



The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

A Newsletter for the members of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

50 Golden Years

The St. Louis Park Charter Commission kicked off its celebration of **"50 Golden Years as a Charter City -- Then and Now"** on Parktacular Weekend June 20, 2004. The program took place in the Wolfe Park Amphitheater at 3700 Monterey Drive.

The program featured music by the St.

Louis Park Orchestra and Jim Rhodes. Historical anecdotes recounting St. Louis Park's history and growth were presented by past and present mayors and city managers.

The celebration of this event will continue for the balance of 2004.

Whistles

Steam train whistles were a common sound to the residents of St. Louis Park during the first half of the century. With five railroads running through the Park, the whistles were an enjoyable part of life and were useful to keep track of time.

The train whistles were not the only steam whistles that governed the life of the residents of St. Louis Park. It was a company town, and the Monitor Drill was the major employer. So that everyone got to work on time, the plant sounded the whistle four times a day. The 7AM was starting time, Noon was lunch, 1 PM was restart and 5 PM was quitting time. Wives knew exactly when their husbands would arrive for lunch, and the kids knew when to go home to eat. Whether you worked for the Monitor or not, the whole village lived by the whistles. It is doubtful that the whistle times were backed up with any formal time keeping system. The employees conformed because they needed to work, and the Monitor jobs were about all there was available.

The Monitor (and later Republic Creosote) used steam as a source of power for manufacturing so it was available to sound the whistle. Steam whistles were

low frequency and easily heard for great distances. The Monitor whistle could be heard all over St. Louis Park.

When the Monitor burned and moved to Hopkins, the whistles did not miss a beat. The Republic Creosote took over and St. Louis Park continued on whistle time.

The Monitor had its own fire brigade that was utilized to fight village fires. The brigade did incorporate some village volunteers. The steam whistle was used to alert the volunteers and call them to a fire.

Eventually the village grew large enough to organize its own volunteer fire department. The city needed an alert system that was under their control. Because generating steam for just a whistle was impractical, a siren was substituted. This became the fire and emergency alarm for the Park.

Gradually the need for a starting and quitting time signal disappeared, but St. Louis Park kept part of the tradition by sounding the siren for noon and 9 PM curfew.

Soon after World War II, St. Louis Park changed over to a paid fire department, and pagers were used to alert the fire fighters. The sirens found a second life as an emergency warning system for

The Re-ECHO is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society and is written by Robert C. Reiss. Its purpose is to acquaint the members, volunteers and friends on how the activities, programs and resources of the Society are used to preserve the history of St. Louis Park. The name was inspired by the ECHO newspaper published by and for the students of St. Louis Park High School since 1917.
Robert C. Reiss
(952) 470 1762
rcreiss@aol.com

Whistles

air raids (WW II) or bad weather. Later all of the sirens in Hennepin County grouped together and could only be sounded at the same time. Although St. Louis Park owned the sirens for its area, it did not have the ability to sound them.

In 1982, Hennepin County upgraded the system to include every siren in the county. This is a digital system and can only be activated by county emergency employees. It is radio controlled, and the sirens can be activated in any selected sequence.

And a Bell

St. Louis Park's first high school was Lincoln High built in 1890. In those days, when you built a school you included a bell to call the kids to class. Early pictures show a bell tower on the rear west side of the school. How and when the bell was used is not clear. Primary students who attended classes in this building do not recall the bell being used.

Lincoln was used as the high school until a "new" high school was built on Walker street in 1914. After the high school students moved, the Lincoln High building was used as an elementary school until 1938. Whether the bell was used is unknown but it did remain in place.

In 1938, the school board added a third new high school next to the existing one on Walker Street. The older high school became the junior high and the Lincoln building became surplus. It was

sold to the village of St. Louis Park and became City Hall.

The bell apparently did not get sold with the building. After the new Central High was completed, the bell was mounted on a pedestal outside the main entrance. In 1940's and 1950's no Echowan would have been complete without a picture of the current cheerleaders gathered around the bell.

When the current high school was built on Dakota Avenue in 1957 there but the bell seems to have disappeared. Eventually it was found in the pond on the Interlachen golf course. It was returned to the Park and put in a locked case inside the new school. Hopkins was not going to steal it again. The bell is remains in the current school by the front door. It was moved after the last remodeling to ensure a position of prominence.

Churches and Synagogues

The Historical Society is researching the history of churches and synagogues in St. Louis Park. We need help with information about the Lutheran Church of the Reform, Peace Presbyterian, St. George's Episcopal and Timothy Lutheran. Two other churches have come and gone leaving few records.

The oldest church in the city is Union Congregational. It began as the Clarke Chapel at the intersection of Wooddale (then Pleasant) and Excelsior Boulevard. Its roots go back to 1870, when services were held in the Pratt School, also at that location. Clarke Chapel was built in 1871. In 1871 it was moved to its present Alabama Avenue location. The current building was dedicated in 1941. There were two community churches that met the needs of the populace in north and south St. Louis Park. The Brookside Community Church started with mem-

bers meeting in a cottage in 1913. They moved to their new church on Brookside Avenue in 1915. It is unknown whether the church was originally Methodist but it was certainly Methodist when it merged with the Methodist Meeting House on Salem Avenue to become Aldersgate Methodist Church. Aldersgate built at its present site in 1951. The little white church on Brookside Avenue was subsequently used by Christian Scientists and is now St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church. The Northside Community Church has roots going back to 1920. In the middle 1940's, the heretofore nondenominational church became Lutheran. In 1947, the name was changed to Westwood Lutheran Church. The church built a new building on Cedar Lake Road in 1948. The original Northside building reopened as Ascension Lutheran Church in 1956.

Churches and Synagogues

In addition to these older churches, there was a building boom of churches in the late 1940s and 50s to coincide with the home building boom.

Synagogues have a very rich and important history in St. Louis Park. The migration of Jewish families from North Minneapolis started after the WWII and continued in force throughout the 1950s and 60s. Two of the first synagogues to move to the Park were B'nai Emet

(1959) and Beth El (1961). For more information about the Jewish migration to St. Louis Park go to www.jeanneandersen.com/jm.htm. If you have any information about a church or synagogue that you could share with the Historical Society, please email Bob Reiss at Rcreiss@aol.com or write to Jeanne Andersen at 4452 6th St. NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Summer Depot Hours

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is opening the Depot located at 36th and Brunswick Avenue for public visits on Saturdays for the summer from 1:00 PM until 5:00 PM until Labor Day. Someone from the Society will be available to provide help.

The Depot the home of the St. Louis Park Historical Society contains the Society's

historical documents. Hikers and bikers from the Southwest Trail are especially welcome. Cold drinks, refreshments and relief station available.

Another part of our collection is on display at the Lenox Community Center. That is open to the public from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM on Monday and Thursday or by appointment.

Donald Fletcher

Donald Fletcher was a plant pathologist. He assisted Nobel Peace Prize winner, Doctor Norman Borlaug and Doctor E. C. Stackman at the University of Minnesota in their seed development programs. Fletcher grew up on his father's farm located in the area of Miracle Mile. He began school in the old Lincoln School and graduated from St. Louis Park High school. At the University of Minnesota he received a degree and took graduate work in plant sciences.

He raised his family and lived his whole life in St. Louis Park. He took an interest in his home town and served for ten years on the school board. He died in 1970.

The area of stem rust control in wheat, durum and other small grains is where Don Fletcher provided his greatest contribution. In 1922, it was recognized that epidemic rust control was very important for the Upper Midwest farmers. The Conference for the Prevention of Grain Rust was founded by a group of Minneapolis milling executives, and Don became involved. Through his efforts, more than six hundred million rust

spreading barbary bushes have been destroyed.

Eliminating the rust spreading barbary was only a small part of the rust program. Don worked with the University of Minnesota scientists who were active in the seed development. He helped organize the government and scientists to achieve extensive and needed expansion of research in the breeding and cultivation of crops. Winter tests with two crops per year from Mexico sped the research and put new rust resistant varieties into the hands of farmers years ahead.

Along with many awards he received an honorary doctorate from the North Dakota State University, the E.C. Stackman award at the University of Minnesota and he became a member of the prestigious Cosmos Club in Washington, D. C.

By 1960, Don Fletcher was expanding his influence with the Rockefeller Foundation in wheat growing technology to the world. Not just Canada and Mexico, but to India, Pakistan and the Philippines.

Palm's Bakery

Palm's Bakery has been operating from a small store at 6416 Lake Street for over 50 years. Today it is one of the few independent bakeries still in business as well as one of the oldest businesses in St. Louis Park.

Since 1950, there have been three generations of Palms involved. The shop is now owned by LeRoy and Marlene. LeRoy's father, Enord, opened the bakery at this location after owning another for 20 years at a Minneapolis location. LeRoy and his brother, Gordon, were the bakers until Gordon died. Then LeRoy's son, Dale, stepped in to take his place. Now LeRoy, Dale and Dale's brother, Roy, start at 2:30 AM to fill the shops shelves for the day. Every thing is made fresh daily from scratch and donated if not sold. Their food is

made to be eaten, not preserved. The recipes have been handed down but never written down. Palms are known for their Scandinavian specialties but also offer a complete line of breads, pies, cookies and pastries. A favorite ingredient is a unique spice called cardomom that adds sweetness to the breads.

Palms is a true family business. Marlene, LeRoy's wife, is a constant behind the counter with the help of an occasional grandkid. Joyce Anderson, although not official family, has worked there for over twenty five years. They know most of their customers and the customers know them. They know what peoples' favorites are. To paraphrase what it says on their shop window "Get your buns in there."

John Reid's Answer

The Re-Echo
Re: This and That
Mr. John Reid

Dear Sir: In August, 1943, I, Ruth Dearstyne arrived in EPHRATA, Washington to marry my high school sweetheart, Ray Carlson (Major Carl Raymond Carlson). He was a St. Louis Park 1942 graduate and I 1943. We were actually married in Soap Lake, Washington about ten miles from EPHRATA. Within days, Ray

was transferred to Felz Field in Spokane. I realized "EPARATA" as written in the winter issue of the ReEcho is not EPHRATA but the coincidence is close I wanted to write you anyway.

If it was Ray you were seeking, he passed on Jan. 20, 1993 in Montgomery, Alabama. It was six months before what would have been our 50th wedding anniversary.

Signed: Ruth Carlson

The St. Louis Park Historical Society meets the first Tuesday of every month. The next meeting dates are:
July 6, 2004 Depot
August 3, 2004 Depot
September 7, 2004 Lenox
You are invited to attend.

"Something in the Water" is available for \$18.00 plus \$2.00 for handling. Send your name and address to:

Robert C. Reiss
5109 Stoney Bridge Ct.
Minnetonka MN 55345
952 470 1762

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