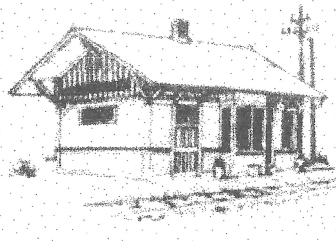


Example



# The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

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

## Ice Cream Social

The St. Louis Park Historical Society's annual Ice Cream Social will be held in Jorvig Park on Saturday, September 18. The event is a long standing tradition. It started in the 1930's as the Firemen's Carnival with its main goal being to entertain the kids. The town fire barn was at 36th and Brunswick Avenue directly across the street from this park. Now known as Jorvig Park, This park has played a significant role on the town's history. In 1892 when the St.

Louis Railroad agreed to erect a depot and donate land near the depot for a park, the town fathers agreed to name the village St. Louis Park instead of Elmwood.

The Social will provide free toy train rides for kids, and tours of a real Twin City Western Railroad diesel engine. The depot will be open and former railroad telegraphers will provide a telegraph demonstration. Jim Rhodes and Friends will provide music.

## Minnesota Rubber

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.

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Minnesota Rubber began in 1941 as the Wilson Rubber Company and moved into the Hamilton Building on Walker Street in 1942.

George Carlson and Paul Dennison purchased the company in 1945 and changed the name to Minnesota Rubber and Gasket Company.

Starting with nine employees, the firm grew rapidly under new ownership. Reaching beyond the military, the company began providing parts for original equipment manufacturers.

To meet increased production demands, a new 10,000 square foot factory was built at a location between Wooddale and Alabama Avenues. This plant has been expanded many times. George Carlson has been an inovator in making changes to rubber products and to the way they were manufactured which would eventually lead to the establishment of the company's own Machine Design Center.

Paul Dennison died in 1955, and George's son Robert Carlson Sr. became President. A tragic plane crash killed Robert Carlson Sr. in 1971. George Carlson died in 1972. Luke Sewall and

the remaining members of the Carlson family continued management of the company.

It was thought at the time that Robert Carlson, Jr. did not have enough experience to be president of Minnesota Rubber. In 1975, Tool Products became a wholly owned subsidiary and Robert Carlson, Jr. was made president. He quickly returned Tool Products to profitability. He became Chief Operating Officer of Minnesota Rubber in 1977. Today he is chairman of the Quadian Corporation. Quadian is the corporate identity for all of the Minnesota Rubber facilities.

Minnesota Rubber acquired the adjacent old Lincoln School site in 1979. The site which had been used as city hall, fire and police station. These were removed to made room for a new three story office building.

Today as the Quadian Corporation, Minnesota Rubber has plants throughout Minnesota, Iowa and the world including Singapore and France. The new corporate headquarters building is located in Plymouth.

## New Development

Rottlund Homes is planning to develop the old Minnesota Rubber property, the area between Wooddale and Alabama Avenues from 36th to Oxford Street. At the July 7, 2004 meeting, the St. Louis Park Planning Commission approved its development plan. Construction is to start this fall.

The development will consist of 223 town homes, condominiums and senior units. There will be 78 town home units built along Oxford. On the north end along 36th Street there will be 80 senior units for rent or ownership. Sixty-six condo units will be in several buildings along Wooddale.

All of the property will be developed with the exception of the Minnesota Rubber office building. This will be renovated and resold as an office building. The buildings on the rest of the property will be dismantled, including the four homes on Oxford.

Minnesota Rubber also owned the buildings on the east side of Wooddale at 36th Street. This property is not included for the development although the buildings have been removed. Because there is no retail included in the plans for the homes it can be anticipated this will be add at this location.

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## Home Rule Charter

At the celebration of "50 Golden Years as a Charter City---Then and Now" on June 20th, Phyllis McQuaid stated that the Charter was a good charter because not only did it spell out what could be done but also spelled out what could not be done.

The St. Louis Park Home Rule Charter is very specific about the relationship between the Council, the City Manager, and the staff. It is very clear that everything must be handled through the City Manager.

In 1975, then Mayor Frank Fleetham publicly reprimanded one of the councilmen for trying to undermine the City Manager. He was accused of conspiring with the police union representative to

get the city manager fired and of negotiating directly with a property owner to purchase land for the city to form a development area.

For several council meetings, the accusations and denials were very heated with each demanding the others resignation. The big problem for the other council members was trying to figure out what could be done if the accusations were true.

Eventually the problem just went away. In the November election, Jim Dahl was elected as the new mayor when Mayor Fleetham chose not to run for reelection and the councilman lost his bid for reelection.

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## Brookside School

On July 7, 2004, the St. Louis Park Planning Commission approved a zoning change that permitted the Foundation Development and Master Development Group to purchase the Brookside school property from the St. Louis Park School District and develop the property with condominiums and town homes.

Brookside School is the alma mater of thousands of St. Louis Park kids. It was built as a four room building in 1921. In 1926, four more classrooms were added, along with a basement, kindergarten and combination gym/auditorium. Twelve more classrooms were added in 1949.

The school was closed as elementary school in 1975 and opened as a commu-

nity educational center. Since that time it has been leased to the Minneapolis School District and has been the home of STEP food shelf and Montessori School. The last two will now have to find a new home.

The existing school building will be renovated into 27 to 30 condominium units. Two additional buildings will be added for the town homes. One building will be built along Webster Avenue and the other will be build in the playground south of the main building on Vernon Avenue for a total of 14 units.

The development will bring new life to a St. Louis Park landmark.



## This and That

After writing the articles on the whistles and bells for the last Re-Echo I was surprised to find that the St. Louis Park Historical Society's collection includes both items. It is unknown where the steam whistle came from, but it is a good guess that it was from the Monitor. The bell is not a big school bell, but is a hand held bell used to call the kids in from recess.

It is with regret that we report the

passing of George "Stoge" Williams. Stoge knew more about St. Louis Park than anyone and was a great inspiration for the book "Something in the Water."

Why are the St. Louis Park fire engines still red today? In 1975, Fire Chief Omar McGary received permission to change their color from red to yellow. Many safety studies came out in favor of yellow and many fire departments around the country were changing, but ours are still red.

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## Summer Depot Hours

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is opening the Depot for public visits on Saturdays during the summer. The Depot will be open from 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM until Labor Day. Someone from the Society will be available to provide help. Hikers and Bikers from the Southwest Trail are especially welcome. Cold drinks, refreshments and relief station available.

The Depot is located at 36th and Brunswick and is the home of the St. Louis Park Historical Society. It is the archival location of the Society's historical documents. Another part of our collection is on display at the Lenox Community Center. This is open to the public from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM on Monday and Thursdays, or by appointment.

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## "Invasion of the Colored People"

In 1954, Honeywell hired America's first African-American physicist, Woodfin Lewis, who brought his family to live in St. Louis Park. After the Lewis family moved into their home, there was negative reaction with the result that the Lewis family was served an eviction notice. This notice outraged the mayor and

the church community who came to their support, but the family was eventually driven away.

Daughter Ellen Lewis is now a writer in New York and has written a play about her family's experience. The play entitled, "Invasion of the Colored People," is being presented at the Great American History Theatre on Tuesday, October 5, 2004.

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## Oral Histories

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is building a collection of oral interviews about Park history. These tapes are available for viewing. Some of them were tapes recorded from cable presentations while others were taped to record memories before they were lost. These memories existed only in someone's mind and this is an attempt to capture as many as possible. Multiple subjects are covered on these

tapes. A listing of the subjects is available through the Society. One example is Ben Brown, Doug Gullifer and Bob Jorvig walking through the Elmwood neighborhood while discussing the historic sites. Another example is called "From Morse Code to Fax to Internet," as related by Bob Jorvig's mother, who experienced them all. Do you know of someone we should be interviewing?

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## Spell Check This

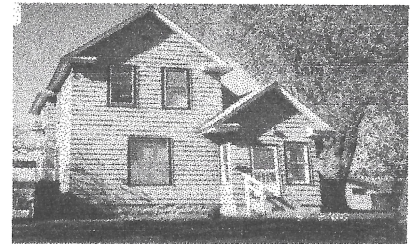
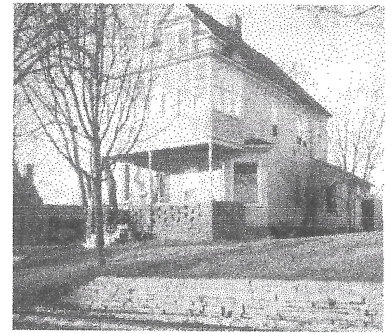
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## Must Go

With the development of the Minnesota Rubber property, two of the oldest houses in St. Louis Park will be lost. There are four located on this property that Oxford Street. Two of these houses are post WW II but the two pictured were even older and built about 1890. They are typical of the two story house built in St. Louis Park at that time by T. B. Walker to house the workers at the Monitor Drill.

For years, the bottom house was the home of the Downing family who moved there in 1903. Frank Downing work at the Monitor Drill as a tool and die maker. It then became the home of the Felber family. Wes Felber was the depot agent for the St. Louis railroad. In the letter written for "Something In The Water," Florence Felber talked about the family's involvement in the running of the depot and how easy it was for her to run out the back door and be at the Lincoln School.



## Engell Dairy

The Engell Dairy was located on Excelsior Boulevard approximately where the Citizens Bank is today.

We remember it, but if you wanted to find out about it at the Historical Society you could not. We had no information.

This has changed. Bohn Engell, who now lives in Oklahoma, has sent us a history and pictures for our collection. Bohn is one of the last of his family, and all of this history would have been lost with out his contribution. We thank

him very much.

Do you have some St. Louis Park history that should be in our files? Our collection is more and more accessible with the addition of the Lenox space and a new web site.

One of the most used things in our files are the St. Louis Park High School Echowans. Our collection starts with the first publication but is not complete. Missing are 1932, 1933, 1934, 1938 and none at all after 1946. Would you be willing to contribute your copy?

The St. Louis Park Historical Society meets the first Tuesday of every month. The next meeting will be September 7, 2004 in the Depot. You are invited to attend.

"Something in the Water" is available for \$20.00 including handling. Send your name and address to:

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