



# The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

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



**We are the  
Parkettes, the  
Parkettes are we.**

## 50th Reunion

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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The Parkettes 50th reunion, sponsored by the St. Louis Park Historical Society, was held at the Marriott City Center on April 22, 2006. Over 350 Parkettes, parents and fan club members attended. They came from all over the United States to celebrate the memories and friendships of their dancing years.

Mary Ann Evans Eckenberg and Sara Lenmark Halverson were at the reunion to explain how they, with Diane Berger Lark, approached Mrs. Fran Libby to form the group and to be the group's choreographer. The idea appealed to Mrs. Libby and she obtained permission for this new school function.

Mrs. Fran Libby was honored for her disciplined coaching and leadership. Toni Swiggum took over after Fran's death and was at the reunion to accept thanks from the "girls" for the great job she did.

Mark Rosen was the Master of Ceremonies for the event, and his selection was an excellent choice. As a graduate of St. Louis Park High and a sports reporter for the Vikings, he provided the background and the school spirit. Although it has been over ten years since the Parkettes last performed, a

group of former Parkettes danced to "One Step at a Time" for the reunion. The evening was full of smaller groups extemporaneously demonstrating that they remembered the teamwork and the steps.

The formal program ended with a style show of Parkettes costumes. As part of the reunion, the Parkettes were asked to recall their memories and the effect being a Parkette had on their lives. Just about everyone called the experience "the highlight of my life." The discipline and friendships were mentioned many times. They knew the tough discipline of practice made them very good dancers, and they were proud of being good. They learned to give 110% and to smile and keep dancing!

They remembered the practices, the points-off for slip ups, and the support they got from the fellow dancers during on-stage mistakes. They all remembered the night the Parkettes arrived at their homes to tell them they were new Parkettes. They also remembered the white Go Go boots.....without love.

It was a gala affair and one to be remembered!!!

## Stone Structures

The Historical Society continues to monitor the relocation plans for the stone picnic structures in Lilac Park and the future of the St. Louis Park Park, SLPP (yes, that its name). Meetings with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, State Historic Preservation Office and the City have narrowed the potential possibilities. It is the Historical Society's position that the structures lose much of their historic significance if they are moved to a remote location away from the highway.

The Society's dream plan for these Parks includes the following:

1. All fixtures/artifacts repaired and preserved at SLPP.
2. That the beehive BBQ and last table be moved from Lilac Park to SLPP.

3. Restoration and a long term maintenance plan for SLPP
4. Access to SLPP from the South west bike trail.
5. The new pedestrian bridge over Highway 7 be accessible from SLPP.
6. Any bike trail plan to link the Southwest and Cedar Trails includes SLPP.

The highway parks were not the only city parks in St. Louis Park with stone structures. MnDot has provided the Historical Society with pictures taken near Highway 100 and Wooddale. These pictures were taken in 1939, but it is unclear in which quadrant that the park was located. We do not know when this park existed or when it was removed. If anyone has information about this park, please contact Jeanne Andersen at [Jandersen3@mn.rr.com](mailto:Jandersen3@mn.rr.com)



## Stone Structure Memories

*Pat Framheim Webster, a 1945 graduate of St. Louis Park High and Co-Editor of the Echo, wrote the following:*

"We took our lunch to a little park under sort of a bridge. There was a strip of land between the early Highway 100 and the nearest street. The WPA had built a picnic area with some stone tables and benches and a barbecue of stone that the local historical society is trying to preserve and move to another location so apparently is still in pretty good shape. They are calling it a beehive cooker. That is a pretty good description of it as it has a rounded top that could be described as an old fashion beehive.

It was here our long term plot began. We (with friend Leona) were eating our lunch one day when someone left some pop bottles. They were

worth two cent then and be decided to take them to the store and collect the money. So we started our kitty. We agreed to pit in any money we got from soda bottles we found. That was when Coca Cola came only in 6 ounce bottles and a case of 24 cost \$1.00, including the wooden case. Our plan for the fund was to finance a trip to Latin America. We were both interested in learning Spanish and this was where we wanted to go. One of the best places to find money was at the bus stops in March when the thawing began. People waiting for a bus would often drop their change in the snow and in the spring we would find it in the gutters. We checked the park regularly, It was not very popular. As we grew older we realized our efforts were not going to produce enough money to go to South America so we decided to split the money, which came to a grand total of \$3.75 after several years of bottle hunting and change finding."



## How St. Louis Park got its Name

The Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad had intended to run to St. Louis, Missouri, but when the Village was formed in 1886, it hadn't made it. In order to justify its name the railroad asked the village to adopt the name St. Louis.

The Post Office reminded the Village that St. Louis was already taken and it would be too confusing, so they settled on St. Louis Park. In exchange, the railroad promised to build a "park" in St. Louis Park as well as a depot. The Park was variously known as Bandstand, Firemen's, and Central Park and was very important to the Village as a gathering place for many years. It is still there and is now named Jorvig Park. The M&StL depot, which was built before 1886, is gone, but the Milwaukee Road depot stands in Jorvig Park. The Depot is owned by the City and has been used by the SLP Historical Society ever since it was moved there in 1970.

The last spoke of the single track Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway was driven in November 1871, and the officials took an inspection tour 12 days before the line

opened to passenger service. The line ran east-west through St. Louis Park to Lake Minnetonka. SLP resident Joel Barber Clough was the chief engineer until 1872. Now the Chicago North-western, the line had its eastern terminal in Minneapolis and extends south to Albert Lea and west to Aberdeen, South Dakota. The line runs parallel to and south of Highway 7. Parallel and north of this track was the Milwaukee Road.

There is some controversy as to what the Village was called before the railroad got involved. Some say it was known as Elmwood, but others insist that that was only the name of the Post Office. The area, which was originally surveyed in 1854, was part of Richfield Township before it was incorporated in 1886. While Elmwood may have been informal it appears that the name went directly from Richfield Township to St. Louis Park.

*The above article was written by Jeanne Andersen and was based upon information from her web site [www.Jeanneandersen.com](http://www.Jeanneandersen.com)*

## Updated By-Laws

On July 11, 2006, we will resume our annual meeting. At this July meeting, we will discuss and vote on a proposed updated set of by-laws presented by our by-laws committee, Bob Jorvig, Jeanne Andersen, and Don Shimmel. Copies of the amended by-laws are available from the Society. At least two week prior to this meeting, each member will be mailed a summary of these proposed by-laws. Please read them carefully and be prepared to vote at the July 11, 2006 meeting. For acceptance of these changes we need as many members as possible to vote. All members are encourage to attend. If you cannot stay for the whole meeting, please come for the vote on the by-laws

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2006, please select the membership category that best suits you.

Member	\$25.00
Silver Member Sponsor	\$50.00
Gold Member Sponsor	\$100.00

Clip this portion of the Re-Echo and make sure the mailing address on the back is correct. Add a winter/summer address if applicable.

Please send your check to:

The St. Louis Park Historical Society  
3700 Monterey Drive  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

## This and That

The Senior Video Department at Lenox can help you convert your personal history into current technology. Slides, photos, and home movies can be converted to VHF or CD's. Phonograph records or audio cassette tapes can be converted to CD's. You could also learn to do it on your home computer. This is all part of your Senior Membership at Lenox.

*In the Spring 2006 Re-Echo story "Pete the Greek" we wrote about Steve Ralles trip to China with the Pawlenty Administration. Steve journalized his experiences. The link to his journal is [www.minnesota-china.com/education/sjournals/steveralles.htm](http://www.minnesota-china.com/education/sjournals/steveralles.htm)*

On Lake street east of McDonalds there is a small two story building that was originally the site of first St. Louis Park Rec Building. It was the former Holy Family church building that had been moved from its location on Alabama Ave. When this building was demolished, the site continued to be used as a winter skating rink and the two story building was built as the warming house. The site is no longer used as a skating rink and the building is scheduled to be demolished.

*The St. Louis Park Historical Society meets at at 7:00 pm the first Tuesday of every month. The next meeting dates are:*

*July 11, 2006*

*August 1, 2006*

*September 5, 2006*

## Who We Are

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to record preserve and disseminate information on the history of St. Louis Park. The archives of the Society are located in the Depot at Jorvig Park and at the Lenox Community Center. The Lenox site is open on Monday and Thursday from 10:00 AM until 12:00 PM. A more convenient visit can be arranged by calling the Society or any of the listed Trustees.

The St. Louis Park Historical Society's mailing address is at the Rec Center  
3700 Monterey Drive

St. Louis Park, MN 55416.

To call us phone 952-934-2550. Leave a message and someone will call back. If your need is urgent, call a Trustee. Jeanne Andersen maintains a website time line with a great deal of informa-

tion on St. Louis Park. It is currently accessible through [www.jeanneandersen.com](http://www.jeanneandersen.com).

The Re-Echo is written and distributed by Bob Reiss. Bob Reiss also distributes the St. Louis Park history book "Something in the Water."

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