



# The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

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

## Cobble Crest

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 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

Cobble Crest was the country estate of Minneapolis businessman Leslie H. Fawkes. The estate consisted of 60 or more acres on both sides of Minnetonka Boulevard at what is now Cavell Avenue. Included in the estate was a large deer pen with tame deer, a stable, a trapshooting area, a waterfall, Cobble Crest Lake (which had been excavated), statues, and the home.

The home is located at 2840 Cavill. At one time it had seven bedrooms, seven bathrooms, and several porches, one of which was 54 feet wide. There were three fireplaces, one of which took up a complete wall in the living room. Because Fawke's hobby was cobblestones the whole house is built entirely of cobblestones, hence Cobble Crest. Fawkes came to Minneapolis from Illinois and opened a bicycle company in 1893. At the beginning of the automotive age, he renamed his company Great Western Cycle and Automotive Company and became the first auto agency in Minneapolis. He sold Reo Speedwagons, Cord sport cars, and Auburn and Overland cars. He also built the building at Hennepin Avenue and Harmon Place that is named after him.

When the depression hit in 1930's all of Fawkes' car companies went bankrupt and he was forced to sell his country estate. The second owner was Howard Meager. He built a dance floor by the lake and opened it to the public. Bands were brought in to provide music for dancing and entertainment. There is no record of a liquor license being issued at this location so it is possible the liquor was

illegal. The endeavor did not last long probably because the end of prohibition. The third owner was a dentist named Dr. Tinker. It was during his ownership that the property was subdivided. Homes in the Cobble Crest addition were built from 1956 to 1958.

Ward Hurd, son of a former Park mayor, was the fourth owner of the property in 1959.

The current owner is James J. McDonough owned the house since 1976. He is in the process of restoring it.

*This story about Cobble Crest, was sparked by a visit to the Historical Society by Dara Miller of Des Moines, Iowa. Her Mother and Father were early residents of St. Louis Park. They lived on Oak Hill in one of the Monitor Drill houses that were built in the low swamp land. Her Mother lives with Dara in Des Moines, remembered working in downtown Minneapolis and walking to and from Carl Reiss's Waiting Station at Brownlow to catch the streetcar.*

*Dara got to see her Mother and Father's former home, but she was also looking for Cobble Crest. At the time, there was nothing in our files about this, and no one in the Society had heard of it. Dara was looking for Cobble Crest because her father had played in an orchestra at this nightclub. Her Mother worked there as a waitress. They met and were married. Recently, one of our researchers found an old 1983 newspaper story that told us the story. Dara Miller and her Mother will be pleased.*



## Mary Monica

Mary Monica Ferris is a prolific mystery writer and is currently writing a series of books about middle-aged Betsy Devonshire who lives in Excelsior and owns a needleshop. Mary Monica's current book is the fourth in the series and entitled "Embroidered Truths."

Mary Monica is the pen name of a long time City resident named Mary Kerfeld. She moved to the Park from Madison, Wisconsin. She volunteers at the St. Louis Park public schools talking about writing mystery stories and sometimes about life in medieval England. She also works with WRR, a group that rescues injured and orphaned wildlife. Her particular favorites are crows. Mary has written more than 15 mysteries and has used several noms de plume. Her first series was the Peter Britcher series she wrote as Mary Monica Pulver. With coauthor Gail Frazer, they wrote six

historical fiction novels as Margaret Frazer. When she was asked by an editor to write a series about a needle-working sleuth who lived in a small town she picked the name Mary Monica Ferris. Ferris was picked because of the ferris wheel that was in the former amusement park in Excelsior.

In an interview Mary Monica was asked about the local writing community. Her reply was, "I have never known a place with so concentrated a collection of writers. And it is not like we are all writing mysteries, there is some of every kind. Maybe it's the water. (We know about that!)" Other novels in the Betsy Devonshire series:

A Stitch in Time  
Crewel World  
Unraveled Sleeve  
Framed in Lace

## What ever happened to Thompson's Store?

The store at 4346 Brookside Avenue became Thompson's Grocery in 1915 when it was purchased by Dana and Anna Thompson.

Thompson was a friend of every kid in the neighborhood and an active participant in local affairs. He always wore a white shirt and bow tie whether he was mowing his lawn, tending his store, or serving on the Council.

The hill behind the store down to Minnehaha Creek was unofficially known as Thompson's Park. In the winter he encouraged the kids to use it for sliding and would let them come into the store to warm up.

Thompson took his civic duty very seriously. He served at various times on the St. Louis Park School Board. His

wife was active in American Indian affairs. Once Dana hired a horse drawn sleigh to get out the vote to approve the building of Brookside School.

The Thompsons were the owners until 1947, although at different times it was operated as Hanscom's Grocery and Lindsrom's Food Market. From 1947 until 1968 it was the Seifert Grocery. Thelma and Alden Syverson purchased the building, and Thelma opened Brookside Antiques. She ran this until her death in 1977. Alden continued to sell off items but purchased no more. The building and its contents are now owned by Syverson's daughter.

## League of Women Voters Tour

On May 21, 2005, the League of Women Voters and Park Shores Campus sponsored a bus tour of the Park, narrated by Kevin Locke, the City's Director of Community Development.. Jeanne Andersen rode along and took marvelous notes. Some of the more significant potential developments are described as follows

The Friedheim Building at 36th and Park Center Boulevard (built in 1972) would be replaced with 14 stories (150

units) of luxury condominiums.

The new Elmwood Post Office Building at 36th street and Raleigh Avenue was turned over to the Post Office by the City in April but recently opened.

The Wooddale and Highway 7 intersection is up for redevelopment. The City of St. Louis Park has purchased the Soomek Building (5915 Hwy 7) and will also purchase the building at 6007.

A former cement plant at 3270 Gorham is/will be 75 market rate condos in a



## League of Women Voters Tour cont'd

three story building.

The site of the former Apple Valley Redi-Mix plant on Louisiana Avenue is slated to become 75 condos.

Sam's Club at Louisiana and Lake Street intends to build a new store at the same site facing Highway 7. Its present store will be a parking lot and a gas station.

The 9.5 acre site that was formerly National Lead and Golden Auto Parts on Highway 7 and Lake Street needs to be decontaminated. Plans are to construct a 95,500 square foot office/warehouse building.

Brookside School is being transformed into 27 condos. Master Builders, the developer, will also build 14 townhomes and 5 single family homes on the site.

Village in the Park, former site of Minnesota Rubber between Wooddale and Alabama avenue, will create 204 housing units by June 2007: Seventy eight will be townhomes, 60 loft condos and 60 senior condos.

Many proposals have been made to redevelop the site of Al's Bar, Anderson Cleaners, and the Best Western Motel at France Avenue and Excelsior Boulevard. Although there are no current proposals, this property continues to attract developers.

## The St. Louis Park Historical Society

meets at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of every month. The next meetings will be held on:

October 4, 2005 @ Lenox

November 1, 2005 @ Lenox

December 6, 2005 @ Lenox

You are invited to attend

Knollwood Target will be demolished and a Super Target will be built in its place.

Projected light rail stations in the Park will be built at Belt Line Boulevard, Wooddale, and Louisiana Avenues.

Parkside Urban Flats, at 460 Ford Road, consists of 70 market rate condos in three buildings.

Aquila Commons: The former Talmud Torah School at 33rd and Virginia will be replaced with 110 units of senior, limited equity co-ops.

Stonebridge Condos: Plans include 65 market rate condos for this former tennis club at Ford Road and Highway 394.

Swamp land between the Creekside Apartments (7400 Excelsior Blvd) and the Appliance Recycling Center is slated to become a six story condo building.

## This and That

Don Swenson's book, "Something in the Water" is in its fourth reprinting continues to be available. The book can be obtained through the St. Louis Park Historical Society from Bob Reiss at 952 470 1762 or Rcreiss@Aol.com.

Nothing in our collection gets used as much as the Echowans but our collection is far from complete. We need copies of them for most years after 1945. If you are not using your copy or have two copies please consider donating to the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

Hilma Skogman Patterson has always been part of the history of St. Louis Park but now her memories are in the Historical Societies archives. She wrote a delightful story on the memo-

ries of her early life. As she writes, "We are part of that old history and none of us is getting younger." Her memories, and yours, can provide a great picture, but you need to write yours. We are encouraging everyone to write theirs. You will find it great fun reliving the memories you thought you had forgotten. Do it now!

The Re-Echo now has its own e mail address. Reecho@Aol.com

Harrison Allen sent the Historical Society some great pictures and stories about the building of his father's riding arena. When it was completed in 1930 it was one of the largest indoor riding arenas in the country. It is hard to realize that there were woods and trails that could be used for horseback riding in that area. Maybe it explains why it is a roller rink now.



## Parkette Reunion

From 1965 until 1983, the Parkettes were cheerleaders for the Vikings. The 1965 Echowan contained the following commentary about the Parkettes: "At seventeen you girls can't ever bend your knees," harped Mrs Fran Libby, Parkette adviser. With this constant prodding plus strenuous practice, Parkettes achieved near-profection. They were asked by the Minnesota State Department to be part of a group of professional who entertained at the St. Cloud Reformatory. Touring the cell blocks and seeing the gratitude on the inmates' faces distressed but deeply gratified them. What they experienced at St. Cloud was different from the joy they felt dancing at the St. Paul Winter Carnival and the excitement tasted whenever they gave a televised performance at a Los Angeles

Lakers' NBA game. Not quite as exciting as television was dancing at a Vikings football game in freezing temperatures wearing only sweaters. But gold megaphones charms given the girls who danced at every game more than compensated for the cold toes and frost-bitten hands."

The planned 50th anniversary reunion is scheduled for April 22, 2006. Contact Jennifer Davis Newell, email JLN7550@Aol.com or telephone 952 401 0111

**Parkettes Web Site:**  
**WWW.Parkettes.Org**

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## Herb Lefler

Herb Lefler was the Mayor of St. Louis Park from 1958 to 1960. He was born in Iowa but graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School and settled in St. Louis Park. He set up a no-interest student loan program for Park High students who wanted to go to college.

In 1962 student loans were almost unheard of and very hard to obtain. College tuition was relatively expensive and it was difficult to pay for college. Instead of giving scholarships, each student had agreement to pay the money back. When the money was paid back it was to be loaned to another student. The program was rather informal and did not spell out exactly how the repayment was to be made.

Herb Lefler was the major source of funding. Mary Lefler has said "That all my husband did was to write a check any time there was a meeting and they were a little low on money." The program fell apart when Herb Lefler died in 1991 and the Educational Loan Fund committee desolved. Currently there is over \$50,000 in outstanding loans are not being paid back by the students who were helped by the program and had agreed to pay the money back.

Herb Lefler loved being able to help Park students. Now his family wants this money returned to help other students. If you benefited from this program and have not paid the money back please contact Barb Nelson at the Senior High School and work out a payment plan. Prove that the faith Herb had in you was well founded..

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The Re-ECHO  
5109 Stoney Bridge Court  
Minnetonka MN 55345