



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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Issue No. 28

THE WESTLING HOUSE

“Westling’s Place,” 8550 Minnetonka Blvd., is on the market. (Parts of) the house go back to 1874, making it the oldest house in St. Louis Park. The new owners plan to subdivide the 3 acre property into four lots, called Isabelle Estates. They have several scenarios that they are discussing with the City; only one calls for the house to be saved. City Councilperson Sue Sanger has shown an interest in saving the house, perhaps even for use by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. The developer gave a tour of the house to members of the Historical Society, and we took many pictures. We predict that there will be many conversations about the disposition of the property in the future.

Some communities have Housing Preservation Commissions to address these kinds of situations. The St. Louis Park Historical Society suggests that one be established in the Park. This City entity would address issues regarding our oldest homes, and perhaps recommend a housing preservation code that would prevent the demolition or substantial rehabilitation of our many 100+ year old houses. Housing Preservation Commissions are eligible for many grants and services available from the State Historic Preservation Office.

Here are some facts and stories about the Westling House; many came from Mrs. Marlys Westling herself:

1874: The original portion of the house was built. Verification of this date is unclear, although it may be in the abstract.

1884: The house was added onto, as evidenced by "1884" etched in the cement, and a copy of an 1884 newspaper found in the wall during a subsequent renovation. News of the day was a visit to Minnesota by General Grant.

The 1889 map shows the property belonging to Mary M. Bruce.

During prohibition the place was a speakeasy, decorated with umbrellas, and featuring a magic cistern - pull on a rope to retrieve the hooch.

1933: Belmont Tavern and Belmont Stables were both listed in the Village's first directory.

1935: Only Belmont Tavern was listed in the directory. A.J. Rowan requested a license to sell beer, although a Mr. Vader Van Slyke was listed as the owner of the Tavern.

Continued on Page 2...

WESTLING HOUSE, CONTINUED

1942: The property and acres of land were purchased by Richard J. and Marlys Westling. As early as 1939, the Westlings had raised produce and chickens on land they rented at 31st and Louisiana. The Westlings also farmed at their new location, and raised chickens and pigs.

1947: The Westlings subdivided the property (West Lynn) and built 65 homes. Mrs. Westling designed the houses.

The Westlings also named the streets in the subdivision, which the Village said had to be named after American battles. Thus, they named:

Aquila: Mrs. Westling originally wanted to name it Aragon, but it was deemed too close to Oregon. Then she found a book called *Action at Aquila*, which described a Civil War battle where 8 men were killed. The 1938 novel was written by Hervey Allen (who also wrote *Anthony Adverse* in 1933, which Warner Bros. made into a major motion picture in 1936, starring Fredric March, Olivia de Havilland, Claude Rains, and Gale Sondergard, and directed by Mervyn LeRoy).

Boone: This street was named in honor of Mrs. Westling's shirt-tail relative, Daniel Boone; she had to show the Village evidence of a battle named Boone to get it approved.

PARK'S OLDEST CHURCH BUILDING

This large, perhaps Park's oldest, church building has had many owners and uses over its 84-year lifespan. It was built by the First Lutheran Church. The group met at Fern Hill School (also called Lake Street School) in 1915, but had to move when the city made an addition to the school. At one time a tent was used for services. In 1922, a lot was purchased from T.B. Walker, and \$110 was donated by Mrs. Walker, provided that certain lot was used. The address was 3208 Xenwood (formerly Rosslyn) at Lake Street.

The church basement was built in November 1924. The congregation met there until the superstructure was completed in 1928, dedicated on October 14. It boasted a seating capacity of over 400 people, and a membership of 549 baptized persons. Reverend J. Lyle Halvorson began at the church in the 1920s, and served until 1956. The building was enlarged around 1937. The house and lot adjacent to the church was purchased for a parsonage, but was converted to a Sunday school in 1959 – a tunnel was built between the two structures. In October 1959, a different house at 5814 W. Lake Street was purchased for the parsonage. In 1961,

membership was approximately 600 with 200 in Sunday School. A new church building, located next to the new parsonage, was begun in early spring 1968.

The old church building on Xenwood Ave. was sold to the Andahazy School of Ballet, which shared the old building with the church until the new one was completed in November 1968. The school occupied the building until at least 1987. In 1989 and 1990, Marius and Krisztina Anderhazy lived in the once and future first parsonage, 3212 Xenwood, which was next door and still connected by the tunnel built by First Lutheran.

Subsequent owners are unclear; the building lay vacant from 1995 to 1997.

In 1997, the building was purchased by the Macedonian Evangelical Missionary Baptist Church. Many of its approximately 50 members had previously attended Zion Baptist Church in Minneapolis. The church started with a meeting on March 6, 1997 at the Plymouth home of pastor Karl L. Darrisaw.

We invite you to join the

ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OUR GOALS FOR 2008 *INCLUDE...*

- Raise \$30,000 for the preservation of the historic Highway 100 beehive and other stone structures
- Continue to make the *Re-ECHO* available to all interested persons
- Enhance the Historic Depot with a model train display
- Assist Jr. High students with the 7th grade SLP history component
- Continue to enter data about the collection into PastPerfect program
- Continue to add information and pictures to the Society's web site: *www.slphistory.org*
- Tape interviews with longtime and notable Parkites, to be shown on Community TV
- Obtain project funding through public or private grants
- Increase membership by 25 percent

2008 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual Individual/Family Membership: _____ \$20

Business and Individual Benefactor Member Donation:

_____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100 \$ _____ Other

Name(s): _____

Address _____

Email address: _____

During winter months from _____ **to** _____ **:**

Address _____

Email address: _____

Mail membership dues to:

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

Phone: 952-924-2550

Donations are 100% tax deductible

SAVE THE BEEHIVE

And other Roadside Park Structures

The plan to move the Beehive and other stone structures from Lilac Park to Roadside Park has been approved by the City Council. Work is scheduled to start in the spring of 2009. City funds and grants have been obtained, but it isn't enough. The Historical Society has been asked to raise \$30,000. The first place we turn to is our membership and the readers of the Re-ECHO. We ask you to donate to this very important cause. Even small donations add up to thousands, so please give what you can. Preserving this historic landmark is important to the City and its residents, so please help us out. Thanks!

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2008 BEEHIVE DONATION FORM

Amount of Contribution: \$ _____

Name(s): _____

Address _____

Mail your contribution to:

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

Phone: 952-924-2550

Donations are 100% tax deductible

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Than you to everyone who brought us donations since the last Re-ECHO.

Beverly Johnson donated a very precious stock certificate from the St. Louis Park State Bank, dated August 5, 1914. The bank lasted from 1915 to late 1918/early 1919, and officially went bankrupt in 1922. Presumably Roy R. Johnson lost his five shares, with a face value of \$100 each. Interestingly, Roy Johnson also signed the certificate as cashier. The president's signature has faded.

Virg Hofstrand sent us the story of the St. L. Loader Company, an early Park business (1917-1926) incorporated by his father, Henry P.

Hofstrand. Look for it on the web under businesses.

Joan Leeds donated pictures of the Ruedlinger family and farm. The Ruedlingers ran a nursery and then a liquor store where Knollwood Liquor Store is today. Joan also donated five Echowan yearbooks from the 1940s.

Emory Anderson donated six pictures of Excelsior Blvd. in the 1970s, including good shots of a gas station that is now a municipal parking lot.

We apologize if we left anyone out. Thank you again for your generous donations!

BEEHIVE UPDATE

The big news to report regarding the effort to move the so-called "Beehive" barbeque structure from one Highway 100 Roadside Park to another is that the proposal that Rick Birno and his staff at the City Parks and Recreation Department developed has been approved by the City Council. That means we have a green light to start raising the \$30,000 that we have been challenged to contribute.

One of the ways we are thinking about to conduct our drive is to send letters to all of the businesses in St. Louis Park, telling them of the project and asking for a donation. We would then follow up on the letter by conducting a door-to-door campaign – not just to collect money, but also to collect the history of that business. The City will be approaching the larger entities in town, such as Target and Home Depot, so ours will be a grassroots drive from the community. No donation will be too small – even \$5 or \$10 will be accepted gladly. We will be keeping track of our contributors and organizing a special event with them when the work is done.

Just to remind you, the work will involve moving the Beehive cooker from the Highway 100 Roadside Park at Minnetonka Blvd. Roadside Park ("Lilac Park") to the Highway 100 Roadside Park at Highway 7 ("St. Louis Park Roadside Park"). Other stone remnants of a place called "Monkey Island" will be salvaged as well. At the Highway 7 site, stone picnic tables and other features will be restored, the path that goes through it will be paved, and more parking spaces will be added.

This is an ambitious project, but we think we can raise the money needed to do the work. All donations will be tax deductible. If you wish to contribute, see the flier inside this Re-ECHO for a donation form. Thanks in advance to everyone who wishes to contribute to save this important historical landmark. To read more about the Beehive, see our website at www.slphistory.org. There are links to three pages about the Beehive on the home page.

WHO WE ARE

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to collect, preserve, and disseminate the history of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The archives of the Society are located in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37th and Brunswick) and at the Lenox Community Center (6715 Minnetonka Blvd.). Office hours at the Lenox site are Mondays and Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment. Our mailing address is:
3700 Monterey Drive

St. Louis Park, MN 55416

To contact us by phone, call 952-924-2550, leave a message, and someone will return the call. Our email address is **history@slphistory.org**.

You may also contact a member of our Board:

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ABOUT THE RE-ECHO

The Re-ECHO is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The Re-ECHO was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of SLP High School since 1917.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue spotlights the oldest home and oldest church building in the Park. Given space, we could explore Park's oldest operating school (Central) and our oldest park (Jorvig). (Do we know what the Park's oldest operating business is?) You can read about these topics on our website, **www.slphistory.org**, where we throw in everything we know or think we know about Park history. You are always welcome to send us your additions, corrections, and memories.

JOIN US!

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the Re-ECHO. You don't have to be a member to receive the Re-ECHO, but we need new members, especially active ones. Meetings are at 7pm on the first Tuesday of the month, and are open to all. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.

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St. Louis Park, MN 55416