to have fun.

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In 1957, Eliot School teachers sat still long enough to be photographed and named.

As all Park Schools, Northside/Eliot grew and shrunk with student population, and was squeezed to make best use of existing resources, accommodating other civic functions until conditions changed again. It served our community well from its hilltop site on the north side of town.



Lael Hanson (Mrs)	27	3rd 208 Hildegard Eckert
Betty Golen	13	Don. room Phyllis Scholberg
Patricia Connors	24	4th 207 Heleen Klucas
Constanee Swindland	3	209 Eunice Watland
LaVon West	16	210 Delphine Johnson
Mary Lou Williams	20	211 Mercedes McLeod
Jean Hendrickson	11	5th 203 Rose Chisholm
Louise Wilson	20	204 Mary Langford
Doris Johnson	9	205 Mary Jean Tiegs
Elsie Anderson	17	206 Crystal Baldwin
Rosalind Anderson	18	6th 201 Fern Kruger
Joan Hanson	14	202 Sharon Maunsell
Mable Schlegelmileh	19	Lik. James Wason
Elizabeth Sarantos		Speech therapist

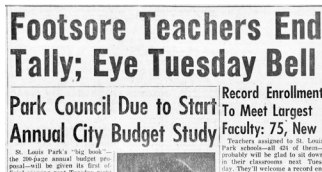
WHAT'S YOUR PARK STORY?

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.

DISPATCH LOOK-BACK



Back on September 1, 1960, the story of Park schools bursting at the seams topped page one of the Dispatch. The entire District faculty of 424 teachers had been sent out to canvass the community:

"This week, the teachers have pounded the pavement, going door to door Monday and Tuesday. Veterans and newcomers alike, they visited each home in the Park to gather information about the school population. This data is required by the state...The census takers were walking ambassadors of good will on the tours. Each brought to the homes copies of the annual bulletin of the school system"

Approaching the Boomer peak that year, Park schools had to hire 75 new teachers to keep up with the burgeoning student population. On its editorial pages, the Dispatch marveled at the sheer courage and awesome effort it took to face the frightening and chilling challenges of educating Park youngsters:

"Here are people willing to accept responsibility for the most important government function in a free society." (sic)



ANOTHER PARK GROWING-UP STORY

Beginning of Rebecca Bender's remarks at St. Louis Park Historical Society Annual Meeting, September 10, 2019, prior to reading from her new book, Still (NDSU Press 2019)

I was brought directly from the hospital to my first home in the 1st alphabet of St. Louis Park, in May of 1958. I followed in my sister Nancy's footsteps, proud graduates of St. Louis Park's public school system. We both graduated from Fern Hill Grade School, Central Junior High, and St. Louis Park High School.

My parents, Frima and Kenneth Bender lived in St. Louis Park for 50 years. They built their first and only home here – a walk out rambler on Twin Lakes, with deep purple flowering clematis vines climbing up the side of the house, and a rose garden expertly tended by my mom in back. During the winter, Nancy and I would sled down what seemed at the time to be a huge hill onto Twin Lakes, (it wasn't!), and would skate and cross-country ski on the lake.

About a year before my dad died, we were riding in the car together, going somewhere in St. Louis Park, and my dad said, "this was really a good place to raise you girls, wasn't it?" I told him that I agreed. It was wonderful growing up in St. Louis Park. With the support of family, friends, and teachers, I felt anything was possible.

In the 1960s, over seven hundred students in 21 classrooms (including me) attended Fern Hill grade school on a typical day. Its playground was on filled-in swampland, with the usual fare of teeter-totters, slides, painted lines on the tar for hopscotch, and primary-colored swinging aluminum cast horses. I attended Fern Hill since kindergarten, as a member of Mrs. Nelson's AM class, who got home just in time to watch Lunch with Casey on our black-and-white TV.

We students all shared the gleeful experience of seeing the "AV Man" wheel the projector in and hand a large reel of 16 mm film of an unknown subject to our teacher, meaning we were going to see a movie about something that day. (It was exciting, no matter what the subject). We all took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills each year and learned to play Comin' Round the Mountain on our flutophones. We ate our breakfasts with the Boone and Erickson Show on WCCO radio – listening most intently on snowy, winter days to hear if school was cancelled.

Our dad, who had stormed the beaches as part of the D-Day invasion at Normandy, was given a special permit by the City of St. Louis Park in 1959. He was one of only a few allowed to use a rifle within the St. Louis Park city limits, specifically to shoot muskrats...A ranked golfer in the Dakotas before the war, after a long day at his department store on West Broadway in Minneapolis, our dad enjoyed setting up a tee

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



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PARK HISTORY TODAY

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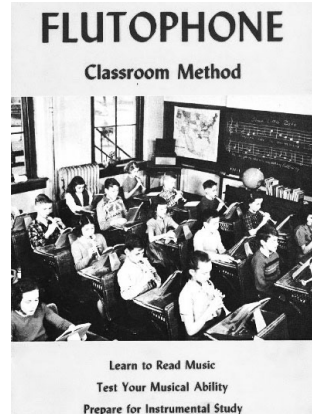
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on the top of the hill in our back yard, to see if he could drive a golf ball all the way across Twin Lakes. The answer? He could.

After special school and family events, our family went to the Lincoln Del, a Jewish neighborhood delicatessen, where I liked ordering cheese blintzes or hot apple pie with cinnamon ice cream. During the summer, my sister Nancy and I would patiently wait on the step that led up to our front door in our matching red canvas tennis shoes with white rubber toes, to buy an orange push-up from the ice cream man's truck that frequented our big baby-boomer population neighborhood. We also had an infamous, though not particularly successful lemonade stand. We gave one free salamander away with each purchase of a cup of lemonade.

I played violin in the junior high and senior high school orchestras, was on the staff of Central's newspaper, and on the poetry staff of the high school literary magazine. I was also a St. Louis Park Parkette from 1973-1976 – dancing at basketball games for the high school and cheering and dancing for Minnesota Vikings games.

My son, Lincoln, like me, was brought directly from the hospital to his first home in St. Louis Park. This home was in the 2nd alphabet - I made the big move from 55416 to 55426. As my son grew, I was a t-ball coach for the SLP Rec Department, a room mother at Aquila and Cedar Manor and a St. Louis Park Cub Scout den leader, as well as a Bravo lady in the SLP schools, introducing composers' works to grade school children.



Remember the Flutophone? Rebecca and big sister Nancy after a high school band concert, top right, and with extended Bender family, below.

