



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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COME TO THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL!

September 20 is the date of our annual Ice Cream Social at the Historic Depot at 37th and Brunswick. Join us there from 1-4 PM for ice cream, lemonade, and lots of fun. In previous years the Fire Department has come to show off their ladder trucks. We hope that both Sparky the Fire Safety Dog and McGruff the Crime Dog will come! This year we hope to have a mini antique car show as well. The event is the Historical Society's only fundraiser of the year, and we are supported by donations from Byerly's. Come out and meet your neighbors, legislators, and Historical Society members, and take a tour of the Historic Depot.

TWIN CITIES WEATHER HIGHLIGHTS

The weather may be an interesting topic of conversation, but the history of weather? Here are some highlights of the most unusual weather experienced by residents of St. Louis Park and the Twin Cities.

1855-56 was a cold winter for new settlers to be out in temporary quarters. The cold wave started on December 22, 1855, and except for a few hours on January 1 and 2, 1856, the temperature was at or below zero for the next 20 days, with many afternoon readings at -10 to -20 degrees.

On **March 14-16, 1870**, a blizzard hit Iowa and Minnesota, dumping up to 16 inches of snow. The term blizzard was reportedly coined by a newspaperman in Esterville, Iowa. It was a boxing term, meaning a volley of punches. Others claim it was derived from the German word "blitz." The term gained official acceptance on December 8, 1876, when it was used in the Weather Bureau publication *Monthly Weather Review*.

On **August 20, 1904**, a tornado of such historic proportions that it was termed a cyclone, killed 14 people in the State, including three in St.

Louis Park. The storm heavily damaged the Sugar Company, Malleable Iron Works, Fosston, Monitor, the Peavy and Great Western Elevators, and 20 houses. On September 12, 1904 the Village Council appropriated \$100 for the victims of the cyclone.

On **June 23, 1914**, a tornado hit St. Louis Park so powerfully that those who lived through it swore it was a hurricane. Pictures show tremendous damage to buildings in the Park, but only one person was killed: 17-year old Esther Munson died when her house collapsed after she and her father had succeeded in dragging younger children from the house. A heavy timber fell on Esther and other debris was piled upon her. Her father was literally blown clear of the wreckage and escaped injury. Proceeds of the Village's 1914 Fourth of July celebration went to Esther's father to build a new house.

Continued on Page 2

WEATHER, CONTINUED

A terrific windstorm created considerable damage on **June 2, 1925**. It hit the former St. Louis Park Bank building, then the Post Office. The *Minneapolis Journal* reported: "There was mail missing in St. Louis Park, Minn. after the storm passed because it blew out the front of the building and scattered letters and papers in all directions."

Although the drought of the **1930's** is primarily associated with Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas, the same conditions were present in Minnesota. Minnesota farms were subject to drought and heat, and the dry soil blew away. It could be 100 degrees in May and stay there indefinitely. Winters were especially cold - Bob Jorvig says that it would be 30 below and kids would get off school for 3 days, but then it would STAY at 30 below and the kids had to go to school anyway.

November 11, 1940 was the date of what is referred to as the Armistice Day Blizzard. (Armistice Day is now called Veterans' Day.) This infamous and deadly Blizzard killed 49 people statewide and more than 50 sailors on the Great Lakes. The storm dumped 6.2 inches of snow in the Cities. The temperature dropped to 30 below, with winds from 32 up to 63 miles per hour. 20 of the fatalities were duck hunters, who had heard a weather forecast of light snow, perfect for tracking. The hunters were delayed in leaving by the temptation of the enormous flocks flying furiously to get away from the front.

The storm hit the area by surprise: the day started out in the 60's, and workers went to their downtown jobs on the streetcars wearing light coats or sweaters. The snow started about 10:15 AM, and by 11 it was coming down thick and fast. By noon the streetcars were slowing down or stopping, stranding workers in downtown hotels, their offices, or anywhere they could find shelter.

Cars were abandoned and stayed in the street for at least five days. Many people in the area walked on the rooftops of the cars to get to Al's Bar, where they proceeded to make the best of things for three days. It was estimated that 2,000 people were stranded on Wayzata Blvd. Nearby homeowners took some people in, and some found taverns along the way.

1965 was just a horrendous year for weather. It started on March 17, when a blizzard shut down schools for first time since 1950. 12 inches of snow fell in 24 hours, leaving 20 inches on the ground. Winds were clocked at 30-75 mph, and temperatures plunged below zero in the days after. Only one fatality was reported.

As a result of all that snow, a 672-mile stretch of the Mississippi River experienced the worst flooding in history, lasting for the entire month of April. On April 14, the flood hit the Cities. 16 people were killed.

To top it off, on May 5-6, 1965, as many as six F-4 tornadoes struck the northern and western portions of the Twin Cities, killing 16 people and injuring 685. WCCO announcers Dick Chapman and Charlie Boone won a Peabody Award for their work keeping viewers informed of what was going on. *Tri-County Publications* published a special tabloid publication called "Suburbia's Longest Night" which described the terrors of that night in words and pictures.

An early blizzard on **Halloween 1991** caught people off guard and the Cities slowed to a near halt before the tons of snow could be removed. The storm broke many records, including the most single storm snow total (28.4") and the most snow to fall in a 24 hour period (21).

Do you have weather stories? Contact us at history@slphistory.org.

SAVE THE BEEHIVE

And other Roadside Park Structures

We are excited about the move of the beehive and other stone structures from Lilac Park (by Minnetonka Blvd.) to Roadside Park (by the Nordic Ware tower) starting in the spring of 2009. This is an important rescue of structures that have graced the Highway 100 roadside since 1939. A **BIG** thanks for so many donations: we now have over \$6,000 of the \$30,000 we have been challenged to raise (of the \$220,000 total cost). We hope to canvass Park businesses, asking them for the history of their business and for a donation to the Beehive fund. We have a long way to go, so if you are interested in saving this St. Louis Park landmark, we'd love to hear from you. Even a nominal amount will help. Again, THANKS to everyone who has donated so far!

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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**

Please write "beehive" somewhere on your check.

Donations are 100% tax deductible

history@slphistory.org

www.slphistory.org

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Thank you to everyone who brought us donations since the last Re-Echo. We apologize if we left anyone out.

Harrison Allen, son of Herb Allen who built the Pastime Arena (now the Roller Garden), gave us his collection of clippings about the arena, including pictures of it under construction and articles about polo matches that were held there. He also helped identify some pictures we had. Mr. Allen also donated a 96-page newspaper insert from 1938 that celebrated the 60th anniversary of the *Minneapolis Journal*. It contains priceless information about the area in 1938 and 1878.

Norma J. Burton sent us a yellowed article picturing her grandfather, William C. Schroder, representing National Lead as the SLP Chamber of Commerce was formed.

Vern Wigfield came by the Depot and donated three vintage maps and a great picture of our Milwaukee Road depot before it was moved to its present location.

Janet Czartryski donated a SLP High School souvenir cup from 1968 as well as materials on the 40th Class Reunion.

THIS 'N' THAT

PARKTACULAR: We had a great time at the Parktacular Parade! We had two antique cars, which generated much appreciation from parade-goers. We also had two recumbent bike riders and a pencil lady (Kathy Johnson) who passed out pencils with our web address on them. We also participated in the "Share Fair" that was held that afternoon, and talked to a lot of people about saving the Beehive. It was a beautiful day and a lot of fun.

THE HISTORIC DEPOT at 37th and Brunswick is open to the public every Saturday from 1 to 4 pm through September. Come chat and look at railroad artifacts. The exterior of the Depot is receiving a long-needed paint job, and we hope it is ready in time for the Ice Cream Social on September 20.

CITY PARKS: John Stout reminded us that Browndale Park (Browndale Ave. and Morningside Road) was named after a person, Henry Francis Brown, who farmed the area in the late 1800s. Before 1962 it was a swamp; the City cut down the north side of the big hill and used the fill to cover the cattails. Stout and his family lived in a house next to the park from 1953 to 2003.

MORE ON PARKS: Paul Omodt wants to know how Keystone Park got its name – anybody know?

ECHOWANS: Our collection of yearbooks is burgeoning! Bruce Fletcher donated six books - thanks, Bruce! And then the high school donated 24 books – all we had to do was ask! Here is a list of the books we DON'T have: 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1941, 1953, 1966, 1968-1970, 1972-1977, 1979, 2003, 2005-2008 . *Please don't throw away your old yearbooks!* Many thanks to everyone who has donated.

GOLDEN POINT?: Does anyone remember a Golden Point Restaurant located where the drycleaner/laundromat is, across from Texa-Tonka Shopping Center? It would have been in about 1959, before the current building was built in 1961. See the picture at www.slphistory.org/history/mtka8105.asp

CALENDAR: The Historical Society has provided historical pictures of the Park to the City for use in their annual City/School District Calendar. We worked closely with designer Todd Pernsteiner, and look forward to seeing the finished product.

MORE ON PICTURES: We recently provided pictures for use by a restaurant. Our rates for scans is \$10, but the Board decided that if you bring your own scanner, the price would drop to \$5. Our pictures are available for viewing during our office hours and by appointment.

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:

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St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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 and is dedicated to his memory. 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 is a little early so that we can tell people about our annual Ice Cream Social. We hope that you can come by, eat ice cream, and tour the Historic Depot on September 20.

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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