



Anoka County  
Historical Society



# HISTORY 21

Volume 48 No.4 July-August 2018

Making alcohol legal since 1933 with the 21st Amendment

[AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)

*History 21 (in honor of the 21 cities in Anoka County) is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit. The ACHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.*

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*Front Cover: Extension Service Annual Report, 1930, pg 23.*

*"Willis Wyatt of the Bethel 4-H Dairy Calf Club with their Jersey Calves."*

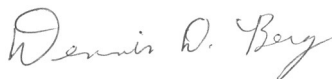
*Object ID#: AG100.1930.10*

## From the President

When I left home to serve in Vietnam, the world felt chaotic and abusive toward not only those deployed, but the family left at home. Communication came through letters since phone calls were impossible. Our loved ones truly were left on their own until our return.

Today, we see a level of support for our military not felt since WWII and the innovations in technology provide for almost constant contact during a deployment. That said, the families face the same anxiety and loneliness of separation during a deployment today than they always have. The circumstances may have changed, but the experience remains largely the same.

We are looking for partners to support ACHS in collecting the stories of these families during an upcoming deployment of the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division. Some of these stories will be featured in a half-hour documentary in partnership with Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), providing a state-wide platform to increase awareness of the family experience. We hope you can join us in this project!

  
Dennis Berg, ACHS President



## From the Director

ACHS has committed to taking the Veterans Voice project to an exciting, and highly visible, level by partnering with Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) to produce a half-hour documentary on military families of Anoka County.

This project will move our efforts to preserve military history into the present by focusing on those currently experiencing a deployment in Anoka County. By engaging veteran families and their networks, we can amplify their story and influence with the public. Too often historians wait for memories to grow old and cold before collecting them, thus risking the integrity of the content. This production will allow for the education of Anoka County residents and the preservation of ideas while the content remains relatable.

Stay tuned...literally! The proposed broadcast date is July of 2019. Until then, look for more information and think about how overseas deployments have affected your networks. We would love to hear your story!



Rebecca Ebnet-Mavencamp, Executive Director



*4-Hers enjoying the summer, 1941. Object ID:Aces 1941-17*

## The Terror of the Summer

*By John Hilst., ACHS Intern*

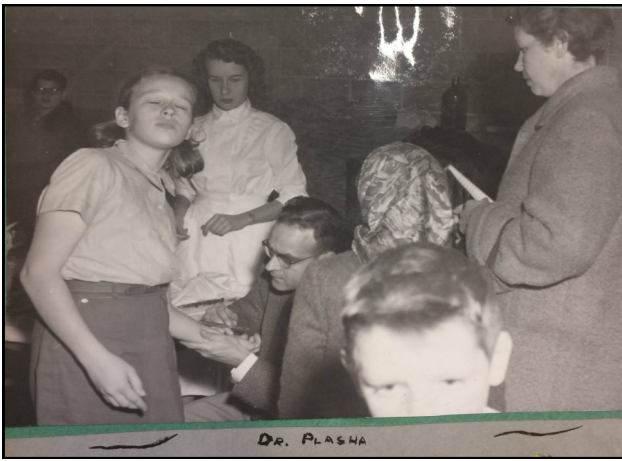
Poliomyelitis, commonly known as polio, has a long history in the United States and Anoka County. Highly contagious and incurable, this disease affects all ages. It can be contracted year round, but is most common between June and September. Polio spreads especially well in contaminated water, causing outbreaks often centered around swimming pools, lakes, and beaches. Minnesota, with its 10,000 lakes and even more lakeside cabins, became a hotbed of polio.

The virus attacks the nerves of the brain and spinal cord. This can lead to muscle weakness, paralysis, and death. Weakness and paralysis of the legs, the most infamous symptoms, especially frightened people. Since it affected all social classes indiscriminately, people felt more threatened by polio than other diseases, comparable to the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918.

The Sister Kenny Institute, now the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute at Allina Health, pioneered organized treatment in Minnesota. Founded in 1942 by Australian Sister Elizabeth Kenny, the Institute treated polio patients with damp, hot towels instead of the more conventional splints. This allowed for relaxation and exercising of the affected muscles and proved more effective and less painful for the patients.

Harriet Olson, an Anoka County native, was admitted to the University of Minnesota Hospital with polio at the age of 8 in 1943.





*Dr. Plasha, a physician in Coon Rapids, administering polio vaccinations at Blaine Elementary school, 1955.*

“I went through all the hot packs and the exercises,” said Olson. “I was there for ten and a half months... [The nurses] did a lot of things. You laid with these hot packs at least two times a day, maybe more, flat with your feet up against a board.”

Upon arrival at a care facility, patients would also be subjected to lumbar punctures, a painful extraction of spinal fluid. In 1946, Minnesota suffered a massive outbreak of Polio. That year, the state saw

nearly 3,000 cases of the disease, including 226 fatal cases. These cases were reported in 86 of the state’s 87 counties. Minnesota cancelled the State Fair, while Anoka cancelled the County Fair, due to fear of polio spreading. Minnesota youth felt the effects the most, with 71.4 percent of cases and half the deaths being represented by children under 15 years of age. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP) provided around \$2 million for treatments.

At the time, the root cause of polio remained unknown. In 1946, the Minnesota State Board of Health suggested that poor diet, excessive exercise, flies and road dust were the culprits. Another popular belief connected tonsillectomy procedures to increased polio risk. The Board suggested dampening the streets and increased rest, as well as avoidance of the ill and polluted water sources. The Board further noted that there was no known cure for polio.

During a nationwide polio epidemic in 1952, Minnesota had the highest polio rates of any state in the nation, seeing nearly 4,000 of about 60,000 cases, and suffering 206 of the 3,145 polio related deaths. That year however, Minnesota began to fight back. NFIP provided 245 nurses from other states to aid with the emergency outbreak. These nurses issued injections of gamma globulin, believed at the time by the American Medical Association to provide short term resistance to polio. Minnesota’s quick and effective response earned praise from the NFIP.

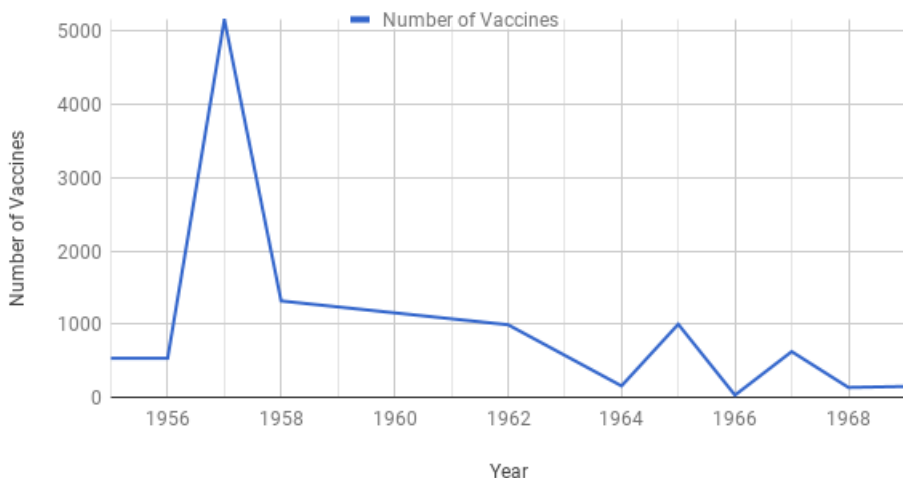
“Under the challenge of the worst polio outbreak of all time, Minnesota reacted with calm intelligence,” reported the NFIP annual report. “There was little panic and a calm attitude was evident everywhere.”

In 1955, Dr. Jonas Salk unveiled his polio vaccine, which could successfully make an individual immune to polio. The Poliomyelitis Assistance Act of 1955 gave

*“I was [in hospital] for ten and a half months...”*

Harriet Olson

## Anoka County Polio Vaccines



Minnesota \$593,448 to use towards vaccinating pregnant women and children up to age 19. In addition, Minnesota received \$86,600 from a General Health Grant for planning and operating a vaccine distribution system, as well as monitoring polio rates. Anoka County first inoculated children between the ages of 5 and 9 on May 26, 1955. By the end of the year, 533 children in the county received the new vaccine.

Statewide, 77 percent of first and second grade children received immunizations, only two of whom would go on to contract Polio. In addition to state-organized efforts, voluntary clinics also opened, in cooperation with local health officials. These clinics charged 50 cents per vaccine, but were noted by the state as administering the vaccines “irrespective of [the patient’s] ability or willingness to pay the nominal charge.”

Local physician Dr. Matthew Plasha administered the Salk vaccine at one of these voluntary clinics at the Blaine school (pictured previous page). By the following year, available stock of the vaccine had grown, allowing the state to encourage everyone to be vaccinated.

In 1957, Minneapolis played host to a mass Polio vaccine campaign, immunizing between 600 and 3,000 children per day. Locally, this campaign was reflected by Conger Pharmacy, at the time located at 120 East Main Street,

**Protect  
Now against  
Polio**

According to studies conducted by twenty-two states and New York City, polio vaccine reduced the incidence of the disease from 29.2 cases per 100,000 population among those not immunized to 6.3 cases among those who had been immunized—a reduction of 78 percent. Don't take chances. Provide maximum resistance against polio for yourself and your family. Be immunized. See your physician today.

In the interest of Public Health this advertisement is sponsored by  
**Conger Pharmacy**  
CORNER OF SECOND AND MAIN

Anoka, which ran a series of local advertisements in the *Anoka Herald*, calling for widespread vaccination. Minnesota reported zero cases of polio for the first time in 1967. This occurred as a result of the massive vaccination campaign, both in Anoka County and the greater state of Minnesota. The state has not reported a death from natural, locally contracted polio since 1973, and polio has not been reported en masse in the state since 1981.



*This section was written by John Hilst, a summer research intern. John has lived in Coon Rapids his entire life and is currently studying both history and industrial engineering at Iowa State University. John is in the process of researching and creating an exhibit focused on the mid-century medical history of Anoka County, especially in regards to polio and medical facilities.*

A black and white photograph of a woman in a long-sleeved, light-colored dress standing next to a large piece of industrial equipment, possibly a refrigerator or freezer. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The equipment has a large blue 'P' logo overlaid on it. The text 'Serving the Anoka Area since 1936' is written in blue, stylized font across the top right of the image. The text 'Pierce' is written in blue, stylized font across the bottom left of the image. The text 'HEATING, COOLING & COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION' is written in black, sans-serif font across the bottom left of the image. The text '1920 2ND AVE. ANOKA' and '763-421-3604' is written in black, sans-serif font across the bottom right of the image.

**Serving the Anoka Area  
since 1936**

**Pierce**  
HEATING, COOLING &  
COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION

1920 2ND AVE. ANOKA  
763-421-3604

Show your business' support of local history by  
sponsoring our next newsletter.



New additions to our collections usually bring us fresh stories about people who made their home in Anoka County over the years. This is certainly true of three recently donated items: a cast iron baking pan and two garden hoes.

These artifacts belonged to two generations of the Wilkins family of Fridley. The baking pan was that of Margaret (Michener) Wilkins (1866-1953), the wife of Charles Morris Wilkins (1865-1940). Married in Indiana on October 16, 1894, the couple later moved to Fridley. Charles' occupation is given as a tin smith or sheet metal worker, while Margaret kept their home and raised five children: Heber C., Howard G., John R., Charles M. Jr., and Ruth M. Wilkins.

Margaret was a Quaker, and even as technology began to progress into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, she preferred to do her cooking and baking on a wood-burning stove using cast iron implements. The baking pan (below, Object ID# 2018.0995.001) was one of them. Composed of two rows of six half-cylinder sections, the rows were joined in the middle and with a small handle on each short end; this one has no mark indicating its maker. The word "Patented" is stamped on one handle, and a number given on the other, but the number is no longer legible. Pans like these could be used to bake a variety of things, including muffins, cornbread, or rolls. Other cast iron implements used by Margaret were a griddle, waffle-maker, and a large fork.

When Margaret passed away in 1953, her youngest son, Charles M. Wilkins Jr.

(1901-1993), inherited her cooking utensils. Listed as a farmer living with his parents in 1910, he later worked as a salesman, selling coffee and soap. He married Florence M. Petersen (1902-1988) on June 14, 1924 (see above). They continued to live in the Fridley area, and having two daughters, Shirley I. and Marjorie J. The family gardened, and they had two garden hoes. One, with a green metal head, is a regular size, used by Charles and Florence. The second is red and was smaller, sized for a child; this hoe was used by their children and grandchildren throughout the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Thanks to these artifacts, we know more about the Wilkins family across two, and even three, generations, for it was one of Charles and Florence's granddaughters who donated them to ACHS. The hoes are now on display in the Garage exhibit, helping visitors better picture what mid-century life was like in Anoka County. The baking pan is safely in the collections, ready for any who want to explore life in the early 1900s.







Come in We're  
**OPEN**

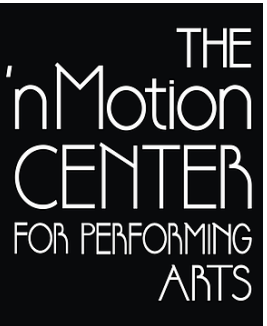
# THE **G**ARAGE

JULY 14  
10 A.M.– 4P.M.

Heading to Riverfest in Anoka on July 14? Pop over to the History Center for some fun and get an eye-ful of those baby-food jars

screwed to a plywood shelf. Yep, we're opening a new exhibit and it resembles that garage you remember in the 60s!

In addition to the new exhibit, join us to play games (hopscotch and hula hoops are a must), enjoy a root beer float, and relax watching dancers from 'nMotion Studio in Fridley.



## Thank You!!

This spring we held our 2nd Online Auction through the generous help and partnership with AAA Auction and Realty Company. Items on the auction included specially designated items and donations (no worries, no collection pieces!). Through the companies auction network and your support we raised \$1,645 for ACHS and local history. THANK YOU!

We are in the process of gathering items for our next online auction. If you have anything you think would be a great auction donation, contact us at the History Center. Board President Dennis Berg is spearheading this effort.



# Home & Garden Tours!

Two cities in Anoka County showcase their history and beauty with Home & Garden Tours this year!

On July 15, the Anoka HPC and ACHS host their 15th tour. This beautiful summer tradition explores unique homes, and the hidden history still present from the 1939 Anoka Tornado. Special features also include an exclusive look past the gates and inside the Federal Cartridge Clubhouse, and a Pop-Up Marketplace and Tornado exhibit at the Anoka Armory, a building destroyed by that same tornado.

Join a new tradition with the Fridley Historic Home & Garden Tour on July 22! This tour will ramble back in time into Fridley's most famous era, the 60s: an age of tornadoes, strength and rebuilding. Enjoy scenic homes and gardens while learning more about the history of the Fridley area. The tour is a fundraiser for the Anoka County Historical Society and the Fridley Historical Society.

**Purchase tickets for either (or both!) tours at [AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)**



**15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ANOKA HERITAGE**  
**Home and Garden Tour**  
 Sunday July 15, 2018  
 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Beautiful Gardens  
 Federal Clubhouse  
 1939 Tornado Twists  
 Pop-up Marketplace

Buy tickets at [AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)  
**ADVANCE TICKETS \$12**

**SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR TOUR SPONSORS:**

- ACHS
- PETERSON Sweets
- TERRY & OVERACKER
- PLANTS and THINGS USA
- The BIG White House
- BOB 106
- Christian Hill Neighborhood
- Fills Avenue Dental
- Main Floral
- Sterling Trophy
- Ticknor Hill Bed & Breakfast



**ACHS** Anoka County Historical Society  
**City of Fridley**  
**FRIDLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**ANOKA COUNTY LIBRARY**

*Ramble back in time...*

Buy tickets at [AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)  
**ADVANCE TICKETS \$12**

**Fridley Historic Home & Garden Tour**  
 July 22, 2018  
 1 - 5 p.m.

**SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR TOUR SPONSORS:**

- PLANTS and THINGS USA
- TWIN CITY STAFFING
- BACHMANS
- Bob's Produce
- Mr. Darcy's Cows



### LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TEA

The afternoon of May 5 was a time for fun and successful fundraising at the History Center. League of Women Voters—ABC partnered with ACHS to sponsor a tea to raise funds for an exhibit celebrating the League's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. A tea has significance for LWV-

ABC because Mary Spurzem held a tea to organize a League of Women Voters in Anoka, which became League of Women Voters—ABC. Our tea was attended by 28 League members, their family, and friends. ACHS staff created a placemat especially for the event showing items of our history from the History Center files. We were delighted that the placemat featured our beloved member, Zilla Way, who attended and signed some of the placemats, which attendees took home as mementoes. Another highlight we enjoyed was a scavenger hunt that introduced everyone to the exhibits. We had a wonderful time, learned about our history, plans for an exhibit featuring the League's 100th birthday, and the great work of the History Center. LWV – ABC thanks ACHS staff for their cooperation and hard work. We had so much fun we may do it again!

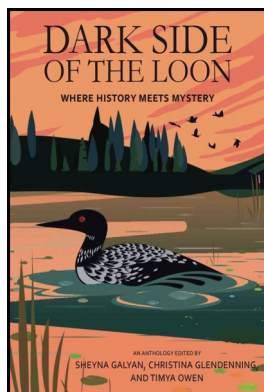


### DARK SIDE OF THE LOON BOOK EVENT

On June 9 authors from *Dark Side of the Loon: Where History Meets Mystery* hosted an author showcase at the History Center. It was a day of mystery, adventure, and local history, all wrapped in fiction. Every 45 minutes throughout the day, new authors from the book took center stage in the Philolectian Room to read a portion of their story in the

publication and answer questions. Visitors seemed especially interested in the writing process, research methods, and publication procedure.

Special thank you to the authors who shared their time and talents: Midge Bubany, E. Bakos (Mary Sebesta), Barbara Merritt Deese, W. Powers (Bill Anderson), S. Owen (Timya Owen), Greg Dahlager, Marlene Chabot, James Goodhue, Carol Huss, Cheryl Lewis, Christine Husom, Michael Allan Mallory, Karl Jorgenson, and Sherry Roberts.

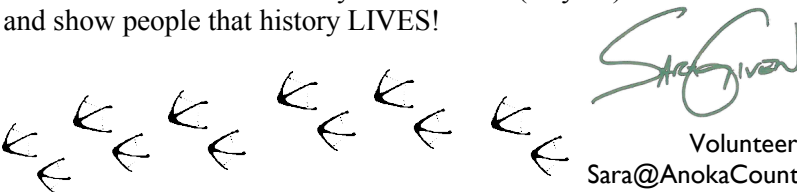




When people think of volunteering the History Center, they automatically think of all the old stuff we keep in boxes. While the collection (re: old stuff) is important to who we are, a bigger need is meeting people, having fun with history and letting them know about the History Center.

Don't be shocked, but there are people that say they don't like history \*gasp\* or haven't heard of ACHS \*pout.\* 😊 Our summer events, including the Home & Garden Tours, Riverfest, Anoka County Fair and Nowthen Threshing Show are chances to introduce the fun of history and ACHS to new folk.

It can't be done without support. We still need help to cover all shifts at these summer events. Volunteer yourself, and even bring a friend or two to join the fun. Spend 2.5 hours at the County Fair (July 24-29), or 4 hours hanging at a beautiful home on the Fridley Garden Tour (July 22) and show people that history LIVES!


  
 Sara Given  
 Volunteer Coordinator  
[Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org](mailto: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.





# INTERNS Ahead



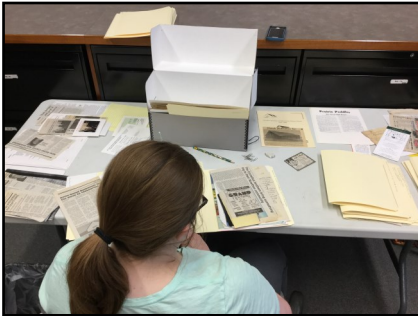
## Meet the Oxley Crew!

This summer, ACHS board member Richard Oxley created a new internship at Hennepin Technical College. Students Cameron, Christi, and Chaeli earn school credits while creating video and digital content for the History Center in the form of 2 *Minute History*.

These video shorts, aptly two minutes long as the name implies, showcase the displays available in the exhibit hall. The crew tackles a new video each week, spending a day each on pre-production, shooting, and post-production. Topics include Jon Arfstrom,

Anoka County Schools, and the Kline Sanitarium.

**Find 2 *Minute History* episodes on our website, or Facebook page!**



## Meet Delaney!

Delaney is an archival intern at the History Center. During her time here, she is organizing and cataloging a large collection of items about the history of Nowthen (Burns Township).

## What favorite thing you have discovered in your project so far?

*My favorite thing I have discovered are*

*the records relating to Jim Hare, the man credited with naming Nowthen. I also found a republican ticket from President Grant's election within that collection.*

## What surprised you about interning at ACHS?

*I think I was surprised by the extensive amount of history on just one town within the county.*

## What is your goal beyond this internship?

*My goal is to go on to graduate school for Library and Information Sciences to become a future archivist on the East Coast.*

**General Donations**

Johannes Allert  
Anoka Women of Today  
Kevin and Patti Bellows  
Mike and Mary Clark  
Eva Mae Cleator  
Julie Firkus  
Eloise Graham  
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Carol Vevea  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Chapter 470  
Rita Warpeha

**Memorial Donations**

Eleanor Lee (Jacob) Swisher

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Sally Esmay  
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Floyd Freeman  
Sara Given  
Don Johnson  
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Tamera Loyola

Fern Mattson  
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Lynne Rickert  
Jerry Soma  
Judith Svitak  
Carol Vevea

**ACHS New Members**

MJ Anderson  
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Beth Clifford  
Barbara Deese  
Rebecca Hope  
Gladys Odegaard  
Charles Thurston

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**ACHS Business Members**

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Fifth Avenue Dental  
Forest Lake Contracting, Inc.  
Hawaii Nail Spa  
Nowthen Historical Power  
Association  
Pierce Refrigeration  
Peterson Shoes  
Ticknor Hill Bed & Breakfast



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**ACHS Remembers**



To those members, volunteers, friends, and neighbors who are  
no longer with us—you will be missed.

Eleanor Lee Swisher  
1920-2018

Julian “Steve” Stephen  
Schmidt  
1946-2018

Donald Vesley  
1932-2018

**Visit the History Center! Open 5 days a week, 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.

**Anoka RiverFest & Exhibit Opening***July 14, 10a.m.-4 p.m.*

Stop by the History Center for fun, history, community and root beer floats. Also enjoy new exhibits, music, and performances from 'NMotion dance studio of Fridley.

**Anoka Heritage Home & Garden Tour***July 15, 1-5 p.m.*

Back for the 15th year, Anoka's Heritage Home & Garden Tour journeys into the history of Anoka's 1939 tornado, through the Federal Cartridge Clubhouse, and into gardens dug with love. Also enjoy a Pop-Up Museum and Marketplace at the Armory. Advance tickets: \$12

**Fridley Home & Garden Tour***July 22, 1-5 p.m.*

Ramble back in time and explore the beauty and history of the city of Fridley on its first Home & Garden Tour. The tour will feature the city's most famous era, the 60s: an age of tornadoes, strength and rebuilding.

Advance tickets: \$12

**Anoka County Fair***July 24-29*

Visit the ACHS at the Old Farmhouse to share stories, play with old games, relax on the porch swing and share the mystery of the kitchen's ice box.

Gate Admission: Adults \$10 (ACHS Farmhouse volunteers receive free ticket)

**Anoka County Genealogical Society Meeting***August 7, 6:30 p.m.* Topic: Migration - Why did they go that way?*September 4, 6:30 p.m.* Meeting topic to be determined.

Meetings held at the Anoka County History Center.

Email questions or suggestions to [acgsmn@yahoo.com](mailto:acgsmn@yahoo.com)**Nowthen Threshing Show***August 17-19*

Visit ACHS in our 1920's era General Store to purchase a delicious pickle or penny candy while bemoaning the effects of Prohibition or women's suffrage.

Gate Admission: \$10 Adults (ACHS General Store volunteers receive free ticket)



Anoka County  
Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
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(763) 421-0600  
[AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)

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