



Anoka County
Historical Society



HISTORY 21

Volume 47 No.4 July-August 2017

Shorter than route 66 but closer to home.

AnokaCountyHistory.org

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Front Cover: Unidentified boys in the back of a truck during an Anoka Parade. Undated.

Object ID#: 2016.0173.003



From the President

One of my favorite recollections in Anoka County is the most fleeting. I didn't grow up here, but visited my aunt and her family in Coon Rapids several times a year. This was the mid-1970's. Little did I know back then (when my age was in the single digits) that one of the new, hot places of the day was Northtown Mall. I didn't know that Northtown had only opened in 1972 and was the first major shopping center in the

Twin Cities that wasn't a "Dale." I just knew it was an exciting place to visit.

The best part of Northtown for me – and for so many others I have talked with in recent years – were the huge aquariums in front of Woolworth's (now Best Buy). I was a small-town kid, so this was a cool thing to do in "the Cities." Going to "see the fish" was something my sister and I definitely thought was payoff for the long drive.

Time has passed and the aquariums are long gone. The photograph on the right is the only one I have found. Malls are becoming endangered species in the era of online shopping and quick delivery. Northtown looks vastly different from how it appeared 40 years ago. I can't walk through the mall, though, without remembering the how glamorous those aquariums were.

Things have changed and so many of those changes are for the better. Youth of today will have their own memories to look back upon. Still, I am a little sorry that the kids in my life won't know the joy of watching those fish.



Orville Lindquist
Orville Lindquist, ACHS President



From the Director

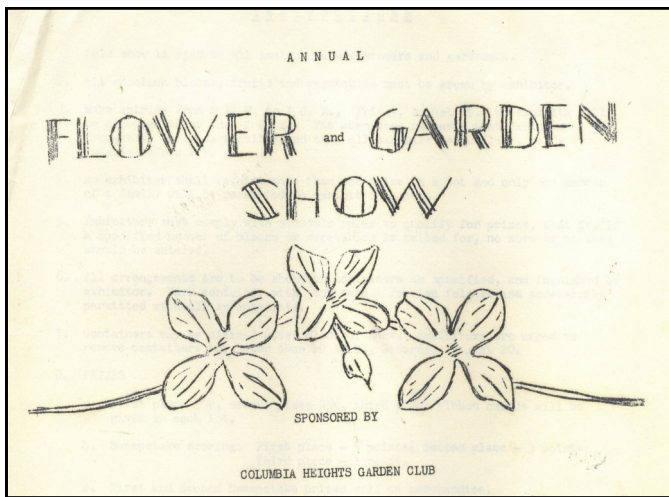
We have hit the six-month mark from when our dear Vickie Wendel retired. Since then, staff have burned up the phones texting and calling her with questions, fishing for information out of her cavernous mind to fill gaps in ours.

It was a pleasure then, to call attention to her 30 years of service one more time when she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MAHLM). Given to history professionals who show a devotion to their career, generally making an indelible mark on the organizations they serve, the award felt like the perfect capstone to mark the beginning of another chapter in the story that only Vickie can write for us.



Rebecca Ebnet-Mavencamp

Rebecca Ebnet-Mavencamp, Executive Director



COLUMBIA HEIGHTS GARDEN CLUB: GROWING FLOWERS & A CITY

By Grant Wilson, ACHS Intern

I began my internship in the archives department of the Anoka County Historical Society in April. Since then, friends and family have asked me what it is that I am working on while I am there. Well, the first day I arrived, Sara Given presented to me a box labeled “Columbia Heights Garden Club.” This box contains letters, programs, newspaper clippings, and record books filled with hundreds of meeting minutes spanning almost three decades. Sara told me my first project was to go through everything in this box and organize it in a way that makes sense. When I tell people my hours at the history center mostly consist of reading through letters and meeting minutes upon meeting minutes from a garden club that functioned decades ago, they have the same reaction you are possibly having right now. Generally, they raise their eyebrows, quietly say, “Oh, okay,” and move onto another topic of conversation.

If I am honest, I was not the most enthusiastic about this project when first presented with it. What could possibly be interesting about a garden club? Surely there is nothing compelling about elderly women gathering in the parlor of their home, discussing how beautiful their gardens are. The beginning of this experience certainly tested my claim that I have

repeatedly stated to many acquaintances who ask me what aspect of history I like the most: “I love all history.” But as I sift through the wealth of history in this box, I realize how wholly inaccurate my initial expectations about

...as I sift through the wealth of history in this box, I realize how wholly inaccurate my initial expectations about the people who made up the Columbia Heights Garden Club were.

the people who made up the Columbia Heights Garden Club were. The members of the Columbia Heights Garden Club were dedicated to improving not only the beauty of their homes, but ultimately the beauty of the community in which they took so much pride: Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

The majority of the information we have concerning the Columbia Heights Garden Club comes from our collection of meeting minutes that chronicle the club's activities from 1938-1966 (although we possess a bank record that suggests the club existed as late as 1970). These minutes give us a clear idea of the club's goals, plans, activities, and concerns, but only go into superficial detail. Article clippings and correspondence supplement some of this information and it is where these sources intersect that provides the basis for this article.

The club organized in November of 1938. Earlier that fall, the Columbia Heights State Bank hosted a flower and vegetable exhibition in their lobby. According to a handwritten summary of the first years of the club's existence, "The moving spirit [behind] this undertaking was John Seman, then employed by the bank." Turnout for the exhibition was unexpectedly high and enthusiastic. Gathered in the lobby with the attendees, Seman suggested establishing a community garden club. On November 1, 1938, a number of Columbia Heights citizens gathered in the parlors of the Church of Immaculate Conception and organized the Columbia Heights Garden Club.

For over 30 years, the Columbia Heights Garden Club remained an active organization in its local community. The club met once a month, with their annual meeting occurring in November, election of officers in December, and committee appointments usually occurring in December or January. The club was affiliated with the Minnesota State Horticulture Society, a relationship that enabled several benefits including free issues of the *Minnesota Horticulturist*, free access to the society's library, and arrangements for guest speakers to attend the club's meetings. These guest speakers lectured on a host of subjects related to gardening, such as soil, flower arrangements, or when and how to trim plants. Even representatives of the Coca-Cola company attended meetings in 1940 and 1941, showing pictures of flower arrangements and serving "a bottle of ice cold coco [sic] cola to all present." They made monetary donations to the Red Cross, local hospitals, and the Minnesota State Horticulture Society. They toured one another's gardens and attended an annual picnic at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Breyley, where the club enjoyed wonderful food and the beauty of the Breyley estate.

While the Columbia Heights Garden Club enjoyed tending to their own gardens as well as admiring one another's, their foremost concern was the beautification of Columbia Heights itself. The Columbia Heights Garden Club believed that the beauty of their city would instill beauty in the attitude of its citizens. In April 1941, club member Mrs. P. Theodore Oleson submitted an article to the *Minnesota Horticulturist*,

summarizing the growth and activities of the club since 1938. She concluded her article by stating, "We believe that by keeping our eyes fixed on an ultimate goal, and by working tirelessly, with Mother Nature, our dependable and powerful ally, our dreams will become realities, our community will be enriched and our people encouraged to a friendlier fellowship and a finer citizenship."

Mr. O.H. Prestemon, charter member of the Columbia Heights Garden Club and eventual mayor of Columbia Heights, was possibly the most vocal member of the club and its biggest believer in this goal. Prestemon had a column in the *Columbia Record* entitled "Prestemon's Points."

Prestemon used this platform to express his belief in the club's work and the value of beautification, what he had gained from his visits to various gardens and nurseries, and to announce upcoming activities the club sponsored within the community. The Anoka County Historical Society possesses several of these articles in which Prestemon articulates the practical benefits of the beautification of any city.

"It affects the growth, real estate values, the type of people attracted, volume of business," asserts Prestemon in one article. "It makes for civic pride and loyalty; it profoundly affects our entire outlook on life. We don't look with pride on bigger and better weeds."

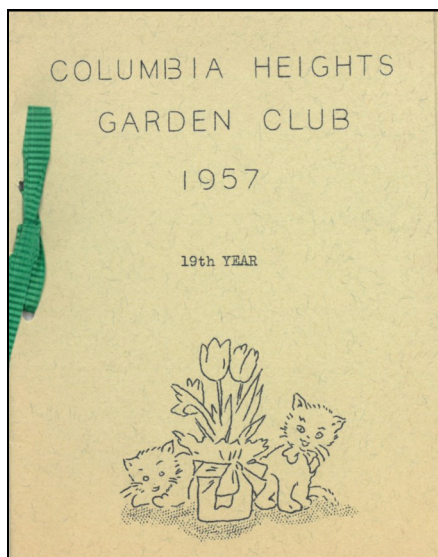
One event that illustrates the Garden Club's endeavor is their "Window Flower Show" or "strolling flower show" of 1950. In fact, a scrapbook at ACHS devotes much of its space to newspaper clippings documenting this flower show. During the weekend of September 1 and 2, businesses throughout the city of Columbia Heights displayed flower and garden arrangements in their windows. Residents and visitors were encouraged to take a long walk and appreciate these beautiful floral displays.

"We want you to know...that this is a non-competitive show," said a statement released by the organizing committee. "There are no prizes. We want to demonstrate that the Garden Club members are interested in flowers for the sake of flowers alone and because of what they do for houses and environment [sic]."

Prestemon commented further on the purpose of this show in his column.

"It comes down to this: we are all interested in a better community in which to live," Prestemon wrote. "There are a hundred ways to accomplish this and the garden club members feel they are contributing something through their efforts, not alone by organized effort but as individuals through example and precept. Anything anyone does to make a better community results in some benefit to all."

The Window Flower and Garden Show is only one example of the Columbia Heights Garden Club's efforts to improve the attractiveness of their city. They also wrote to county commissioners, city officials, and state legislators concerning the obstacles facing the beautification of Columbia Heights and Anoka County. In June of 1957, the Garden Club addressed the Anoka County commissioners regarding the



Columbia Heights Garden Club

Columbia Heights, Minn.

Received

Cash Awards at Flower Show, Aug. 29th & 30th, 1942.
Sweepstakes

Mrs. Jones Adkins, 4055 Jefferson St. \$.75

Betty Barrington 3828 Jackson St. 2.00

Jane Adkins

Betty Barrington

mosquito epidemic plaguing Minnesota.

"Now therefore be it resolved: that the Columbia Heights Garden Club urge that this county participate in an area wide program of mosquito abatement, to include at the least five or six neighboring counties," wrote the club.

The club also wrote to Senator Ralph W. Johnson of the Minnesota State Senate concerning the unsightly presence of billboards along interstate highways. Another letter, written in July 1960 to the Minnesota State Highway Department, urged the state to develop rest areas alongside highways in Anoka County.

"The Columbia Heights Garden Club shares the consensus of all the people in the rapidly growing Anoka County over the lack of provisions for transients passing through our area for some place for them to place to the side of the road and enjoy a brief rest, a snack and recreation," they wrote.

The club also contacted Columbia Heights officials encouraging them to purchase vacant lots so that they may be converted into beautiful parks. Foremost in their minds always was the further beautification and aesthetic improvement of Columbia Heights and the surrounding area so that it may be a pleasant and wholesome place to live and visit.

Although a Google search will yield virtually no results directly related to the Columbia Heights Garden Club, the organization remained a significant presence in Anoka County for over 30 years. The attendees of that first exhibition in the fall of 1938 may have initially only shared an interest in flowers and gardening, but the members of the club appeared anything but half-hearted. The club was not merely a hobby that got them out of the house once a month. They were a serious organization with elected officers, appointed committees, sponsored events, and advocacy to state legislators - all in the hopes of achieving their ultimate goal of making Columbia Heights a beautiful, desirable place to live; a city whose beauty permeated throughout

the entire community, positively altering the way its citizens conducted themselves.

While we may not feel so compelled, perhaps the example of the Columbia Heights Garden Club can move us enough to simply take time and smell the roses.

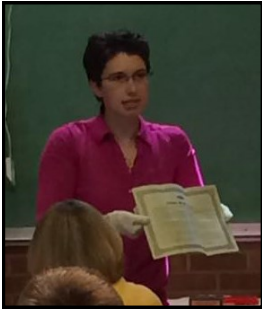
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS GARDEN CLUB

Dear Friends:-

With spring just around the corner our thoughts turn to finding ways in which we can make the most of the coming spring and summer in our gardens.

Lovely gardens and flowers bring joy and color into our lives and beauty to our community. If you are not already a member of our newly organized Garden Club, won't you join us in our efforts, and come out to the next regular meeting, Tues. evening March 7th, at 8 o'clock? Our meetings are being held in the church parlors of the Church of Immaculate Conception. Come and bring others with you.

Mrs. I. Leo Olson
Jean Treas



Not unlike other professions, it is important that ACHS staff continually improve our specialized knowledge and training so that the ACHS collections, archives, and organization receive the best possible care.

One way I do this is by attending the annual Midwest Archives Conference, where workshops, panels, and lectures presented by other archivists provide me with new and improved skills to bring back to ACHS. This year, I attended the 2017 Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) in Omaha, Nebraska at the beginning of April. I would like to thank the Twin Cities Archivists Roundtable (TCART) for their

assistance with a generous Professional Development Scholarship to offset some of the conference costs.

One of the highlights of this year's conference for me was a workshop on creating mounts and supports for artifacts on display. As of this year, I am responsible for not only the collections at the Historical Society, but also for the exhibits. I have some limited previous experience with exhibit-building, but also lots still to learn. This workshop, "Exhibit Mount Basics & Beyond," was very helpful.

The three women conducting the workshop did an excellent job explaining how to build different structures for artifacts on display, keeping the mount itself unobtrusive while still giving the artifact the support that it needs. They provided hands-on practice for two exhibit mounts and provided instructions on how to create many more. I practiced mounting a flat item, such as a document or photograph, onto a supporting board using corners or strips of Mylar to hold the item in place – an excellent way to keep adhesives away from an artifact. We also created book cradles, a technique of scoring and folding acid-free mat board up to form two triangular supports and a base. A fragile book can then rest open in this cradle, with the spine and the pages all fully supported.

Additionally, the workshop provided samples of good materials to work with for exhibit-building, as well as a list of resources and further reading. I recently put my new knowledge into practice when creating our new exhibit on the Ticknor House in Anoka. Flat mounts support two fragile prescriptions dated c. 1900, which can now be safely propped up and displayed for visitors. We also have two Ticknor family photograph albums, one from the late 1800s and the other from the early 1900s, which I wanted to display. Building each a custom support (one a full book cradle, the other a half-cradle), allows me to display them without putting additional stress on their spines.

Further techniques discussed in the workshop included skills like sewing small pillows out of Tyvek or unbleached cotton fabric on which small, delicate items can



Sample wheel of archival materials

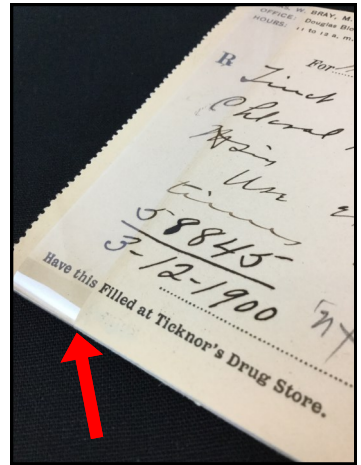
safely rest. You can see examples of this technique in the Ticknor exhibit as well. Look for a glass medicine bottle with an interesting Ticknor & Co. drug store label on it resting on such a pillow.

A later panel session touched on similar themes to the workshop, providing advice and examples for supporting artifacts while they are in storage, rather than on display. Several ideas for building useful yet cost-effective supports were shared, and attendees could later access the program as a reference. I will use this information on the organizational side of our collections storage at ACHS in the future, so that our artifacts can have good support and protection while we stay within our available funds for preservation.

Other aspects of the conference provided intellectual support and encouragement for some of our projects and goals here at the history center. A lunch-time forum focused on the idea of collaboration between libraries, archives, and museums. Since ACHS has long-term relationships with the Anoka County Library system and the Minnesota Digital Library, it's encouraging to know we are certainly not alone in pursuing collaborations of this nature. Our unique projects with these organizations allowed me content to share with my colleagues during the course of the event. Museums, archives, and libraries have much to offer each other as institutions, as well as our patrons, who can have easier access to a greater number and variety of resources when we work in collaboration.

Although they are projects for another year at ACHS, I was also glad to attend panels discussing the issues of Web Archiving (preserving websites and other internet content) and Digital Content Migration (making sure that various types of digital content remain accessible despite changing hardware, software, and file formats) to begin planning. These panels gave me some new information and ideas about these processes. As we look to tackle these projects in the future, I think the more we can learn about them beforehand, the better. Hearing how other institutions are undertaking them, whether singly or cooperatively, as well as their challenges and solutions, are helpful in this regard.

The Midwest Archives Conference allowed for me to connect with colleagues in my profession and to bring new or improved knowledge back to ACHS. It is my goal that we improve our collections management and continue to present top-notch, interesting exhibits to our visitors. I hope to attend both MAC and local TCART professional events for many years to come.



An almost invisible way to mount this paper using Mylar.



Finished mount

World War I Resources

in the Reference Library

On April 6, 1917 the US declared war on Germany. Why? What happened then? The ACHS Research Library has a good selection of books for World War I research.

EYEWITNESS WORLD WAR I, written by Simon Adams and photographed by Andy Crawford (call number 940.3 AD), is a great starting place for information on “The War to End all Wars.” Chapters begin with a concise overview of the topic. This is followed by photographs accompanied by detailed information about the subjects of the pictures.

You’ll want to see the Navy Recruitment poster described in the book as, “When the U.S. entered the war in April 1917, a poster showing an attractive woman in naval uniform urged volunteers to enlist.” Learn what else women did in the war. Find out why Alexei Brusilov, Joseph Joffre, Gabriel Voisen and others are “Important Personalities.” Check the “Fascinating Facts” section for information on preparing food in field kitchens, messenger dogs, and the first tank. Read the “Questions and Answers” to discover why tanks were called tanks. Another section describes “Major Battles.” Other topics included weapons, uniforms, gas masks, trench life, sand shoes, espionage, and more.

If **EYEWITNESS WORLD WAR I** leaves you looking for more in-depth information, try **WORLD WAR I: A VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA**, General Editor: Simon Forty call number 940.3 FO.

Want to see WWI exhibits at other historical societies? Try the Minnesota History Center, Dodge County Historical Society, Olmsted County Historical Society, or Otter Tail County Historical Society



Sandy Connor has been a volunteer with the ACHS for more than 10 years. She can be found helping at the front desk at the History Center, setting up home at the Farmhouse during the County Fair, and selling tickets for the Home and Garden Tour at Riverfest. Her dedication, smile, interest in local history, and sparkly glasses cannot be matched.

Come to Dinner, We miss you!



Did you attend Buster Talbot's, or Natalie Haas Steffen's recognition dinners? Did you celebrate the Halloween Stamp unveiling at our dinner this past September? In doing so you helped support ACHS and contributed to an important part of keeping us a financially healthy organization.

With hundreds of people attending these large events, we didn't have a chance to connect with YOU. As a result, this year we created smaller, exclusive *Night at the Museum* fundraising dinners from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Each dinner has a different theme: learn about the hidden pieces of the ACHS Collection, special Halloween artifacts, or dust off your detective skills at a murder mystery. These limited seating events also offer a gourmet, plated dinner, behind the scenes tours, special artifacts, and lots of laughter and fun. Invite a friend and purchase your tickets now! **A fun night for you will help ACHS continue our mission to keep telling our Local History.** Tickets: \$50 via website or phone.

July 20 Dinner

Collections— Un-wrapped! Fold back the tissue paper and witness the unveiling of some of the oddest items in the ACHS collections! Become a foster parent to an artifact you choose to adopt and help ensure it lives a long and happy life for future generations.



August 24 Dinner

Jon Arfstrom [1928-2015] lived his life creating art. Pencil, pen, oils, acrylics, watercolor, markers, colored pencils, charcoal, and pastels all found a home in his work. Enjoy a relaxing evening with people who knew him while helping to support his legacy project of digitizing diaries, a book, and an online exhibit for the museum.



September 20 & October 11 Dinners

Anoka Halloween goodies are collected all over the world. Talk Halloween, get an up-close look at ACHS's exclusive collection of Anoka Halloween memorabilia...and hear some ghost stories!



September 27 & October 18 Dinners

It's a who-done-it night of mayhem! Become detectives, interrogate suspects-- or try to get away with murder at ACHS's inaugural murder mystery dinners. Character profiles given prior to event.





Sometimes I feel like we are Elmer Fudd, “Shhhhhhhh be very, very, quiet we’re huntin’ (history) rabbits.” If we are too loud people might hear us coming. While the sneak attack works well for my cat, it doesn’t work so well for museums—it just means that

people don’t know about us or continue to think of history as boring.

That is definitely not true! We know we're cool. Our volunteers know that history doesn't have to be boring, that it can be exciting and thought-provoking. Our local stories can make us cry just as easily as they can make us laugh. We can be surprised by the rich history right in our own backyard, the house down the street, or that place across town.

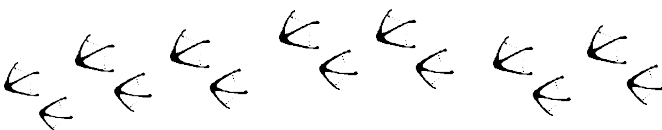
SO I am placing a summer challenge to all of our volunteer friends: don’t let ACHS be a secret anymore! Talk to your friends and when you speak of us, shout from the

(metaphorical) rooftops. If you must speak in hushed tones, do so from awe. The more we share our love of history, the more we advocate for ACHS and let others know we’re cool too, the more friends we will have. These new friends will have new stories to share, and help ACHS grow.



Further proof we’re not boring.

Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org





MUSEUM SCAVENGER HUNTS

Not sure where to take the kids on summer break? Bring them by the History Center! Our exhibit hall is FREE to ALL and is a chance to share your own stories along the way. There is also a FREE Scavenger Hunt that takes you from one end of the exhibit hall to the other searching for the unexpected. (Like the item above!)

Ghost Tours

They aren't just for the fall anymore! Book a private ghost tour for your group of people-- friends, family, co-workers, club, senior center, etc. Enjoy the history and mystery of Anoka on a beautiful evening walk this summer. Please keep group size between 15-25 participants.

Tickets: \$9 adults, \$7 members. Schedule your tour by calling Sara at 763-421-0600

WANTED

GHOST TOUR GUIDES



Are you, or someone you know, comfortable speaking in front of crowds of people? Love local history? Intrigued by ghost stories? AND have time this Ghost Tour season (Aug-Oct.)?

Auditions August 4 & 5

Prepare any 5-minute story and show what you have to be a new Ghost Tour Guide.

Contact Sara for more information and to schedule an audition
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

Keep up with the Fun at ACHS!

Don't wait another two months to discover what the ACHS is up to. Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We share photographs and artifacts from the collections, updates about upcoming programs, and a behind the scenes look at antics around the History Center.



Anoka County Historical Society



AnokaCoHistory



AnokaCoHistory

General Donations

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ACHS Sustaining Members

Terry Overacker Plumbing

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Members

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 Dan Gould Jewelers
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 Nowthen Historical Power Association
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 Pierce Refrigeration



Become a Business or Sustaining Member!

As a Business Member you receive membership benefits, a listing in our newsletter and website, an ACHS window cling to display— \$75



NEW! (For Individuals or Businesses) A Sustaining Membership includes the benefits of a regular membership, a shout-out in our newsletter, and recognition on our web site. You also receive an annual free personalized Group Tour for you and 14 friends (must be scheduled in advance). Will come with complimentary refreshments.— \$150

If you want more information or your business would like to become a member or sponsor with ACHS call, 763.421.0600, email Audra@AnokaCountyHistory.org or visit our website AnokaCountyHistory.org

Visit the History Center! Open 5 days a week, NOW FOR FREE:

Tuesday 10 a.m.—8 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday 10 a.m.—5 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

ACHS Board Meetings

Second Thursday of each month. 6 p.m. at the Anoka History Center

Open to membership and the public

Rum River Rovers Baseball Team

Watch and cheer on our Anoka County baseball team. These players play a gentleman's game using original 1860s rules. Full schedule at:

anokacountyhistory.org/rum-river-rovers-vintage-base-ball/

Riverfest

July 8, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

Cost: FREE but donations welcome

A new exhibit explores the life of four generations of Ticknors, from Heman through his great-grandson, who fought in the second World War. On display are family land grants from the 1700s, photograph albums, clothing, and military dog tags. No party would be complete without entertainment and refreshments, including performances by the students of 'Nmotion Dance Center of Fridley, special musical appearances, and treats of ice cream and cake.

14th Annual Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour

July 9, 1 p.m.—5 p.m. throughout the city of Anoka

Tickets: \$12 advance, \$15 the day of the tour

You will discover an elaborate birthday celebration at the Ticknor Hill Bed and Breakfast, where cake, candles, live music, lawn games, and even view antique fire trucks (all those candles could be dangerous!) will occur in addition to the home tour. You'll also find fraternal organizations past and present of Anoka, have a chat with a professional gardener and soil conservationist, and see musical sculptured art.

East Bethel Booster Club program

July 15, 2:30 p.m. in the council chambers of the East Bethel City Hall

Cost: FREE

East Bethel is the largest city in Anoka County by land area. How did this community come to be its own city, and how did that city grow and develop? Shortly after incorporation in 1957, a group of determined citizens formed the East Bethel Booster Club. Under the leadership of John H. Nordin, they spent the next two decades helping their new city to grow and prosper. Learn the story of the Booster Club, their ups and downs, and the lasting legacy they have left in East Bethel.



Anoka County
Historical Society
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Anoka, MN 55303
(763) 421-0600

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