



Anoka County
Historical Society



HISTORY 21

Volume 49 No.1 January-February 2019

Did you know there are 21 communities in the county?

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: Coon Rapids Snowflake Days buttons dating from 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1987

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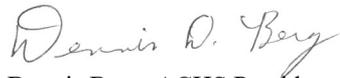
From the President

In anticipation of the board working on goals for 2019, I reviewed the goals from prior years. The one constant goal of your board over the years has been the need for county wide identity and outreach. The support we get from our host city of Anoka, which we greatly appreciate, has created an image for some that we are more localized.

In reviewing the past year I'm very pleased to report that making this goal a priority was very successful in 2018. We now have more dedicated space in local newspapers for a full, illustrated spread of history and current events at ACHS. We added the nursing home programs in Andover, Ramsey and surrounding areas. We participated in county wide Chamber of Commerce events and expanded our school programs to private and home school groups. By expanding our outreach we also hope to increase membership which is the life blood of our organization.

The outreach has been a contributing factor to the early success of the fundraising effort for our Veteran Voice project. We have already accomplished over 85% of our \$60,000 goal, a major portion coming from first time supporters and new members.

For 2019 our goal will be to continue our outreach efforts by partnering with local non-profits and other organizations to bring our shared history to life in an effort to grow our membership.



Dennis Berg, ACHS President



From the Director

The present is the past of the future. Our actions of today influence our decisions of tomorrow, just as the events of today will only be remembered if we take the time to document them. With the flurry of activity that ushered out an era of Kordiak family leadership in the Fridley/Columbia Heights area, so too has the publicity occurred ushering in Mandy Meisner to take the seat as County Commissioner of District 4. We are excited to announce Mandy will serve as liaison for the Historical Society, continuing the tradition of communication and partnership we value so highly.

Welcome, Mandy! We're looking forward to the future.



Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, Executive Director



The Philolectian Clock

By Chuck Zielin

Becoming a new volunteer at the Anoka County Historical Society was a challenge; how could I contribute? My interviewer, Sara, quickly answered the question. With my background in antique clock restoration I could help them bring back to life the Philolectian Society's grandfather clock. It could then be used in the rededication of the Philolectian Room at the History Center. As a side note, I discovered that this clock is the second donated by the Philolectian Society to the library after they organized in 1892. (Does anyone know anything about the first, 'ugly' clock? Please let us know if you do.)

Before getting into a discussion of the clock, I believe a few words about the Philolectian Society are in order. The Philolectian Society was instrumental in bringing the library to a "culturally and geographically isolated Anoka." To break out of this isolation they saw the "great propensities for social, civic and cultural advancement" that a library could provide. They were/are "lovers of learning" and their tool was a free lending library. Through many activities, they reached out to the community to motivate the city fathers to take advantage of new state levy laws. In 1903 a commitment was made. The sum of all this action was the Carnegie Library Building of 1904 with an original commitment for 10 years. The Carnegie Building lasted until 1965, but community support for a library has continued to this day, thanks in large measure to the Philolectian Society.

In the dedication of the Carnegie Building, the Philolectian Society donated this clock. It first stood in the lower level area known as the Philolectian



*Carnegie Library, at the corner of Third Ave
and Jackson St., Anoka*



Chuck working on the timing mechanism of one of the Grandfather clocks in the ACHS collection.

Room. Then, in 1965, it was moved to the new library building on Third Avenue and occupied a position in the fireside room. When the building came to house the Historical Society, the room was renamed the Philolectian Room, though the clock was placed in storage. As ACHS has worked to create new exhibit panels for the room, it seemed only proper to have this artifact once again prominently displayed.

Hidden in the depths of the storage area, I retrieved the clock just before Christmas. It hadn't been

serviced in many years and needed a total refreshing of all its components.

I identified the clock as a 1904 Ansonia Long Case. It has a time and strike movement and is powered by two weights: one for the time gear side and one for the strike side. Its crown, with inner facing curved wings and ornate brass finials is classic 19th century. The time piece hood, waist, and base feature square and rectangle lines of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Having a square stamped face with no arch at the top also reflects this latter movement. However, the large silvered time ring and the smaller second ring, along with the scrolled spandrels (corners) and center circle reflect the earlier style. Finally, the solid straight oak wood cuts are key to the Arts and Crafts design. One can easily consider these case design features to be hybrid and transitional.

In refurbishing the case, I intended to remove the collected grime and old cracked varnish without damaging the patina. This was accomplished through hand work using a solvent and steel wool before I sealed the wood with a flat finish. I tried to split the difference between the purist who would have left it as found and the revivalist who would have stripped it and then refinished it.

I cleaned, polished, and sealed three brass finials, the two weights, and pendulum bob, as well as cleaning and adjusting the timepiece.

Our timepiece is of a high-quality brass and is of a common Ansonia design dating to the second half of the 19th century. The weights are of a plain design and are raised by pulling down the chains every seven or eight days. The gong striker is a small brass hammer attached to the timepiece strike arm and has a leather insert to soften the sound. The actual gong is a curled rod common to most Ansonia Time and Strike clocks. Penciled dates



Preparing to refurbish the clock case on a table in the Philolectian room.

on the timepiece carriage indicate the clock was serviced some eight times: March 2, 1905; April 3, 1908; February 25, 1915 RNB; March 4, 1918 PHB; January 9, 1935 Saudberg; January 3, 1954 AL, April 17, 1957, and May 31, 1999 Tom Burns. A ninth date could now be added: December 27, 2018 CZ.

The finished product now proudly stands in the Philolectian Room at the Anoka County Historical Society. It is running smoothly and keeping good time.

Thank you, Philolectian Society, for this beautiful symbol of your contributions over these many years.



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PHILOLECTIAN BEGINNINGS

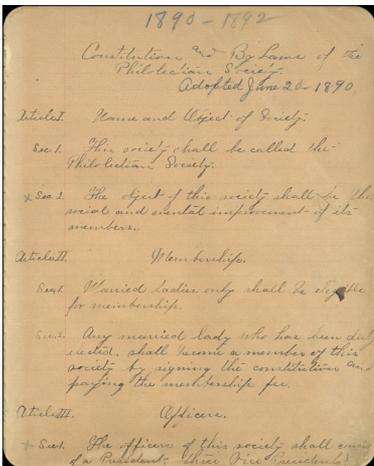
On June 20, 1890 a dozen members of the Anoka Ladies Social Club met and officially reorganized as the Philolectian Society. This new group, dedicated to the “social and mental improvement of its members,” maintained the same officers as previously elected—thus, Dr. Flora Aldrich became the First President.

The society met every other Friday afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m., rotating homes though their membership. Each woman paid an admission fee of 50 cents in addition to quarterly dues of 25 cents to maintain their status within the organization. Potential members had to be married and elected by ballot, receiving no more than two dissenting votes.

Article nine of the bylaws states that “All entertainments and meetings of the society must be of such a character that all members can participate.”

Activities included the selection and reading of educational articles, picnics at Crooked Lake with ice-cream, lectures on the platforms of Republican and Democratic parties, as well as efforts to bring their love of learning to the city of Anoka.

The Philolectian organization made the creation of a free public library in the city of Anoka one of their central goals. Members knocked on doors asking for donations while pushing a political campaign forward to ensure the success of this venture. As a result, the city council issued a tax



First page of the Philolectian Constitution and Bylaws, 1890.

levy and appointed a nine member library board.

The members of this board rented three second-story rooms at the corner of Main Street and Second Avenue, just above Ticknor & Co. Drug Store. The doors opened to patrons of the first Anoka City Library on December 6, 1893, but books weren't issued until Jan. 23, 1894.

The library quickly outgrew this space, prompting J.E. Douglas of Anoka to write to Andrew Carnegie in 1903 asking for a public library building. He agreed, on the condition that the city should supply \$1,250 per year for 10 years for the support of the library. The building, located at the corner of Jackson Street and Third Avenue, opened December 6, 1904 and stood until 1966 when it was razed and the next city library opened its doors.

The final city library operated from 1965 to 2000 on Third Avenue. The Anoka County Historical Society moved into this building when the Rum River Library opened.



Above: First Anoka City Library, circa 1894. Below: ACHS building as City Library in 1973.



The Philolectian

est. 90

"Lovers of Learning"

PHILOLECTIAN ROOM REDEDICATION

You're warmly invited to the rededication of The Philolectian Room at the

Anoka County History Center. With a permanent exhibit featuring the group's beginnings, their library legacy, and the newly refurbished Philolectian Grandfather Clock, the room will be available to visitors throughout the year.

When: March 13

Time: 1 p.m.—3 p.m. Open House

2019 begins a series of years with important centennial anniversaries for Anoka County organizations and businesses. We will be celebrating here at the History Center with the “We Are 100” exhibit series, beginning with the local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

As the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution passed by Congress in 1919, it then began the ratification process, with the final needed state ratifying it in 1920. Minnesota ratified the 19th Amendment on September 8, 1919, and the women’s suffrage movement here could then adjust its efforts in a different but related direction:



helping to educate women about their new voting ability.

The Minnesota Women Suffrage Association reincorporated as the League of Women Voters, Minnesota in October 1919, and local chapters began to form, including one in Anoka with Nellie (Erickson) Peterson as President (pictured at left). She wrote to the *Anoka Union* after final ratification in 1920, pleased with the victory, but encouraging women to exercise their newly-gained voting rights. Many women did, with about 40% of the Minnesota vote in the 1920 election coming from women. Others went further: a charter member of the League, Minnie (Hill) Beatty, also served as the first female election judge chair in her Anoka ward in 1922. Another local chapter, located in Columbia Heights, was also formed in the following

years.

The LWV Anoka chapter was permanently re-established in 1938 by Mary Spurzem, and promptly got to work on local issues that needed to be addressed. (The Anoka chapter merged with the Coon Rapids and Blaine chapters in 1979, to become the LWV-ABC chapter.) In 1940, they successfully worked to organize garbage collection throughout the city of Anoka, and later got trash cans placed on public sidewalks throughout the city as well. Also in 1940, LWV began one of their longest-running programs: that of candidate forums. These forums allow candidates for local and state political office to make their positions clear, helping ensure voters are educated on the issues and discern which candidates support or oppose them.

From the beginning, the LWV has also made strong efforts to register as many citizens as possible to vote. Getting women registered was important in the early years of suffrage, and since then they have made sure to focus on groups of citizens who have recently gained the right to vote: high school students turning 18 and new citizens at naturalization ceremonies.

Local League members have made other voting-related efforts over the years. In 1990, legislation was passed in Minnesota allowing those with long-term disabilities or illnesses to register as permanent absentee voters, so that they would receive an absentee

ballot application automatically for each election. The push for this legislation was made by LWV-ABC member Sandra Shanley, who herself suffered from Multiple Sclerosis, so that citizens whose physical mobility was limited would be able to exercise their voting rights more easily.

In addition to these Voter Services, LWV-ABC follows the League practice of studying various topics of concern to citizens, learning about an issue over the course of two years. Following this period of study and consideration, the chapter will then adopt an official position on that topic. Positions can be held at the local, state, or national level.

Local League chapters also pursue other projects in the community. The ACHS exhibit examines these as well, looking at the Bee Safe and Pollinators projects that the LWV-ABC chapter undertook in 2004 and 2015, respectively.

Another development for the League over the years was the eventual inclusion of men. While initially only women were allowed to join the LWV, that later changed. Fred Strobel became the first male member of the LWV-ABC in 1974.

Participation in the League has also led many women into local and state offices over the years, or coincided with their time in office. Some notable names include: Zilla Way, Susan Anderson, Kathy Tinglestad, Natalie Haas Steffen, and Margaret Langfeld.

Join us beginning on January 19, 2019 to learn more about the League of Women Voters, and help us kick off the “We Are 100” centennial celebrations.

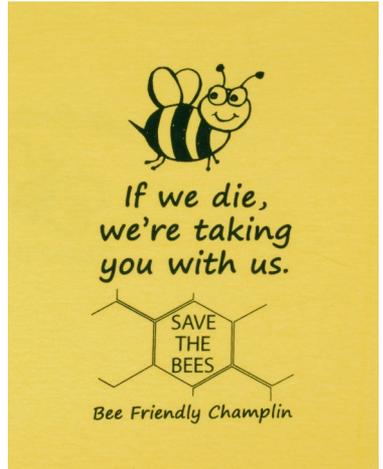


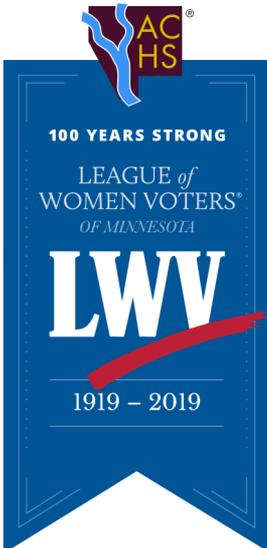
EXHIBIT OPENING!

You're warmly invited to the official opening of The League of Women Voters exhibit. Come celebrate their history of advocacy, civic mindfulness, and election promotion with us. We are excited to tell this story thanks to a partnership between ACHS and our local League of Women Voters—Anoka, Blaine, Coon Rapids Area.

WHEN: January 19

TIME: 2—4 p.m. *program at 2:30 p.m.*

WHERE: Anoka County History Center





TPT Production Update

By Luke Heikkila
Producer, Twin Cities PBS

January

A sigh of relief

It is January in Minnesota. If you're like me you breathe a sigh of relief. January in Minnesota means the days are getting a little longer, maybe soon I will be driving home from work in the daylight.

January means the Holidays are behind me. The wrapping. The cooking. The planning. Weeks of preparation that was put to waste in one 24-hour period won't happen again until next year. I've breathed more than one sigh of relief since.

If you're like me, more daylight and the Holidays being but a memory is enough to get you through to the next goal, whatever it may be.

If you're like me, you're not in the military nor do you have a family member living on a military base either stateside, or overseas. If you're like me, your family is living under one roof, or they are just a short drive away.

Unlike me, perhaps you have a military connection. You have a spouse, child, or parent in the military and they are far away from home. The Holiday season may have been gut-wrenching. You had an empty chair at the table, an empty stocking on the mantel. Maybe you had to drive to Mass when your spouse is the one that usually does that. Maybe it was up to you to shop for the gifts when you usually don't need to. The snow shoveling. Worrying about ice-dams. The decorating. Keeping things normal for your kids. Maybe it feels like you didn't breathe all month.

This Holiday season, and for the foreseeable future, you have had more to worry about than having enough tape to wrap gifts and enough powdered sugar to make frosting for the cookies. You worried non-stop about a loved one's safety and waited for a call on New Year's Eve. The phone rang. You sighed.

As part of a documentary Twin Cities PBS is producing with the Anoka County Historical Society, I am able to interview residents of Anoka County who are either currently experiencing a military deployment or have done so in the past. In doing so, I am learning this is a time of year in Minnesota that is increasingly difficult for families of



Scott Collier tells Luke Heikkila about his experience leaving his newborn to serve.



Dale and Joyce Melcher discuss what it's like to have their granddaughter serving in Kuwait.

next goal of being reunited because they must.

After the deployment is served and the family is reunited, some say the real work begins. The distraction of the deployment passes, and the focus is on reconnecting. The first year back together can be more difficult than the previous year spent apart. This reintegration takes time. The family has learned to fix faucets, shovel driveways, and conquer once unfamiliar errands. They have new routines and different abilities than they did before the deployment. The veterans I have spoken to learned to realize this and were mindful not to disrupt the family's newly found balance upon their return.

When this project is completed in the summer of 2019, it is my hope viewers will see these stories and the storytellers as examples of resilience, strength, and commitment. The storytellers are men and women who can help us all understand how to prepare for and overcome challenges. They can teach us all to trust that no matter our obstacle, with help and through resiliency, sooner-or-later we can all begin to breathe our own sigh of relief.

deployed soldiers. Though deployments are difficult I'm learning the resiliency of military families is unquestionable.

Deployed soldiers and their families are strong and I am finding a deployment, and the passage of time, can make them stronger. They have found strength and solace in their community, their churches, their friends. They find time to communicate with their loved ones. They write letters, they text, the call, they use Skype. During the deployment they carry on because they must, they continue their mission because they must, they busy themselves and they work towards their

Special Thanks to our sponsors for making this TPT documentary possible!

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Parade of Projects



*When: March 24
2-4 p.m.*

*Where: Anoka County
History Center*

Come celebrate the close of another year in history!

In addition to the announcement of our newly elected Board members and a short business meeting to approve the 2018 Annual Report, we will bring to life the projects and programs that meant the most to us.

Jell-O Cookoff — Show us your best jiggle!

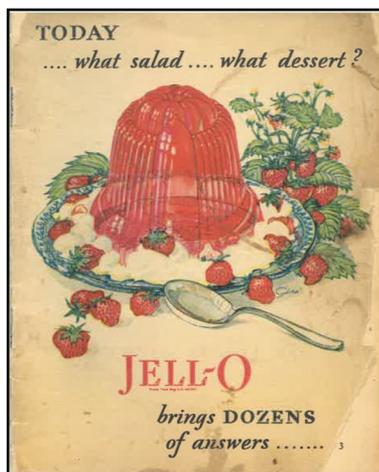
You've done it with chili, now do it with Jello-O! No family gathering in the Midwest is complete without fruit, fluff, and that magical jiggle.

Enter your best Jell-O salad, dessert, or dish for a chance to win prizes for:

- ◇ **Best in Fluff**
- ◇ **Best Fruit Suspension**
- ◇ **Best Family Story**
- ◇ **Best Photo Entry (the older the better)**

We will have games like Jiggler toss and Jell-O Jeopardy as well the tastings, of course! Mark your calendars for this fundraiser:

April 27 at 2 p.m.





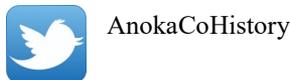
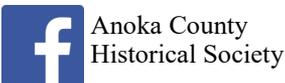
ACHS VOLUNTEERS! The promised time has come—we are now equipped with an internet connection! Yes, we could access the interwebs before, but you often had time to get a snack between uploads. **NO MORE!** Before Christmas three technicians descended on the History Center for six hours to update our wired connection. This ended up being a larger job than we anticipated

with our high ceilings! While many of our historical artifacts are from a pre-computer era, the care and cataloging of them need computers and the internet, as our database is now cloud-based. Your help as volunteers supports the ACHS in so many ways, I'm happy to say we can support you with an updated connection and computers.

Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
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.



General Donations

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 Twin City Staffing



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 County Genealogical Society Meeting

Meetings held at the Anoka County History Center.

Email questions or suggestions to acgsmn@yahoo.com**League of Women Voters Exhibit Opening**January 19, 2-4 p.m. *program at 2:30 p.m.*

Anoka County History Center

Philolectian Room RededicationMarch 13, 1-3 p.m. *program at 1:30 p.m.*

Anoka County History Center

Annual Meeting

March 24, 2-4 p.m.

Anoka County History Center

Jell-O Cookoff: Show Us Your Best Jiggle

April 27, 2-4 p.m.

Location TBD

For more
information on
our programs,
check out the
Events section
on the ACHS
Facebook page.

Look for our cooking series *Best of the Blessed*, coming to you soon on YouTube! We're taking fabulous recipes from our church cookbook collection and whipping them up for you to enjoy (on screen, at least).

Don't forget to drop by QCTV online to find the latest episode of *It's Your History*.

**ACHS Remembers**

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

Lenwood Lambert Sr.
1925-2018

John Reynolds
1935-2018



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