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The Park's first 30 years, by Norman Thomas.

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REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

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IN MEMORIAM

The St. Louis Park Historical Society has received gifts in remembrance of former Park mayor Phyllis McQuaid, (who passed on June 7, 2023 at age 95), from the following persons:

- Joanne (McQuaid) Hinderaker
- Bridget Kienenberger
- Linda Haight
- June Knighton
- Douglas Hogdon
- Diane Steen Hinderline and John Olson
- Jane Pratt Hagstrom
- Wendell Maddox, ION Corporation
- Linda Koch
- Nancy A. Thomas
- Susan and Tom Nelson
- Elizabeth Trach

And, from the Phyllis McQuaid Trust on behalf of:

- Dale Fine
- Carol Haff
- Larry and Janice Hoopman
- Kay and Jim Miller

In our 2019 book, *Places in the Park*, we wrote:

In classical Roman belief, the "genius loci" was the pervading, guardian spirit of a place. In a fully developed metro area, that place-spirit is fed by the people who occupy it. Whatever its physical attributes, the mostly accidental political subdivision named St. Louis Park, Minnesota has been shaped into a great place to live by its people, guardian spirits all.

As much as any Park resident in its history, Phyllis McQuaid was one of those guardian spirits. Phyllis served on the St. Louis Park school board from 1974 to 1978, as the Park's first woman mayor from 1978 to 1982, and as state senator from 1983 until 1990. She is prominently featured in the mural on the side of the Society's offices.



[Ed Note: As we write this, it's the dog days of summer, so we have a summer re-run for our readers. We lean on the writings of Norman Thomas, graduate student in history in 1951, who was hired by Earl Ainsworth to write the first history of St. Louis Park. His well-researched book was never published, but the Society has his 300-page manuscript in its collections, and from it we offer a selection of quotes from the Thomas manuscript framing a snapshot of the Park's first three decades.]

A VILLAGE IN GESTATION

PARK SNAPSHOT, 1855 - 1885

Like a worm in a cocoon, which waits through the long winter months before it breaks out into a colorful and beautiful butterfly, western Minneapolis Township waited through the period 1872 to 1886 before leaving its shell and becoming a village. The people who were to live in the area for a generation had come and settled down in the period 1860 to 1872, were now owners of their farms and were laying a sound institutional basis for their lives.

In the latter period there were a few land sales and farms tended to become smaller under the impact of a changing farm economics. Life was more placid and most of the happenings of the world, Minnesota and the nation rolled over the people like a great wave breaking over a boulder near a beach...

In the fall of 1872 – September 20th to be exact – there came to the United States a force which was to seriously hurt the people of the eastern part of the nation – the Panic of 1875...The Panic started in Europe when certain banks in financial centers closed their doors because of financial maladjustment due to the Franco-Prussian War. Like a chain reaction it reached the United States on September 19, when uneasiness existed in the New York financial district...But the waves of Panic did not reach Minnesota in a catastrophic degree, this area being too far from the financial centers

...There was a slight stringency in the money market, said one historian, and a dullness in real estate. There was not a failure of any mercantile or banking house – nor did any manufacturing establishment close its doors...certain saw mills closed temporarily and a Minneapolis bank experienced a “run” which it overcame...The six year depression had little effect in The Park, except to change the name of one of the railroads.

This era was a time of amoral laxity during which promoters tended to take advantage of every circumstance which would enrich them. In 1874 the notorious Boss Tweed, ruler of Tammany, was indicted for mulcting the city government of millions. Jim Fiske was wrecking railroads to add to his fortune, and tobacco chewing Daniel Drew was victimizing investors in railroad stocks while piously writing pledges to build a theological seminary.

In St. Louis, a group was cheating the government out of whisky taxes while the nation was increasing its consumption of liquor from twenty-nine million dollars worth in 1860 to almost seven times that amount in 1880. It was considered ethical to make a “racket” out of distribution of Indian annuities and railroad stock – watering was considered standard practice until the depression took the investor out of the market. In Minnesota in 1873, the legislature impeached Seeger, the state treasurer, for misuse of state funds and in the following year the Auditor McIlrath was investigated for irregularities...genuinely God-fearing people in St. Louis Park were considering organizing her first church.

As though there was not enough to think about in this period especially in the line of national and state morality, nature provided a subject which no doubt became the material for stories told by grandfathers to their grandchildren – the great storm of 1873. That year, on January 8, the day opened clear and delightful and many went their ways to get food for selves and feed for cattle while children traveled to school. By four o'clock in the afternoon the wind had risen, snow began to fall, thermometer stood at fourteen below and the blizzard was on. Fifty-two hours later the state began to assess the damage, seventy people dead and vast numbers of livestock. Here and there, one heard of people with frozen feet and with stiffened fingers who had found shelter too late. So grave were the consequences of the storm that ninety-four families in thirty-four counties were given relief by the state legislature.

Some person in Iowa coined a new word for the storm – blizzard – and all snow bearing winds since then have carried the appellation. In St. Louis Park area no one was maimed, probably because the farms were rather small as compared to those on the prairies and thus closer together...the incident provided a topic of conversation for more than a generation.

A movement which affected the region but which caused no great changes in The Park was the organization of the Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange. Organized by Oliver H. Kelley, a former resident of Elk River, and at the time a minor clerk in the Bureau of Agriculture, it espoused the causes of farmers who were protesting abused by the railroads, in addition to giving a fraternal tinge to farmer groups...in 1874 there were 53 Granges in the state.



Minnehaha Grange #398 was organized on December 23, 1873, with members coming from Edina Mills, Richfield Mills, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins. The Grange Hall was built on the present-day site of St. Stephen the Martyr Episcopal Church at the corner of 50th and Wooddale in Edina. It was first used for a Grange meeting on February 27, 1879. Joseph Hamilton of St. Louis Park was elected secretary. Sarah Baird of Edina was elected Master, reflecting the major influence of women in the Grange movement. The building also served as the official Edina Village Hall from its incorporation in 1888 until the first Village Hall was built in 1942.

>> Continued on page 4 >>

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

School is back in session, and there is significant construction at the high school including a complete demolition of the front entrance, renovating the kitchen, installing solar panels on the roof, rebuilding the Track and Field, and numerous classroom renovations. It got me curious about stories from when it opened in 1956, so I read our extensive website entry and found a few gems:

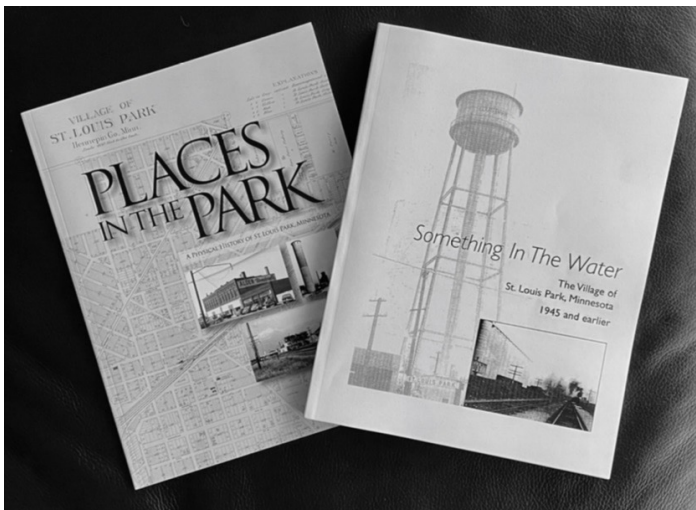
- ... the *Minneapolis Star* reported on a crisis at the new high school: "It all started...when an early-morning disk jockey plugging 'Oscar Socks' urged students to don knee-highs of one design left leg, contrasting design right leg..."
- ...students were no longer allowed to wear blue jeans to the new high school for fear the rivets would scratch the new desks...
- ...Overcrowding at the grade schools led to 366 elementary school students occupying the south wing of the third floor of the High School in 1956-57....
- ... Pearl Souers, the cafeteria supervisor for the school system, said she liked making Sloppy Joes the best. The recipe was 25 pounds of hamburger and 20 gallons of "tomato condiments" cooked in a 40 gallon double boiler...

The notable stories from the high school are certainly different over 65 years later, and hopefully so are the food choices!

We recently held our Annual Board Meeting and shared that our organization is in good financial shape, though membership continues to decline slightly which we would like to stabilize and find ways to connect to new audiences in the community. To that end, we are actively looking for new Trustees to fill out the Board. If you would like to learn more about what serving on the Board means or about other ways you might get involved, please reach out!

With Park Pride,

Ted





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St. Louis Park
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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
WILLIAM BEYER

Writers
TED EKKERS

Contributing Writer
JEANNE ANDERSEN

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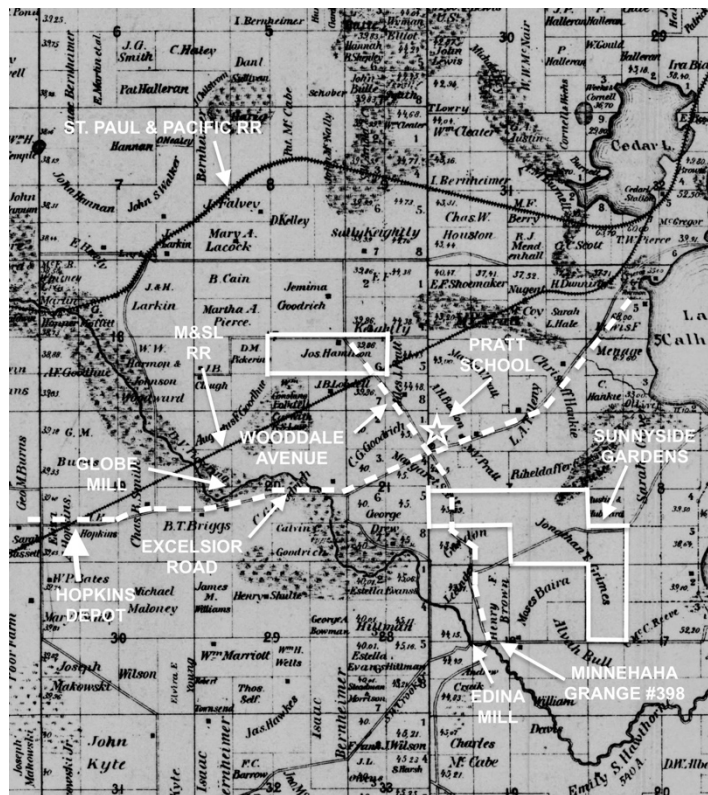
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This partial plat map from 1874 shows the state of play in the pre-industrial Park. The only roads worth mentioning – Excelsior Road and Wooddale Avenue – met at the 100% corner of human civilization in the area, the Pratt School, which had served as the main community gathering space since 1859. Wooddale was known as the Schoolhouse Road, created by Edina milling magnate and future state horticulturist Jonathan Grimes from the south, and future Park first mayor Joseph Hamilton from the north so their children could attend school, (their farms are outlined on the map). Grimes' nursery was on the site of today's Sunnyside Gardens. The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad was only three years old, and the only depot and post office on the line, had been snagged by Harley Hopkins before the tracks were laid. The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad on the north side of town, was bankrupt and in receivership, yet to be purchased and straightened through the village by James J. Hill, who was not interested in the locals, but focused on getting to the Pacific Ocean and beyond. The ill-fated Globe Mill on Minnehaha Creek and the thriving Edina Mill at 50th Street and Wooddale, were the only industries in the area.

While the western and northern parts of Minnesota were absorbing vast numbers of settlers who were making use of the Homestead Law which was put on the books in 1862 and which provided for almost costless land for claimants if they would but live on it five years, the population of the state grew steadily. The State Census of 1875 showed that there were almost 600,000 residents in the state with 34,000 more males than females and roughly one-third of the settlers being foreign born...

...While the world went by The Park was fortunate in another respect. The rest of the nation experienced disaster and devastation, but like a charmed land, The Park escaped. In '76 a contingent of the 6th Cavalry under General Custer was killed at the Little Big Horn, Molly Maquires were hanged in Pennsylvania and the southwestern part of Minnesota was visited by grasshoppers which devoured every living plant, but The Park had no devastations. Grasshoppers had been known to have devastated areas in the territory as early as 1856 and 57 after which there was a decade of quietude. In 1868 they

returned to Jackson County and continued ravaging the western part of the state for another decade. In 1876 swarms were seen to pass over Elk River, Belle Plaine, Shakopee and in September various spots in western Hennepin County were attacked.

Various expedients were tried to halt the invasion, tarred pans to collect the vermin, burning fields, digging ditches, paying bounties for eggs and bushels of grown locusts, and various other things. The legislature appropriated funds to aid with subsistence for the settlers and seed for the coming year. In '77 the weather was unfavorable and a parasite appeared which inhibited the hatching of eggs and development of the adults. Furthermore, instead of devastating the land, the adult insects which did hatch took wings and migrated. The Park escaped as if by miracle and since then has had neither threats nor invasions.

About the same time there occurred a renewal of railroad building and activity in the state. The Hastings and Dakota – a line which connected part of western Minnesota with the lines east of Minneapolis sought an outlet directly into Minneapolis from the west instead of going south of the city, entering St. Paul from the south and then coming west into the flour milling city. In 1876 or '78 it made a contract with M&SL to use its lines from Hopkins into Minneapolis and began to run trains through The Park.

By 1880 the Panic of 1875 was in its last stages and the Hastings and Dakota planned to complete its line into Dakota Territory. The company had been organized in 1857 as the Hastings, Minnesota River and Red River of the North Company but had changed its name to Hastings and Dakota Railway Company in March of 1867. By 1872 it had built the line from Hastings to Glencoe which it sold to the Minneapolis and St. Paul Railway Company in June of 1872.

After it had built the western end of the line to Ortonville, the railway decided to build its own tracks through St. Louis Park and not make use of the M&StL tracks as it had done for three or four years...In January of the same year [1880] the Hastings and Dakota sold and deeded the whole of its Dakota lines to the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company, [Milwaukee Road]...The Park gained little at this point from the railroads, for none of them maintained a depot for an elevator or even a flag stop but all of them blew the whistle as it passed through the area with their freight loads of grain from the empire of wheat enroute to the great mills of Minneapolis which were becoming the greatest producers of flour in the world.

In the other end of the area which was to become St. Louis Park the Great Northern was relocating most of its track. It will be remembered that the road was originally built by the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad's First Division in the 1860's. In the Panic of 1873 this line had gotten into financial difficulties because of its connections with Jay Cooke and Company and had gone into the hands of a receiver, one Jesse Parley, who represented Dutch bankers.

Six years later James Hill formed a syndicate of St. Paul and Canadians who bought out the bond and stockholders and formed the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Company (it was later named the Great Northern). The old line ran around

the south side of Cedar Lake then slightly northwest when it again turned southwest. The new syndicate planned that the relocated road should pass the Lake on the north side and take an almost straight course toward the southwest...After the rails were laid and the trains began using the new line, most of the old rails were removed and some of the land was returned to farms.

Like the other railroads the M&StL had experienced changes during the Panic of 1873. In April of 1881 it had been merged with three other short lines but two months later had gone into the hands of the receiver. R. R. Cable, president of the road, in getting the road on the way to solvency secured the services of a young man from the Omaha line, W. H. Truesdale. Coming to the railroad as assistant to the president he was vice president within six months and though he carried most of the duties of president he was finally elevated to that office in 1887. It was this same William Truesdale who was to make an imprint on the area which was to become St. Louis Park.

It is during the period of 1872 to 1885 that the first tentacles of metropolitanism reach out to touch St. Louis Park area. It is the needs of the Twin Cities which set the tenor or her ways for almost a score of years. The cause of this Phenomenon was the growing population of Minneapolis and St. Paul. In 1872 the two cities were almost the same size...Within eight years Minneapolis had outdistanced St. Paul, the former having about 46,000 people while the latter had 41,000. Thus within twenty-five miles of The Park there were about 90,000 people, all of whom had to eat, and milk and garden truck were two of the things which they needed and which could not be imported from greater distances.

These two items came in part from the St. Louis Park area. The Grimes family had been in the area since 1855 and had always produced certain vegetables and operated the Lake Calhoun Nursery...The Hankes produced many hundred pounds of butter which they sold in Minneapolis. Likewise the Bastons, Tillyen and others, principally located in the easternmost tier of sections, produced garden produce such as onions, potatoes, cabbage, turnips, carrots and many other vegetables.

In the northern part of the area which was to become St. Louis Park the land was somewhat less adapted to the raising of garden produce but beef and milk production was profitable, because the land was suitable for pasturage. Furthermore, alfalfa which had been improved by Wendelin Grimm, another Minnesotan, was providing an artificial pasture. Anderson, Johnson, Earle and Hanke were raising cattle on the rich grasses and sold the meat or distributed the milk, cream and butter in the growing city of Minneapolis. It seems that the cattlemen and dairymen were largely of Scandinavian extraction while the gardeners were native born.

The only manufacturing activity in the area during the period was done by two mills, one within the area which later comprised St. Louis Park, and the other south of it a short distance. The former was known as the Globe Mill and was located on Minnehaha Creek in section 20. It had been built by William P. Day and his son Horatio N. who had come to

Minnesota in 1849. The dam and mill were built in 1874. Four runs of stone burrs were installed in the mill which had a capacity of 125 barrels of flour daily. The builders found the mill unprofitable and sold it, by 1881 it was owned by the First National Bank. Though it was later a steam driven mill it was not able to compete with the great mills of Minneapolis. Though it was operating, in 1891, doing commercial work only, it ceased shortly afterward.

A mill had operated since early days on the south side but outside the present limits of St. Louis Park. Located on Minnehaha Creek, also, was the Waterville Mill, built in 1857 by five pioneers of Richfield Township. In 1869, Andrew Craik, a native of Scotland, who had learned milling in Canada, bought the mill and renamed it Edina Mills in honor of his home near Edinburgh...

These two mills were, no doubt, the places where early settlers took their grain for grinding until it became common to sell more grain and buy flour in stores. Another aspect of the grain business was the building of the Commander Elevator along the M&StL Railroad in 1880. The capacity of the wooden structure was about a quarter of a million bushels...



Jonathan Grimes and Joseph Hamilton were two local activists shaping their future communities from opposite ends of Wooddale Avenue. Grimes bought the Edina Mill in 1855 and ran it, but his main interest was horticulture, establishing a nursery near the present-day Sunnyside Gardens; his second home (above, left) on 44th Street, Edina, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Hamilton was Secretary of the Minnehaha Grange; his second home, built about 1896, is on Goodrich Avenue (above, right).

The story of the period is not one of high and spectacular activity...one might call the period the era of somnolence, a waiting period, although there are beginnings of the gardening and milk producing activities...The area had a solid economic base, had three railroads traversing it. and the neighboring city of Minneapolis was growing due to the rise of the flour milling industry, all of which promised that within a short time the placidity of the countryside would be a thing of the past.

...The originator of the movement for incorporation of the village was an organization established earlier in the year, the St. Louis Park Land and Improvement Company. The corporation was established to deal in land, real estate, buildings, personal property, or mixed personal and real property, mortgages, etc...The original incorporators, and apparently they were the only stockholders, were five men from Minneapolis: Calvin G. Goodrich, Thomas A. Orr, Chauncey Wheeler, Hiram C. Truesdale and C. Elwood Brown, plus Joseph Hamilton and Oliver K. Earle of the Township of Minneapolis.

>> continued on page 6 >>

The Park, it has been noted, was in part platted by the St. Louis Park Land and Improvement Company, of which Hiram C. Truesdale was secretary. In other plattings Hiram C. was associated with the Goodrichs and with William Haynes Truesdale. The latter was at that time an official of the M&StL Railroad having successively held the position of assistant to the president, vice president and later president, after which he was receiver of the railroad.

Between H.C. Truesdale of the development company and William Haynes Truesdale of the railroad, (it is likely that they were brothers) a deal was made by which the Park could be boomed. The railroad president was to have a depot built at the site if the embryonic village would be named St. Louis Park in honor of the railroad...the M&StL built a depot sometime before 1886. That the deal was made before 1886 is indicated by the fact that the St. Louis Park Land and Improvement Company was organized in April 1886 and thus promoters knew that the area would bear that name.

In order to secure residents for the thousands of vacant lots, the promoters had inserted an advertisement in the Minneapolis Evening Journal on Tuesday, November 9, 1886 which gave notice to the advantages of living in The Park...It all sounded very attractive.

With the building of the depot, which apparently was only a flag stop, the government established a post office for the distribution of mail. Oliver Keese Earle was appointed postmaster, but apparently because of the scarcity of population, had but very slight duties. It might be presumed that he did the work only as a convenience because small post offices paid salaries commensurate with postal revenues which was, no doubt, very, very small. The first post office was named Elmwood, but by whom is undiscoverable. The first mail was dropped at the station on October 20, 1887.

Another evidence of the high hopes that existed for the area was the building of a store, in the heart of the platted area, by Joseph Hamilton. A general store, it carried food, goods and miscellaneous merchandise, mostly in bulk in barrel lots, from which the customer was served. With the establishment of this first place of business, the post office was moved to his store where it remained until he sold his store and Davis and Williams began merchandising. James T. Davis, one of the partners in the store, became postmaster.

In the first regular election for officials which was held December 16, 1887, much the same slate were reelected for the coming year. Joseph Hamilton was to retain the position of president of the council until 1894 when he was displaced for one year by C. B. Waddell. The most consistent winners of offices were Christopher and C.H. Hanke, O. K. Earle, J. J. Baston plus Joseph Hamilton and his son Chesley.

If one says that it was during the five years preceding 1890 that the village of St. Louis Park was established one is right but the reader should not conclude that in those five years a full blown city was established...There were virtually no roads, the principal ones being Excelsior Road running east and west on the south, Cedar Lake Road on the north. Lake Street had been extended into the area. As for crossroads between blocks they were virtually non-existent, but grading had been done in some places...not one graveled road

existed, and tarred or concrete highways were unheard of. Most roads were but tracks over which carriages and wagons passed.

FREE EXCURSION.
TO ST. LOUIS PARK.
Band of Music to Accompany the Train.
GET A HOME.
The Most Beautiful Spot, the Finest Trees, the Largest Lots.

St. Louis park will have 60 to 100 houses built next year. Pure air, pure water, lovely trees, wide streets, with all the lake attractions around us is what we claim. Also steam cars which carry us to St. Louis park depot in 12 minutes, or one half the time it takes to go to Lake st on a cold street car. Quarter acre lots, \$400, one-third cash, balance five years time on or before. If at any time before Sept. 1, 1887, you decide to build a house you get 25 per cent. rebate. Abstracts of title furnished with every lot sold. One can secure a home now which it will be hard to obtain at any prices in a few years as the city becomes densely populated. Some of these lots will sell readily in a few years at two or three thousand dollars. Use your foresight and select a choice lot. Any body's hindsight is good. We can all look down the ladder and see where we ought to have taken stuff on at ground-floor prices, but failed to catch on. Go see this early for yourself and consult your own judgment, not other people's. Free excursion train Wednesday, Nov. 17, at 9:30 a. m., from Minneapolis & St. Louis depot, corner 3d st and 4th av N.

No car blew its horn, no stop signs adorned the corners, and no streets were numbered. Furthermore, there was no water system, nor gas mains, nor electricity, nor telephone. One carried water from the backyard pump, considered gas a luxury, read at night by kerosene lamp or went to bed early, and read about the marvels of telephone in newspapers.

In the heating and cooking stove the residents burned oak and elm wood purchased at three to five dollars a cord. One store served their needs, and one went to the post office to ask for mail. Most houses had stables in the rear where the driving horse was kept. Going to Minneapolis one could take the M&StL from the depot, which cost ten cents, and in town the traveler could reach other places by taking a streetcar which only recently was built and electrified. Only in Minneapolis could one see a theatre, cafe, hotel or saloon.

RECENT DONATIONS

The Society periodically receives donations of artifacts or photos. We recently received a batch of photos from Rick Sill, son of Geneva Williams, who was sister to all the firefighter Williams brothers. The family originally came from Horicon, Wisconsin in 1890 when the Monitor Drill Company was lured to T.B. Walker's industrial circle. Monitor was the largest employer in the new Village for 30 years until 1908, when it was sold to the Moline Plow Company and later to the Minneapolis Moline conglomerate. Mr. Sill donated a very early photo of the Monitor headquarters building, (destroyed by fire on June 5, 1909), and a post-merger photo of Moline products displayed on Machinery Hill at the Minnesota State Fair. We thank Mr. Sill for making our collections more complete.



CORPORATE MEMBERS



We recognize and thank our generous corporate members, who help the Society continue its mission of preserving Park history. Discover St. Louis Park and NordicWare, above, Park Tavern, Gearty-Delmore Funeral Chapel, Luther's West Side Volkswagen, Citizens Bank, The Webb Group/Re-Max, and Gleason Printing, below.





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PARK HISTORY TODAY

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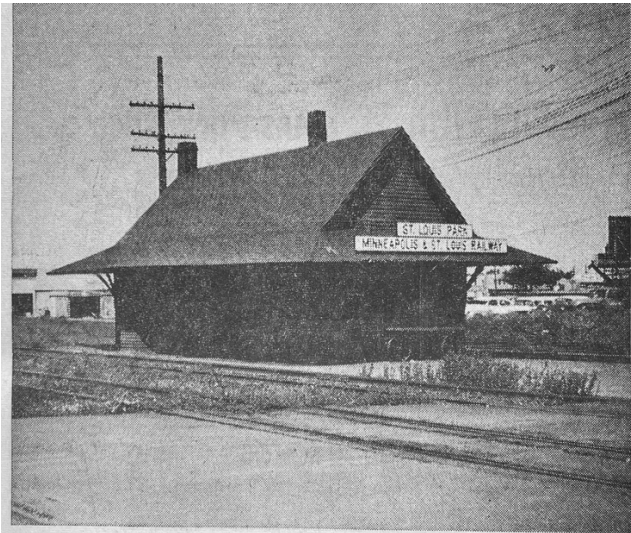
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DISPATCH LOOKBACK

The May 18, 1961, issue of the *Dispatch* celebrated the Park's 75th anniversary and its railroad history with a photo of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Depot located where Brunswick Avenue crossed the tracks back then. Phyllis McQuaid, who is holding a modern LRT car in the mural painted on the Society's offices, was a major supporter of light rail transit and would have been pleased to see the new Wooddale Avenue station nearing completion two blocks east.



THIS PICTURE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.—Built over 70 years ago, this building still serves as Minneapolis and St. Louis RR station. No "Grand Central Station" by any measurement, nevertheless, M & St. L. patrons were well served by its modest facilities over the years.

