

P1 / FEATURE ARTICLE

Discover St. Louis Park's history with our Ambassadors.

P4 / RECENT DONATION

The Park's first cradle is now in our collection.

P5 / MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ruth Steuck shares the changes she experienced during her decades-long career at Methodist Hospital.

P7 / MEMBERSHIP & GIVING

Your support helps us collect, preserve and share our history. Become a member, donate or volunteer now!



REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

Collect. Preserve. Share.

Volume 16.3

Summer 2017



HUNTING FOR HISTORY WITH THE ST. LOUIS PARK AMBASSADORS

BY TED EKKERS

Seventy-five years ago, the St. Louis Park Ambassadors program was known the Miss St. Louis Park Program. As with its name, many things have changed since then to reflect changing times. However, what has not changed is the camaraderie among the young people and the public service and leadership skills they develop while participating.

The Miss St. Louis Park program began in 1940, with each year's winner competing in the Aquatennial's Queen of the Lakes pageant. In 1967, the winner's title was changed to Maid Marian in honor of the city's Robin Hood Days festival. Robin Hood Days ended in 1971, and with it went the Miss St. Louis Park program, until its revival in 1985. In the late 1990s the first boy was included on the court—ours was the first community in Minnesota to take this step—and they bestowed the title "Ambassador" on him as he joined the Princesses who made up the court. The Princess title was eliminated altogether in 2002 in favor of the gender-neutral—and, by then, more aptly descriptive—Ambassador title. A Miss St. Louis Park was still crowned through 2007. Since then, the practice of selecting a single winner has been abandoned, reflecting the reality of the entire court sharing the responsibility of representing the city and the scholarship dollars distributed to court members.

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE ON EXCELSIOR: THE PARK'S FIRST HEALTH CLUB

BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

When the Sports and Health Club opened on November 23, 1959, it was the first time anyone had ever seen a family-oriented exercise facility. Located at the northwest corner of Excelsior Boulevard and Quentin Avenue, the \$250,000 precast concrete building was the brainchild of Arthur W. Owens. The facility featured a pool measuring 20 feet by 45 feet, separate workout rooms for men and women, a nursery and a game and social room suitable for cards, dances, shuffleboard, or even golf.

Instructional opportunities were available as well. If you were a teenage girl in 1960, you could take a self-improvement course by the owner of the Mary Lowe Charm School. The Teener's Charm Course taught hairstyling, makeup, wardrobe training, figure control, carriage, posture, personality analysis and development, and social graces. Similar courses were available for career girls and housewives.



Owens opened other such clubs in the Midway (1961), Apache Plaza (1961), LaSalle Court (1970), Normandale (1973), and Northland Park (1977).

In 1983 it was announced that a new Sports and Health Club was being constructed on the other side of Quentin at 4900 Excelsior Blvd., the former site of the Engell Dairy. That property became Bally's Total Fitness, and is now being redeveloped.

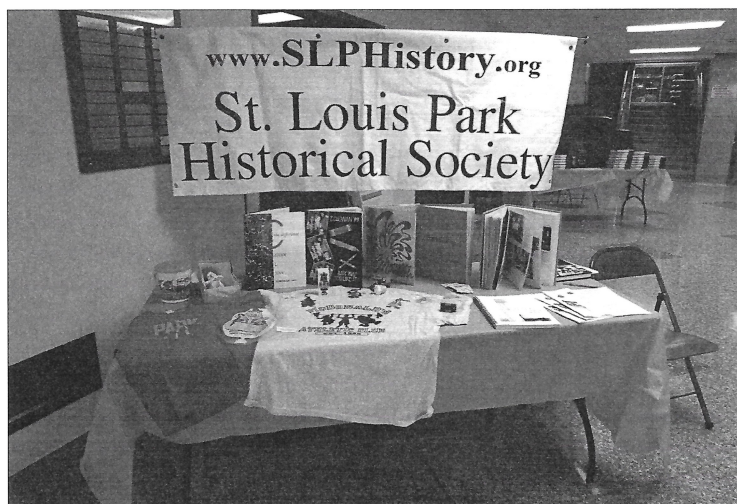
In 1982 the original Sports and Health Club building was leased to Park Nicollet and the pool was replaced by a conference room. Traces of the former health club remained: tiled staircases on either side led down to what had been the male and female changing rooms.

Now the building has been given a makeover, with a brilliant copper façade. It is fitting that a building originally dedicated to the health and wellness of the community is now owned by the clinic that had its roots right here in the neighborhood and continues to keep us healthy. Now if only Park Nicollet offered charm for all!

An earlier version of this story appeared in the May 2017 issue of *St. Louis Park Magazine*.

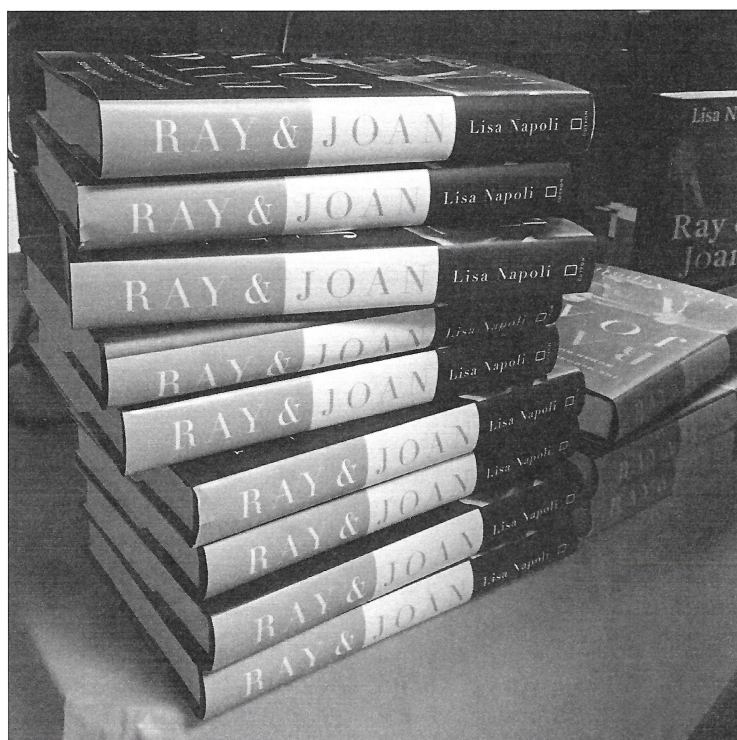
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISER RECAP: OUR NIGHT WITH LISA NAPOLI

On July 18, Lisa Napoli, author of *Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made the McDonald's Fortune and the Woman Who Gave It All Away* and *Radio Shangri-La*, delivered an informative and engaging presentation on the origins of St. Louis Park's first McDonald's, the history of the McDonald's chain and Joan Kroc's life and philanthropy. This enjoyable evening took place in the particularly appropriate setting of the St. Louis Park High School auditorium and raised over \$700 for our building fund.



To learn more about Napoli's book, visit rayandjoan.com. And visit our website to watch the video recording of the fundraising event with Lisa Napoli.

Thank you to all those who attended and supported this event and we look forward to seeing you again soon!



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Summer is coming to a close. My children will return to Susan Lindgren Elementary after Labor Day as fourth and second graders. While looking through the program from the school's dedication ceremony, I realized they will be part of the fiftieth class to go through that school! The teacher and staff names are all different of course, but, aside from a small addition on the west side, everything else about the building is pretty much the same. I suppose that is why the School Board has a major referendum on the ballot this year to do a serious overhaul of all the schools.

Our own fundraising efforts are also on my mind. We have helped two writers with the research for their most recent books and both have been willing to speak with us about those works in recent months. In April, St. Louis Park native Thomas Friedman was with us for an evening that raised about \$20,000 for our Building Fund. Lisa Napoli, author of *Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made The McDonald's Fortune and the Woman Who Gave It All Away*, joined us in July to describe Ray and Joan Kroc's affiliations with the McDonald's at Lake and Dakota and to explain how our city's protracted political battle over the site contributed to their courtship. We were able to connect with over 300 people at these two events combined and share with them the relevance of the Historical Society and our fundraising efforts. You can find a recording of both events on our website home page in the News section. Stay tuned for another event this fall!

At these events, we are often asked about the Building Fund's progress and how we fund our general operation. At our annual meeting (Sept. 12, 7 p.m., at the St. Louis Park Rec Center), I will share a more detailed recap of our finances, but give a brief overview here. The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a completely independent non-profit organization. While the City provides generous in-kind services such as maintenance and utilities at the Depot, we receive no financial funding from the city, county, or state. Your membership fees roughly cover rent for our office space. We rely on additional donations, corporate memberships and merchandise sales (street signs and books) to cover our operating costs, including printing and mailing the newsletter, archival supplies and insurance. So far, we have managed to keep our operating budget on track while raising over \$20,000 for the Building Fund this year. I hope you will continue to support us with your membership dues as you consider donating to the Building Fund.

As always, I welcome you to become more involved at the Historical Society. We have many ideas, but not enough volunteers to make them a reality, so we can easily find an opportunity that fits your desired time commitment, skill set and interest. Please reach out to anyone on the Board if you want to learn about how you can contribute.

With Park Pride,
Ted


CONNECT WITH US

Stop by: 3546 Dakota Ave. S., Suite C
St. Louis Park
Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.,
and by appointment

Call: 952-583-9893

Email: history@slphis.org

Visit online: www.slphistory.org

Follow on social media:  



Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society collects, preserves and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today* is an official publication of the Society.

Editor

INGRID MOE

Writers

JEANNE ANDERSEN

TED EKKERS

INGRID MOE

Contributing Writer

STEVEN STEUCK

Designer

JOANNA MCPEEK

© 2017 St. Louis Park Historical Society. All rights reserved.

SHOP AT AMAZON AND SUPPORT THE SOCIETY

Yes, really! AmazonSmile is an easy and automatic way for you to support the St. Louis Park Historical Society every time you shop, at no cost to you. Simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device.

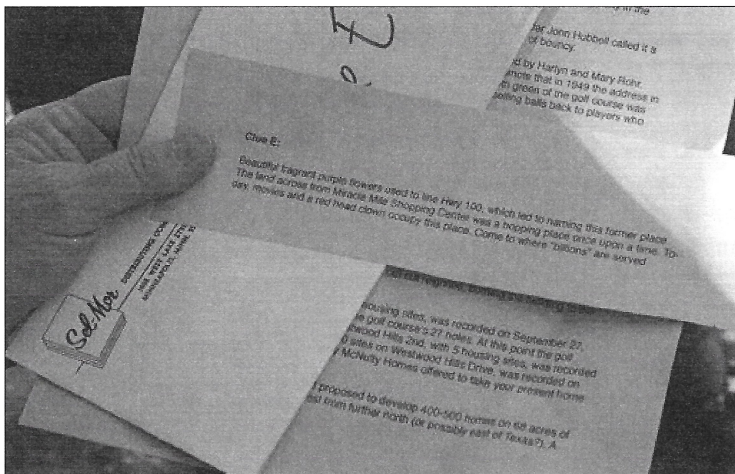


Designate the St. Louis Park Historical Society as your recipient nonprofit organization. If you are already an Amazon member, you can use the same account on AmazonSmile. Just always start at smile.amazon.com and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to us.

Start shopping at AmazonSmile today. It doesn't cost you a dime, but the dimes donated to us bring smiles to our faces!

For the past three years, current and potential Ambassadors have visited the St. Louis Park Historical Society for a talk on local history in preparation for a scavenger hunt. Each clue in the hunt takes them to a historical landmark. This event has quickly become a favorite among the candidates. Marla Destache, Co-Director of the Ambassador Program, explains, “The kids say it’s one of the neatest things they get to do as a candidate. They say there are places they passed by all the time without knowing the interesting stories about their importance. The kids really took a lot from it, and the families dove into it as well. So it is now an annual tradition.”

The event is held every year in the week of June leading up to Parktacular when the new Ambassadors are named. Themes for the event and the attendant clues rotate each year to keep the event fresh for both the outgoing court and incoming candidates. Past clues have led groups to the oldest house in the city (The Westling House), Skippy Field, Park Theatre Building, Nordic Ware Tower, the Historic Milwaukee Road Depot and the Bee Hive at Lilac Park.



The Ambassador Program has nurtured a long tradition of community service while teaching our younger community members life skills such as public speaking, networking and time management. The children are busy throughout the year, representing our city in parades all summer long, volunteering at the annual Empty Bowls fundraiser for STEP, the Winter Carnival that supports Perspectives, Children First Ice Cream Social and even our very own Depot Winter Lighting Ceremony. The last honor bestowed on the Ambassadors after their reign is getting added to the Historical Society’s record. Marla shared, “they see their name on the website and think it’s really cool to be a part of history.”

You can learn more about the Ambassador program on our website (which includes a listing of all past Miss St. Louis Park winners and Ambassadors), the Ambassador Facebook page, or by attending their annual scholarship fundraiser. This year’s Bundt® Off Baking Challenge will be on Oct. 7; proceeds will benefit the Ambassador Program’s Scholarship Fund.

NEW TO OUR COLLECTION: THE PARK’S FIRST CRADLE!



Pictured above is the cradle used by Horace Hamilton, son of St. Louis Park’s founding father, Joseph Hamilton. Horace is thought to be the first baby born in St. Louis Park after it became a village in 1886.

He became a pharmacist and had a drug store in Minneapolis in the 1920s. He became friends with a fellow merchant, a butcher named Lane, and when “Hammie” moved into the Masonic Home, the cradle was given to the Lanes.

Mrs. Lane has passed it on to us, and we thank her for the generous donation. We hope to provide a permanent location for this cradle and other artifacts of our city’s history in the near future; please consider contributing to the building fund today!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Building Fundraiser at Copperwing Distillery
Tuesday, Oct. 10

6409 Cambridge Street, St. Louis Park.

Create craft cocktails and learn about the history of beer, wine and spirits in the Park.

Tickets are \$50 and only available online.
Check our website for details coming soon!

Annual Depot Lighting Ceremony
Saturday, Dec. 2. at 5:30 p.m.

Historic Milwaukee Road Depot
in Jorvig Park at 37th St. and
Brunswick Ave.

This is a free event with hot
chocolate and cookies.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: RUTH STEUCK'S RECOLLECTIONS OF METHODIST HOSPITAL'S MANY CHANGES

BY STEVEN STEUCK AS TOLD BY RUTH STEUCK

The New Hospital's Opening and Early Days

In the late 1950s, there were seven hospitals in Minneapolis but none in the suburbs. Asbury decided to open a hospital in the fast growing suburb of St. Louis Park. I started at Asbury planning to work at the new hospital. I was hired on the maternity ward and started there in June 1958. I was a licensed practical nurse (LPN). Because of limited training, LPNs could not administer certain drugs or start IVs.

We stopped accepting new maternity patients in December 1958. We then worked at Methodist in St. Louis Park to get the maternity ward ready, including some non-typical nursing duties such as cleaning.



Ruth's 1956 LPN Graduation

I was there when the first baby was born on Feb. 16, 1959. At that time, I worked mainly in the nursery, but also worked wherever I was needed on the ward. There were six or seven nurses in the nursery and four in the delivery room with perhaps 25 total employees.

It was very disorganized for the first few weeks. At first there was no pharmacy in the hospital, so we had to estimate what was needed and order it for delivery the next day. And

critical care babies were sent to other hospitals. Mothers stayed in the hospital up to 10 days. In the 1950s and '60s, St. Louis Park had many Jewish residents and two rooms at Methodist Hospital were set aside for Jewish patients to perform circumcision ceremonies.

For the first few months at the hospital, nurses either brought bag lunches or went down the road to Brookside Drug for lunch. I worked in the ward full time days until I had my first son in 1961.

1960s to 1980s: The Most Striking Changes

I went back to work part time in 1969, on the sixth floor, which was general surgery. Eventually, the surgery floor closed due to shorter stay times and more same day surgeries. I later changed to a "float pool" or worked evenings until I retired in February 1998. There have been enormous changes at the hospital since I began in 1959.

- People spend less time in the hospital recovering from surgery. Many years ago, cataract patients couldn't get out of bed for four days. Nurses had to feed patients who weren't supposed to move their heads.
- Nurses used to check the blood sugar of diabetics with urine tests. Now diabetics use needle sticks.



Methodist Hospital in 1968

- Until around 1961, blood and IV solutions came in glass bottles. Nurses needed to use great care around the bottles to avoid breakage. Fortunately, plastic bags arrived in the 1960s.
- Polio vaccines were developed in the early 1950s, but many still suffered from the effects of polio. Methodist had an iron lung in the 1960s to help patients breathe.
- Methodist allowed smoking by patients in the early years. There were smoking and non-smoking patient rooms. Cardiac patients could not smoke, because it dilated veins. Though I didn't work with smoking patients due to my sensitivity to smoke, nurses were able to tell who broke the rules when patients complained of pain.
- LPNs joined the Professional & Technical Health Care Union in 1980 because of pay issues.
- In the 1980s when patients first developed AIDS, nurses put the patients in isolation. It was not certain how the disease spread and no one wanted to chance it spreading. Nurses working in the isolation area had to cover up completely before going in.
- In 1984, registered nurses (RNs) at Methodist went on strike. LPNs and supervisors ran the hospital during the strike for perhaps a week. Three floors of the hospital were open during the strike. Hospital stays for patients were reduced due to lack of staff.

Editor's note: the 1984 strike lasted a total of 38 days. News coverage of metro hospitals reflected that hospital administration felt things were functioning well, while interviews with staff revealed more stress in keeping things running.

MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED

This was once the tallest building in St. Louis Park. Originally known by name, now it is primarily known by a number. Where is this?



The Northland Building

The Northland Building, now known as the Park Nicollet 3800 building, was dedicated on January 18, 1969. It eventually grew to seven floors, the tallest building at the time in St. Louis Park. Its original address was 5000 W. 39th Street.

No one solved the mystery this time, but try the summer mystery photo for a chance to win a Target® GiftCard.

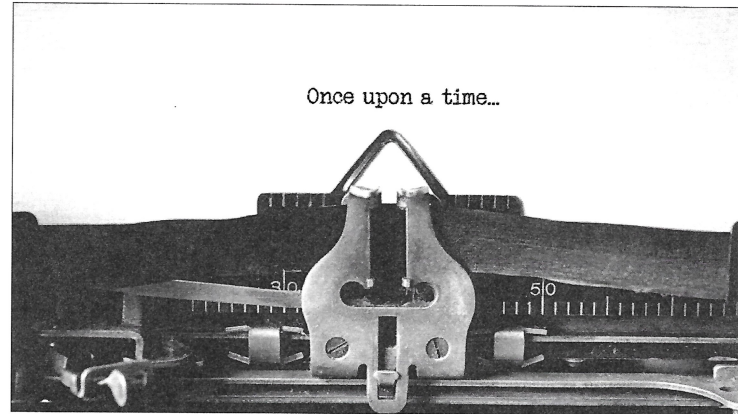
SOLVE THE SUMMER MYSTERY PHOTO



This Park institution has moved and changed much since 1925. While you won't find gas pumps at it today, you can roll in for a good time and a bite to eat. What is it?

Solve this mystery and you can win a Target® GiftCard.

WHAT'S YOUR PARK STORY?



Do you have a St. Louis Park story to share with our readers? We would love to hear from you! We're looking for articles, stories, reminiscences and photos.

Submission Guidelines

- Articles are relevant to the St. Louis Park Historical Society audience
- 1,000 words maximum
- Articles are published at the discretion of newsletter staff and may be gently edited to accommodate space limitations
- Submit your article to slphs.newsletter@gmail.com — include your name, email address and phone number

HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT — TED EKKERS

VICE PRESIDENT — OPEN

SECRETARY — JEANNE ANDERSEN

TREASURER — HENRY SOLMER

TRUSTEES

JANE HAGSTROM

DALE LAPAKKO

PAUL LINNEE

JOHN OLSON

JIM ROBBINS

OPENINGS

Are you interested in becoming more involved at the Historical Society? We looking for members who want to contribute time as a Society board member. For information about time commitment, expectations and community, visit slphistory.org/volunteer.



St. Louis Park Historical Society

MEMBERSHIP & GIVING FORM

HELP US COLLECT, PRESERVE & SHARE.

Annual membership benefits include:

- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events and merchandise
- Newsletter and Society mailings

☐ Send me the *ReEcho* newsletter by mail -or- ☐ Send the *ReEcho* via email

☐ Please contact me about volunteering with the St. Louis Park Historical Society

☐ I have items to donate to the St. Louis Park Historical Society

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

☐ Individual Membership \$25 ☐ Family Membership \$35 ☐ Building Fund
☐ Individual Benefactor \$50 ☐ Business Benefactor \$100 \$_____

Total Amount Enclosed \$_____

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member

Today's Date: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Send this form with your check to:

St. Louis Park Historical Society
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-2671

-OR-

Become a member or renew your membership online via credit card or PayPal. Visit slphistory.org/shop.

Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and share St. Louis Park's rich and unique history. The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Your dues and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Questions? Contact us at 952.583.9893 or history@slphis.org.



An official publication of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 30308

3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, MN 55416

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Thank You New & Renewing Members

In addition to dues, members donated an additional \$1,020 to the building fund!

Paul Abzug	Roger Granberg	Sharon Lindgren	Therese Ann & Len Powell
Doris & Harrison Allen	Adele & Steven Hansen	Gloria Linnell	Robert Pratt
Barb Anderson	Tom Harmening	Beverly Lippka	Mary & Lee Raabe
Chris Anderson	Alan Hartman	Peggy MacMillan	Jon Radabaugh
Nancy Barthell	Shelley Hendrickson	E. I. Malone	Joyce & Bob Ramsey
Shirley Bolmgren	Judy Hogan	Jan McElfish	Barbara Reiss
Joanne Bongaarts	Judy Holmquist	Helen McNulty	Sandy & Tom Rempfer
Pam & Jim Brimeyer	Mary Jane Hurd	Joanna & Paul McPeck	Julianne Renner
Chris Burbul	Beverley M. Johnson	Ted Meland	Tom Schaedler
Carolyn Charles	Maureen & Jim Johnson	Valerie Noren	John Scroggins
Judy Daniels	Robert Jorvig	Jeff Norman	Allan Sorenson
Laura & Phillip Davis	Andrea & Jeff Kaiserman	Jane Veker Noyce	Nancy A. Thomas
Jeff Eisenberg	Dorothy Karlson	Lisa Pannell	Jon Wallin
John P. Fitzgerald, Sr.	Berthina & Richard Lang	Paul Pegors	Lynn & Chuck Wallin
Alan Freed	Betsy Larson	Charles Pfannenstien	Karen Waters & Warren Djerf
Elizabeth Fuller	Sue Larson	Jane Pharr	Yvonne & Henry Williams
Beverly Brown Gaddy	Gerald Lausen	Dorothy & Al Pooler	Albert Yngve

Note: we will be returning to a calendar year dues cycle as called for in our bylaws, so all memberships will come up for renewal as of January 1, 2018. Dues received in November and December 2017 will count for all of 2018.