



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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Issue No. 31

THE BEEHIVE HAS BEEN MOVED!

In a surprise and welcome move, the City of St. Louis Park decided to move the Beehive fireplace from Lilac Park (Highway 100 and Minnetonka Blvd.) to SLP Roadside Park (Highways 100 and 7) this fall instead of next spring. In mid-September, Otting Movers dug up the structure and put it on a trailer. On October 22, the Beehive was towed down Minnetonka Blvd. to Ottawa, down Ottawa across Highway 7, and down the service road that serves Nordic Ware to Roadside Park. Thanks to the expertise of the movers, the structure survived the move in perfect condition. Afterwards, the Ottings exclaimed: "That's the smallest building we've ever moved!" It is now in the ground and snug for the winter.

In the meantime, the picnic tables and other stone structures at Roadside Park were cleaned, pieced together, restored, and placed on new pads. Pads were also made for bike racks and a portable toilet, to be installed next spring. Roadside Park, which has been voluntarily maintained by Nordic Ware, is in the process of becoming a jewel of the six original wayside parks built in 1939 along with Highway 100. The only other existing park is in Robbinsdale.

The move was covered by the *Sun-Sailor*, the *StarTribune*, KSTP-TV, the City's *Park Perspectives*, and no doubt many other local newsletters and publications. A full-blown media event and picnic will be held next spring.

Thanks go to Rick Birno, Recreation Superintendent for the City, who has been the force behind this endeavor, from writing the proposal, obtaining the funding, hiring the movers, and overseeing the restoration of Roadside Park. The work done on these parks couldn't have been done without him and we are grateful for his actions to save this precious piece of our history.

The work so far has come under budget, and the amount that the Historical Society has been challenged to raise has been reduced to \$10,000. Those funds will go toward restoration of the Beehive next spring. We have already raised almost \$8,000, and just need one more push to meet our goal. Thanks go to everyone who helped raise those funds! If you would like to donate, send your check to the Historical Society at 3700 Monterey Drive, SLP 55416.

For pictures of the move and links to media coverage, see the Historical Society's web site at www.slphistory.org

DON SWENSON

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is sorry to note the passing of one of our best friends, Donald Nels Swenson.

Don's St. Louis Park roots run deep. In 1923, his father Nels Swenson, along with partner Carl Redeen, opened the Swenson Redeen meat market and grocery in the Walker Building on Walker Street. In those days, housewives called in their order and the groceries were delivered to their door. The store was a great improvement from having to take the streetcar to Minneapolis for groceries.

In 1927, Don's parents moved to St. Louis Park and Don was born on January 2, 1928. He graduated from Park High in 1945, served in the Army, and returned to the University of Minnesota to finish his education. He worked for many years in the area of human resources and served as Vice President of Personnel for Massey Ferguson, Inc.

Don played a key role in the life of the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Although he had not lived in the Park for many years, in 1998 he decided to write a book of memoirs by people who had grown up in the Park during the Depression. He called the book *Something in the Water*, a sly reference to the City's experiences with the Creosote Plant. From his home in Arizona, he contacted many of his classmates and children of businessmen like his father to get first hand accounts of how life in the Park was like in the 1930s and early '40s.

He needed additional reference material, however, and turned to the SLP Historical

Society. Unfortunately, with the death of founder Marie Hartmann in 1996, the Society was floundering and the collection of documents was in disarray. Through Don's persistence, a major sort was done in the summer of 2000. Don used those documents to supplement his book. Without Don's push, those materials may have not seen the light of day for several more years. (They are now safely stored at our location at Lenox.)

Don self-published his book, and made copies available to the Historical Society to sell. After recouping the cost of copying, proceeds were donated to the Society. Copies of the book are still available. This is an important resource, especially since the chapters are not included on the Society's web site.

At the same time he was writing his book, Don also wrote a series of articles on St. Louis Park history for the *Sun Sailor*.

Don remained in contact with the Society, and made regular visits to his old home town. On one of those trips he recorded his memories of his early family history for the Society's Oral History series.

After a brief bout with pancreatic cancer, Don passed away on October 14, 2008 at age 80. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Connie, and his sons Craig and Joel.

In a typical act of generosity, Don and his family have requested that memorial bequests be made to the Historical Society.

Don's legacy is his book *Something in the Water*. The book is available by sending a check for \$20 to our mailing address: 3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park 55416.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL A BIG SUCCESS!

September 20 was the date of our annual Ice Cream Social at the Historic Depot at 37th and Brunswick. Thanks to the hundreds of kids and their parents for coming to eat ice cream, drink lemonade, and visit with Sparky the Fire Dog! The fire department came with their big truck, and a police car was there for kids to tour. We had one antique car that was very popular too. And we had a model train set up in the baggage room of the Depot. The event is the Historical Society's only fundraiser of the year, and we are supported again this year by Byerly's, who generously provided the ice cream, lemonade, and other supplies. A BIG THANKS to Rick Birno and the City of St. Louis Park for refurbishing the exterior of the Depot in time for the event - it looks great!

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Historical Society has been involved in two Historic Preservation projects in the past year: preserving the Historic Roadside Parks on Highway 100, evidenced by our Save the Beehive Campaign, and providing information about the Westling House property redevelopment project.

The City of St. Louis Park has also been involved in these projects. The City has provided half of the funds needed to move the Beehive and restore Roadside Park. The Planning Commission has spent many hours studying the proposal of a private developer of the historic Westling property.

In both cases the City has asked for Historical Society input. This has led us to consider the role we might play in creating a Historic Preservation Commission for the City of St. Louis Park.

At our October Meeting we invited Michael Koop from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to speak to

us on issues of historic preservation and how to encourage the City to create a Historic Preservation Commission.

A Historic Preservation Commission can only be created by city government. Once established, it would conduct historic resource surveys, recommend local designation of historic properties, develop and enforce design guidelines for locally designated historic properties, and undertake preservation education in the community.

At our November meeting, the Society created a Historic Preservation task force to work toward the establishment of a Historic Preservation Commission.

Members Nancy Rose and Kathy Johnson will serve on the committee along with others interested in this issue.

If you have an interest in historic preservation and would like to join this task force, please contact Kathy Johnson at 952-926-5040 or [djrkjsj@msn.com](mailto:djrksj@msn.com).

IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING RE-ECHO DISTRIBUTION

We have enjoyed providing copies of the Re-Echo to past and present residents of St. Louis Park and other friends who are interested in Park history. Perhaps due to our popularity, there are now over 900 names on our mailing list. The idea was to send it to everyone who was interested, in the hopes that readers would share information with us.

But because the mailing of the Re-Echo has become difficult due to of the large number, we are considering only providing it to our members. Membership is only \$20 per year, and pays the operating costs of the Historical Society, including the production and distribution of the Re-Echo. In 2008 we

had about 150 members.* If we could increase our membership, we could continue to publish the Re-Echo.

We are NOT implementing this policy change right away, and we would like to hear what you have to say. Please write or send us an email with your opinion. Our email address is history@slphistory.org, or you may contact a board member, as listed on the back page. Thank you for your support!

*By the way, we understand that there were life memberships taken out by some of our members years ago. If you were one of them, please let us know!

SEVENTH GRADE GEOGRAPHY PROJECT

This fall the Historical Society again assisted students on their 7th grade Geography projects. Students chose various places around St. Louis Park, and were asked to discover the past, present, and future of that site. Before we had our web site, we had many students coming to our Lenox site to look in our files and do some primary research. With the advent of our website, most students rely on that secondary source, but we did get about 16

students who came in during special evening hours to let them look at our files and pictures. Some of the topics they chose were the Park Theater, Westwood Hills Nature Center, the Walker Building, the Roller Garden, Monitor Drill, and St. Louis Park High School. We enjoy doing this, and we think the students learn an important skill by looking at old newspaper clippings, documents, pictures, and other materials in our collection.

SLP DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

The St. Louis Park Distinguished Alumni Awards committee is taking nominations for their annual award, to be presented at graduation. Nominees must have been Park students, but not necessarily graduates of Park High. Previous awardees are Thomas Friedman, journalist at the New York Times (Class of 1971), Sharon Isbin, Grammy-winning musician and head of the guitar department at Julliard (Class of 1974); and

Dr. Gregory Hedberg, curator, professor, and art historian (Class of 1964). The committee is especially interested in getting nominations from distinguished Park alumni in the math and science fields. For more information, see their web site at www.slpschools.org/distinguished.html or contact Nancy Lapakko at lapakkofam@yahoo.com.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

We have received many generous donations since the last Re-Echo. Thanks to everyone!

Mark Brothen donated a 1961 SLP Directory, a precious addition to our Directory collection.

Norma Burton donated a 1941 *Echowan*.

Robert Gronau donated a 1953 *Echowan*.

The family of Doug Gullifer, a sorely missed friend, generously donated *Echowans* from 1932, 1934, 1936, and 1938; four video tapes, miscellaneous papers, including meeting minutes; and Class of 1937 reunion materials. *

Anne Heller donated a copy of the September 6, 1951 *Dispatch* newspaper.

Gladys Johnson donated a 1937 *Echowan*.

Don Kruse donated a lectern that his father, Albert Kruse, made for the new St. Luke's Church in 1937. Albert Kruse also built the altar, pulpit, and baptismal font, as well as much of the church itself, first located at 41st and Webster Ave. When St. Luke's dissolved in 2005, it was decided to give the lectern to the Kruse family, who in turn donated it to the SLP Historical Society.

Chris Lavin donated a 1976 *Echowan*, and a Brookside school program.

Ted Meland donated a St. Louis Park High Student directory from 1959 that listed every student from the classes of 1959 – '62.

Roland and Joyce Pearson donated a 1941 *Echowan*.

Tom Smith found what appears to be a license plate hold emblazoned with an SLP Oriole!

*A note on the 1934 yearbook donated by the family of Doug Gullifer: this was a remarkable document that we didn't know existed. Ironically, it was dubbed the *Re-Echo* instead of *Echowan*. And instead of the slick paper of a normal yearbook, the book was apparently mimeographed, except for the student pictures. There was a note saying that the staff hoped the book was adequate given the shortage of money available. We are missing yearbooks from 1933 and 1935, and now we wonder if books were even issued during those dire Depression years.

Thanks to your generosity, we have a GREAT collection of *Echowans*. Those we still need are: (1933), (1935), 1966, 1968-70, 1972-75, 1977, 1979, 2003, 2006-08.

ALAN WEISMAN

On October 28, two of our members attended the 6th Annual St. Louis Park Community Foundation's "Give Back Day." Grants were presented to 12 community groups from the SLP Community Foundation. The keynote speaker was Alan Weisman, internationally renowned author and St. Louis Park native. Mr. Weisman spoke about his latest book, *The World Without Us*, which explores what would happen to the earth and man's infrastructure if people suddenly vanished. The presentation was fascinating, and Weisman was very

gracious about his connections to the Park, beginning his talk with "It's good to be home." (He attended elementary school at both Park Hill and Fern Hill, and graduated from Park High in 1965.) It was extraordinary that he found time to speak to us amidst his international book tour. He also sold and signed copies of his book, the proceeds to go to the Foundation. A copy of the book has been donated to the SLP Historical Society's library at Lenox. Find out more about Weisman and the book at www.worldwithoutus.com.

The following is a sample of the kinds of memoirs that appear in Don Swenson's book, Something in the Water.

A PAPER ROUTE TRIO

By Earl Ames, Jr.

If you lived in Oak Hill in the 1930s and wanted a newspaper delivered, you dealt with me or one of my two buddies. Bill Roberts delivered the *Journal*, Harry Hanson delivered the *Star*, and the *Tribune* was my paper. Our home was on Texas Avenue, just north of Walker Street. The Roberts family lived on 35th Street next to Ruedlinger Nursery, and Harry lived at Pennsylvania and Walker Street. Central pick-up spot for our newspaper bundles was at the Reiss Corner, and that's where we met other Park paperboys. The Village was spread out with lots of open spaces, so each route was a long one.

We covered all of Oak Hill with our deliveries. That meant Lake Street from the Reiss corner to Jaspersen's Dairy, Cottageville and all points in between. We then went as far north as Minnetonka Blvd. with the Creosote Plant on the east and Minnehaha Creek on the west. We could use our bikes in the warmer months, but it was a hike through the snow in the winter. Round trip from home and back was 7 ½ miles.

In the summer, Bill, Harry, and I sometimes wanted to get to the creek for a swim so we needed to hurry up the delivery process. We would divide the territory and each of us took one section and delivered all three papers. This didn't always work out to the best advantage. Sure, we knew every customer in Oak Hill, but there were mix-ups when customers received a paper – but not necessarily the right one. The phones would ring and we had to straighten out the mistakes. Paper routes were a learning process, and we learned that haste makes waste!

LIVING IN THE COUNTRY

We lived in the Village, but Oak Hill was more like living in the country. The Skogmans across Texas Ave. from our home had about six or seven acres and were involved with truck farming, raising strawberries, raspberries, sweet corn, and other produce. Most of us boys in Oak Hill worked at Ruedlinger Nursery [now Knollwood Liquor Store] and I also helped with haying and other chores for Vic Johnson, who was the largest farmer in Oak Hill. He was a grain farmer and at one time had a dairy. For a while, Dad helped Vic with milking in the mornings before he went to his regular job at the Creosote Plant.

Continued on Page 9...

Ames memoir, continued...

We saw Highway 7 being constructed, but it was impossible to look ahead to all of the changes that would follow for Oak Hill. I remember when Calhoun Realty put of a FOR SALE sign on the property that later became Knollwood Plaza. Someone contracted to take hay off the acreage and it turned out to be a real attraction for us kids when everything was neatly stacked. A gang of us descended upon the field and were having a great time sliding down the stacks when the caretaker arrived and scattered us in all directions. I headed for cover at the Creosote Plant, but a couple of the guys were caught. I soon found out that those who were caught had provided the names of each of the offenders. A formal letter from Calhoun Realty told my parents that legal action would be taken because of the damage. The good news was that Mother convinced the company that it would be good for the boys to re-stack the hay under the supervision of the fathers. All went well on that Sunday afternoon when the repair activity took place until my dad was accidentally stuck in the leg with a pitchfork. It didn't turn out as a happy day for the Ames family!

OAK HILL HERITAGE

Myrtle Borne, my mother, grew up on Oak Hill near Quebec and Lake Street. Long time friends who helped to raise her were Clara and Annie Werner. Annie married Sig Lundin, and Clara's husband was Boostrom. Both of the men did brick work at the Creosote plant. Mother met Earl, my dad, when he was taking courses at Dunwoody during World War I. They married in 1918 and settled in Oak Hill. The family tragedy was when my sister, a teenager, died of a ruptured appendix in 1935. The family joined Union Congregational Church and became very active members. When I was young, the church had a mission program at Oak Hill School to serve our neighborhood. I attended Sunday School class there with Albert Lundberg as teacher.

Dad worked at the Creosote Plant for 20 years. I became very familiar with the operations there. In fact, before we had indoor plumbing at our house, I went to the plant for a shower each week. The Rodgers Hydraulic Plant was also in Oak Hill and Dad worked there as a security guard during and after World War II.

Dad was a World War I veteran and the family was very involved with the Park's American Legion Post. Mother worked with the Auxilliary and also with the Rebecca Lodge since Dad was an Oddfellow. The Legion, Lodge, and church activities were at the center of family activities.

In 1950 my wife and I built a home on Texas Ave. next to the one owned by my parents. We lived there until 1988 and had a chance to see Oak Hill change from rural to a fast-paced suburban community.

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

Our email address is history@slphistory.org.

Our web site is www.slphistory.org

You may also contact a member of our Board:

President: John Olson. 952-929-6156

jrocnwr@juno.com

Vice President: Robert Jorvig. 952-938-6553

rjorvig@comcast.net

Secretary: Kathy Johnson. 952-926-5040

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Treasurer: Megan Crosby. 952-933-1399

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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.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

For the past few years we have been sending the Re-Echo by bulk mail, which saves us a lot of money each issue. But because we don't get returned mail, and because there may be many bad addresses on our mailing list, this issue is being sent by first-class mail. If you no longer wish to receive the Re-Echo, please write "Return to Sender" and send it back to us.

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

ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GOALS FOR 2009

- Raise \$10,000 for the restoration of the Beehive at Roadside Park
- Publish the Re-Echo newsletter quarterly
- Enhance the Historic Depot
- Assist Jr. High students with the 7th grade SLP history project
- 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 funding through public or private grants
- Increase membership by 25 percent
- Get YOU involved!

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2009 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

Donations are 100% tax deductible