



# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 1

January– February 2009

## “HISTORIC”

### CARLOS AVERY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



SERVING:

Andover

Anoka

Bethel

Blaine

Centerville

Circle Pines

Columbia Heights

Columbus

Coon Rapids

East Bethel

Fridley

Ham Lake

Hilltop

Lexington

Lino Lakes

Linwood

Nowthen

Oak Grove

Ramsey

St. Francis

Spring Lake Park

*By Holly Broden, Contributing Writer*

It's easy to miss the wrought iron gated opening to the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management area driving along the winding road of County Highway 18, but its history in Anoka and Chisago Counties, as well as in the State of Minnesota is hard to ignore. It is a history dotted with successes in wildlife management, habitat restoration, and adapting to changing philosophies in wildlife management.

Chukar partridge, Bob White quail, ring-necked pheasants, and Canada geese (yes, it's true) all were projects undertaken at the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Columbus Township in Anoka County. While the wildlife reintroduction programs are significant to the history of Minnesota as is the Colonial Revival style of buildings at the WMA. So significant that the Colonial Revival style buildings helped establish the criteria that placed the 23-thousand acre WMA and its eleven buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is a listing of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects considered to be worthy of preservation. The document confirming its place on the National Register stated that "Carlos Avery Game Farm Historic District is historically significant under National Register Criterion as one of the largest and best equipped game farms in the nation at the time it was first placed in operation in 1937. The district is also important as one of the first large scale efforts at wildlife management in the state."

Named in honor of Carlos Avery, the state game and fish commissioner and a nationally recognized

conservationist, the refuge consisted of a little more than eight-thousand acres, which had been purchased from the Crex Carpet Company in 1933. The property was used by the carpet company to harvest a wire grass used in the manufacturing of rugs. The original land purchased included three small lakes, several thousand acres of swamp land, and large heavily wooded areas---ideal for the propagation of Bob White quail. Bob White quail had been plentiful in Minnesota, but the bird was quickly disappearing from the state.

It seems that timing is everything--such was the case with the Carlos Avery Game Refuge. In 1935, when the United States Government asked states to "submit work projects for unemployment and relief," the Carlos Avery Game Refuge quickly surfaced at the top. Soon project approval came from the WPA (Works Project Administration) and President Franklin Roosevelt established the game refuge and the subsequent quail project at a cost of \$40,887, of which the WPA paid 85%. Also, coming out of project money were five buildings, a central heating and pump house, two dwellings, a combination barn and henhouse, and an incubation room. Also included were a field kitchen, workshop, and farm machinery storage. The game farm was actually one of several distinct and separate functional areas within the refuge which also included a sanctuary for wild birds and animals, a nursery, and a public hunting ground. Quail yards, 200 electric brood coops and fencing, as well as preparation of fields, were completed as the Bob White quail project commenced.

*Continued on page 6*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

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County Commissioner Liaison—

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The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director...**

*By Todd Mahon*

### **Happy Trails, Sharron**

If you are a regular reader of Sharron Stockhausen's column in the *Anoka County Union*, you are aware by now that she has retired from the column after 13 years of interesting stories, pertinent history, and a wry sense of humor about some of the more mundane details of Anoka County's past.

In late 1994, Sharron was serving as the vice president of the Anoka County Historical Society's board of directors. Not interested in serving as president of the organization, she proposed to the board that she write a weekly column about the county's history. When she approached the ABC papers, publishers of the *Anoka County Union*, *Blaine/Spring Lake Park Life*, and *Coon Rapids Herald*, she insisted on the column be in the section that appeared in all three editions and reached the largest Anoka County audience. After all, ACHS represents the entire county, the column would be about the entire county's history, and publishing it only in the *Union* would mean it reached a primarily Anoka audience. The Society has benefited from her insistence ever since.

For many people, the column is their most visible association with ACHS. I regularly hear from people who refer to one of her many columns or ask me a follow-up question about one. It's always great to get such positive feedback. I hope ACHS members and the public join me in thanking Sharron for her countless hours of research and writing about local history. We have all benefited from it. I am glad to count Sharron among ACHS's many great assets and wish her well on her future endeavors.

As we bid goodbye to Sharron, we also welcome Randy Getchell into the writer's chair. Randy has done volunteer research for ACHS in the past and even served as an intern several years ago. He is a retired librarian who has had work published in *Minnesota History*. He has been beating the bushes for several months since agreeing to take over for Sharron and I really look forward to the direction he will take the column. Be sure to pick up the latest edition of the ABC newspaper to check him out. And, if you see Sharron, be sure to give her your thanks.

## **From the President...**

*By Catherine Vesley*

I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season and are looking forward to an interesting new year when the prospect of spring and the return of longer days keeps us all moving forward.

Over the tables laden with food last month, with various friends and family, one of the main themes of discussion was the idea of heritage. We hear it applied to so many areas— farms, estates, gardens, etc. Yet when I looked around my life, I wanted to apply it to a lesser known area: plants.

I am the chosen keeper of a whole group of heritage plants. The best example is the mammoth Christmas cactus in my sunny south living room window. This one is three and a half feet in diameter and it produces classic pinkish red blooms all winter. It was my grandmother's and lived in the small farm house on the eastern Montana plains outside of Great Falls. I remember seeing it in her sewing room. Mom brought it back when the place was sold and the plant took up residence in a sunny window in Northeast Mpls. Mom never split it, so it just grew. When Mom left her apartment, the plant needed a home, so it came with me, where it has been ever since, carrying memories with it.

It is not alone. The Christmas Cactus shares a home with other heritage plants. There is the Bay Tree from my aunt in Oregon, the Mock Orange brought to me in the hospital 45 years ago when my son was born—its now 4 feet high, the unnamed plant with the huge red blossoms that came from Africa via friends in England through American customs to Minnesota. There is also the Sansevera (mother-in-law's tongue) that has been split so many times everyone in the family has a piece. That probably came from a friend in Evanston, Illinois, back in the '40s when we lived there. A friend has a huge pipe organ cactus with a similar lineage and we both cherish one old big leaf begonia with a long history.

And then there are the ferns and ivies!

In the chilly days of this season, one can look at the collection of household greenery and remember where it came from, and how it is a visual, growing link with our past. I have a picture of Ellis Island immigrants carrying packages with slips of cherished, sturdy, plants from the old country: ivies, wandering Jews, fruit trees, etc. I know my mother's family brought seeds and tiny slips to grow in sunny windows when they arrived here. Enjoy your heritage plants and pass them along with the stories. They are truly a living heritage.

# The Story of an Artifact

By Vickie Wendel, Program Manager

Throughout the past year, we have given glimpses at some of the behind-the-scenes decisions and questions ACHS staff face as we care for and exhibit artifacts in our collections. This has now developed into our *75 Years of Collecting* exhibit, which opened in December. We encourage everyone, especially our long-time members, to visit the exhibit to see if you can help identify some of the “unknowns.” We also thought members would like to understand how we are working through this huge project.

The process of sorting through the collecting done in the past 75 years is a daunting task and it would be very easy to become overwhelmed were it not for the little “success stories” we have encountered. The doll quilts are one of those successes, but it took this kind of massive project to make that success happen.

Part of the process happened as ACHS moved out of Colonial Hall to the History Center. At that time, many things were sorted and like objects put together. This made keeping track of things as we moved easier. It also helps us break down this project into manageable pieces. We brought out all nine of the small doll quilts in the collection. There were records for eight quilts, but only three of them had any kind of marking to indicate which was which. Careful examination of another quilt found an acquisition number hidden in a seam, so that one was identified.



One of Maud Lockwood’s quilts

Maude McQuaid’s quilt.



We spread out the remaining unidentified quilts together with what little description was originally put into the records. The “yellow star” description made sense to one staff person who had been reading about antique quilts, so we could definitively say that quilt belonged to acquisition #427, donated by Maud Lockwood of Columbia Heights in 1977.

Another quilt record described a “pink border.” With all of the quilts laid out on the table, it was clear there was only one with a pink border. Now we could identify which record that quilt belonged to—it was the second of two doll quilts Maud Lockwood had donated.

Now we were down to three unidentified quilts.

One of the unknown quilt records stated that it had belonged to Maude McQuaid of Anoka, when she was a little girl. Since fabrics can be dated, we used several authoritative fabric resources to date the fabrics used to make the quilts, then compared those dates to when Maude would have been playing with dolls. Two quilts had fabric matching the years Maude would have played with dolls. Since one had a name,



Dorothy Ziemann’s quilt

J.Porter, embroidered on it, we knew that one was not Maude’s, leaving only one quilt that could possibly be Maude’s.

To be even more sure, we checked the dates of the other donor, Dorothy Ziemann. The fabrics in the second unidentified quilt matched her dates. With the explanation of how we reached the conclusion included in the updated record of the artifact.

We had now identified all but one quilt—the one quilt that had no record. All we knew about this quilt was “J.Porter Feb 1 95” from what had been embroidered on the quilt. With diligent research, we found Jane Porter, a very early Anoka County settler. Based on her age and the date on the quilt, we can guess Jane might have made it for a granddaughter’s doll. Jane’s daughter was married and had her own family by 1895.

Another reference found in the archives told us the Porter women did attend quilting bees in Ramsey and that Jane was still living there in 1895. While we still don’t know who or how the quilt was brought to ACHS, we are very confident about the provenance of this little quilt and have included all of the research in the permanent record for this artifact.

Success! All nine doll quilts in the collection now have donor records and provenance, making them much more valuable in the collection. That is what keeps us going in this massive undertaking and makes all the work worth it!



Jane Porter’s quilt

# Minnesota Quilt Project

By Maria King, Volunteer Coordinator

On Tuesday, November 25, ACHS hosted the Minnesota Quilt Project volunteers. The goal of this ongoing project is to document quilts made in Minnesota or brought here by Minnesota families. The data collected will be added to the Quilt Index, which is a project of The Alliance for American Quilts in conjunction with the University of Michigan. The Minnesota Quilt Project is a standing committee of the Minnesota Quilters' Guild. They have documented countless quilts since they began in 1988. By 2004, they had recorded over 4,000 Minnesota quilts, and published *Minnesota's Historic Quilts*. The book required making some hard choices because there were so many beautiful quilts to choose from and fascinating stories to accompany them.



The Quilt Project volunteers were aware that their job was not yet complete, so the next step was to document the collections of county historical societies around the state, wherever access was available. ACHS has some 30 quilts and they are being added to the database. Substantial collections were recorded in Winona, Buffalo, and Fergus Falls. The county historical societies of both Ramsey and Hennepin Counties were documented, as were private collections in Duluth and New Ulm.

Quilters who would like more information or would like to become part of the National Quilt Index are invited to contact the Minnesota Quilters' Guild at [www.MQP@mnquilt.org](mailto:www.MQP@mnquilt.org). There you can download the necessary paperwork and submit a photo of your quilt or quilts.

The volunteers, Pat, Jean, Gail, and Linda, offer the following advice to all quilters: Sign and date your quilt and locate it geographically. Families move and it's great to know when and where the original quilter constructed each quilt. One hundred years from now, someone will be glad you did!

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## 2008 Holiday Ornament from Nowthen

City officials and community members from Nowthen presented a wonderful ornament filled with history and symbolism on December 2. It was designed by a native of Nowthen, Joel Greenberg. Joel, an artist by trade, was asked by members of the city council to come up with an idea for an ornament to represent Nowthen.

He wanted an image that would be recognizable to everyone who has ever been in Nowthen. He figured the town itself is the most recognizable element of Nowthen, so he chose the four main buildings that have been there the longest: one on each corner of county roads 22 and 5, the two roads that intersect in Nowthen. He used an old western font for the word "Nowthen" to convey age, then the year Nowthen became a city. He included the date Burns Township was established, 1869, when the first officials were elected to manage the community. Joel then put in some country scenery to convey the rural heritage. To finish it off, Joel coined the phrase "country crossroads" as a phrase that could sum up the city's description.

Joel Greenberg, city officials, family, friends and members all gathered to get the first look at the newest ornament on the Anoka County Tree.



## Up To Date

### ACHS By-Laws Meeting February 1

ACHS needs to revise its by-laws. The Board of Directors is proposing three main changes to the bylaws and some minor adjustments to clean up anachronistic and confusing language.

#### The major changes are:

The elimination of the office of Past President.

Two year terms for Vice President/President.

Eliminating the current term limits for Directors.

**Please attend the meeting at the Anoka City Hall on February 1, at 1:00 p.m., just prior to the special presentation on Abraham Lincoln and his connection to Anoka County.**

The proposed by-laws are available on the ACHS website: [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org) or members may request a paper copy by calling ACHS at 763-421-0600.

### Legacy Amendment Distribution Before Minnesota Legislature

On November 4, Minnesota voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment with 54% affirmative votes. The amendment places a 3/8 of one percent sales tax on top of existing sales taxes, with that money being dedicated, for 25 years, to the environment, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage. Much of the language was open to interpretation and there was very little in the amendment that addresses the mechanisms for distribution of the funds. Those issues will be before the Minnesota legislature this session.

Here's what we know: the sales tax revenue is expected to be about \$249 million in the first year (each week, as the forecasts are readjusted for the worsening economy, this number comes down). The language of the amendment does divide up the funds in the following manner:

Outdoor Heritage Fund receives 33%,

Clean Water Fund receives 33%,

Parks & Trails Fund receives 14.25%,

Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund receives 19.75%.

This is outlined in Section 15 of the Minnesota Constitution. The only fund that has a method of distribution is the Outdoor Heritage Fund, which had language for the Lessard Council (Bob Lessard is the legislator who worked on the amendment for years).

In December, three public meetings were held in St. Peter, St. Cloud, and at Fort Snelling to discuss the amendment and its potential impact on the historic preservation community. The meetings were called by a group of statewide organizations and included the Minnesota Historical Society, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums, and the Council for Minnesota Archaeology. Among the many subjects discussed were what the funds might be used for, what concerns cultural heritage organizations have about the funds, and how to move forward from here.

This legislative session should be a robust one and the Anoka County Historical Society is sure to be keeping an eye the issue and making our voice heard through organizations like the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums.

**You have a voice in this, too.** Don't hesitate to contact your legislators and tell them how these funds could have a positive impact on smaller organizations like ACHS. If you have any questions, please call Todd Mahon, ACHS Executive Director at (763) 421-0600.

### American Girl Teas Score Laughs for Moms and Shocks for Girls

By Maria King, Volunteer Coordinator

This most recent set of American Girl teas focused on the 1970s and brought back memories for many mothers and grandmothers attending. The girls, however, struggled to imagine a phone that was stuck to the wall or a video game that simply ate dots! In the "current events" portion, we discussed the Arab Oil Embargo, the Cold War, and other memories from the '70s.

"I remember waiting in long lines to buy gas," said one mother.

"How long did you have to wait?" asked her daughter.

"I can't remember," Mom answered. "I was strapped into my car seat in the back."

One mother shared a family story about escaping from East Berlin. "They had to leave everything behind," she said. "Anyone walking through the city with a suitcase would be questioned and probably detained. They put a few items into a picnic basket and pretended it was just an afternoon picnic."

We always share girlhood doll memories, too. One lady remembered a doll she could feed and it had a plastic tube going to its diaper. "I know this because my brother wanted to be a surgeon, so he operated on my doll to see what she looked like inside."

There was a good deal of laughter as we revisited pop culture: Disco dancing, pet rocks, granny dresses, muscle cars, and leisure suits! We looked at the world beyond our borders: the Iron Curtain, the Cold War, and the troubles in Northern Ireland. We related stories about childhood toys: Cabbage Patch dolls, Rubik's cube, Strawberry Shortcake, Holly Hobby, Barbies (of course!) and the Smurfs. Within the country, the '70s struggled with Watergate, impeachment, Vietnam, and peace protests, while celebrating our nation's incredible technological advances and its bicentennial birthday.

Before tea, we decorated a pair of eye glasses that would make Elton John green with envy. Covered with glitter, jewels, sequins, feathers, and assorted bling, the glasses had pink cellophane lenses to make them "rose colored glasses."

You and I know the '70s were really about sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll, but of course, we skipped all that! But there *are* lessons from the '70s that we can all find uplifting. Public pressure *can* have an effect on an unpopular policy. Pollution *can* be cleaned up. There *is* a limit to presidential power. Hard times *do* pass.

Dependence on foreign oil is *not* a good thing. Women *can* do anything men can do.

But you *still* cannot walk your pet rock!



# *President Lincoln is Coming!*

**Anoka City Hall Community Room (lower level)  
1:00 p.m., Sunday, February 1, 2009**

Admission is an image of Lincoln—  
ACHS members get in for one Lincoln penny,  
Non-members are admitted for a \$5.00 bill!

Abraham Lincoln historian, author and costumed historical interpreter, Bryce Stenzel, will be the featured speaker on Sunday, February 1, 2009, at 1 p.m. Mr. Stenzel will present a first-person biographical sketch of Lincoln, featuring slides from historic sites all over the country associated with the life and career of America's 16th president. In addition to detailing the major events of Lincoln's rise to the presidency, his impact on the Civil War, and his assassination, the program will highlight Lincoln's impact on Minnesota history, particularly his response to the Dakota Conflict of 1862. To bring the story right to Anoka County, Mr. Stenzel will end his program with a discussion of the Lincoln funeral train car, and its final fate. Audiences are encouraged to ask questions. This program is held in conjunction with the upcoming Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial celebration on February 12, 2009--



the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

Bryce Stenzel is a native of Mankato, the site of the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Mankato, Minnesota was where 38 Dakota warriors were executed by presidential order for their participation in the killing of white settlers in the Minnesota River valley. Less known, but no less significant, was Lincoln's pardoning of 264 other Dakota, originally sentenced to death for the same crime. Mr. Stenzel, who holds a Master's Degree in History from Minnesota State University, Mankato, has both written, and lectured extensively on the subject. His books will be available for purchase in the ACHS gift shop. In addition, Mr. Stenzel has portrayed Abraham Lincoln to audiences throughout the Midwest, beginning in 1989. This year marks his 20th anniversary as a costumed historical interpreter. Mr. Stenzel is a member of the Association of Lincoln Presenters.

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## *Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area*

*Continued from Page 1*

The Bob White quail propagation began with 200 pairs of birds which had been reared at a game farm in Mound, Minnesota. The initial group of 200 pairs yielded 1,879 birds with 1,000 pairs retained for breeding and the remaining released. The quail project was discontinued in 1955 after 17 years. Similar methods were used for Chukar partridges, from 1939-1947, ring-necked pheasants, 1947-1981, and from 1950 to 1970 a project to reestablish the Canada goose in the state was undertaken at Carlos Avery. Later projects also included swans and reintroduction of Sandhill Cranes, but both projects were later discontinued. Such projects, and the game farm philosophy, depicted an era in wildlife management in which the propagation of game birds was recognized as a game management tool. That philosophy soon changed.

In 1981 the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, had a change in policy and discontinued large scale production of birds at the site. Today, modern game management no longer considers it practical to raise game birds for release as a means to replenish the population. Instead, contemporary efforts include improving habitat areas, and providing nesting

cover and food. Yet, while the bird propagation programs discontinued, other uses for the refuge surfaced. Big game biologists and University of Minnesota graduate studies brought in programs to study deer nutrition and wolf behavior.

Today, Carlos Avery WMA is a popular destination for wildlife watchers, trappers, and hunters. The area has habitat that supports healthy populations of game birds. It also has been identified as a site of outstanding biological diversity by the Minnesota County Biological Survey. A wildlife sanctuary still exists within its borders with 4,500 acres posted and closed to all trespassing. Habitat improvement and restoration programs continue for brood and migratory birds as well as ongoing deer and turkey habitat management. There is no doubt that the Carlos Avery WMA is unique to Anoka County. It is not only a special piece of property with a special history in Anoka County, but represents a wildlife management philosophy that has adapted to changing wildlife management criteria. It has a history not only worth preserving and managing today, but worth managing and preserving for future generations, too.

*(Article details taken from ACHS archives and from the MN Dept. of Natural Resources websites.)*

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

(All lists are current to December 31, 2008.)

## DONATIONS

Julien Anderson Family  
Dennis & Darlene Berg  
Lucille Elrite  
Lyle and Elsie Elverud  
German American Fellowship Assn.  
Don and Ruby Greenberg  
Pat Hesli  
Joyce Hollinder  
Robert and Virginia Koehler-Barnier  
Maxine Larson  
John and Lillian Meyer  
William and Virginia Ridge  
Rebecca Loader and Michael Ritchie  
Leora I. Sundberg  
Stephen & Linda Schmidt  
Ann Steen

## MATCHING GIFTS

Ameriprise Financial

## MEMORIALS

In Honor of Charlie Sell,  
given by  
Jan and Don Anderson  
Dick and Helen Bennett  
Roger and Dorothy Carlson  
Robert W. Powell  
Ralph Talbot

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Lawrence Butler  
Joel Greenberg/City of Nowthen  
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Naomi Reland  
Andrew Revering  
Janice Bell Schmidt  
Mary Sell  
Rhonda Sivarajah  
Lois Spadgenske  
Barb Thurston  
Catherine Vesley

## Welcome New Members!

Helen Breyen – Anoka  
Sylvia Carsen - Fridley  
Lori Gazda – Fridley  
David Haugland - Ramsey  
Charles Porter - Brooklyn Center  
Karen K. Rieks - Ramsey  
Joyce Schmidt - Fridley  
Laarni Sta Teresa – Mounds View  
Gretchen Zell - Dayton

## YEAR END DONATIONS

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June Anderson  
LaVerne Anderson  
Roy and Beryl Anderson  
Anoka Lions Club  
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Richard Barstow  
Dick and Helen Bennett  
John and Sandy Bertzyk  
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Vernon and Fern Boettcher  
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Janet F. Wilcox  
Ernie and Sharon Woizeschke  
Peter Wojciechowski  
John and Mildred Wolfe  
Linda Yudka  
Lester and Shirley Ziegler  
Cheryl and Wesley Volkenant

***The Anoka County Historical Society extends  
our sincere sympathy to the families of:***

***Glen Lindstrom***

*An ACHS member from St. Francis who recently passed away.*

# Coming Events

## January-February

## Celebrating Abraham Lincoln

Anoka County History Center and Library lobby. 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th and one of the most well-known and revered of all U.S. presidents. Many things in Anoka have been named for Lincoln and his influence reaches deeply into our history, even here in Anoka County. Spend some time looking over the items in our collection that relate to President Lincoln.

### February 1, 1:00 p.m.

### ACHS By Laws Meeting

Anoka City Hall, lower level. All members are encouraged to attend a brief meeting to vote on changes in our by-laws. These changes will make it easier for all members to participate in decisions and your voice is needed! This important membership meeting will take place just prior to the presentation on Abraham Lincoln.

### February 1, 1:00 p.m.

### President Lincoln is Coming!

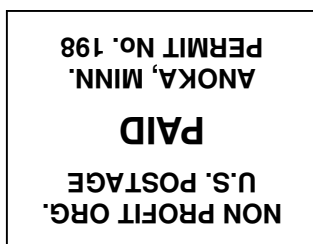
Anoka City Hall, lower level. Bryce Stenzel will present a first-person biographical sketch of Lincoln, featuring slides from historic sites all over the country associated with the life and career of America's 16th president. Admission is an image of Lincoln—1¢ for ACHS members and \$5 for non members. See page 6 for more on this day's events.

### March 29, 1-4:00 p.m.

### ACHS Annual Meeting

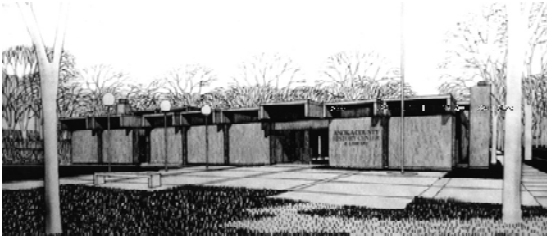
Fridley VFW, 1040 Osborne Road, Fridley. Just west of the intersection of Hwy 65 and Osborn Road in Fridley. Mark your calendars to hear a special program by Anoka County resident Lyle Bradley speaking about his book, *Marine Wings*. The book is a collection of stories told by Marine Corps pilots in WWII and Korea.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600





# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 2

March-April 2009

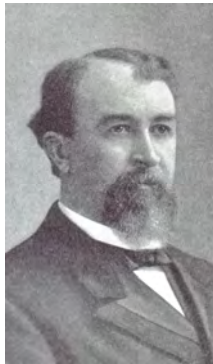
SERVING:

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- Lexington
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- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

## *The Columbia Heights Streetcar Connection*

*By Holly Broden, Contributing Writer*

The connection between Columbia Heights and the streetcar is an interesting one. It started in 1893 when Thomas Lowry, owner of the Minneapolis Street Car Company and Improvement Company Northeast, began acquiring land in southern Anoka County. He obtained 1,100 acres. Ninety-five acres were slotted for Columbia Park and the rest for a planned development. Anchoring all of the development was the streetcar and its ability to open up the city of Columbia Heights for those living and working in Minneapolis.



According to the biographical book, History of Minneapolis, Lowry was born in Logan, Illinois, on Feb. 27, 1843. He attended the University of Galesburg in Illinois and, at age 17, became a law student. In 1870, he was married to Beatrice M. Goodrich, the daughter of C.G. Goodrich, a leading physician in Minneapolis. The couple had four children. Lowry practiced law until 1875 when his connection with the railway began. It is said, from that time on until his death in 1909, Lowry put aside all other business interests and activities to devote almost all of his time exclusively to street railway operations.

The streetcar played an important role when Lowry teamed up with Edmund G. Walton of the Arcade Investment Co. Together they began a big promotion in Columbia Heights. Every Sunday, visitors had the opportunity to "ride the line" when free streetcar excursions were given to Forest Park--an amusement park between 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Street along 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Refreshment stands, a dance hall, and later the first movie theater in Columbia Heights, were part of the park. Lowry's team auctioned off land and gave it away as prizes during promotional events. The Arcade Investment Company promised a double streetcar track running to 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street if enough people would make Columbia Heights their home. A single track from 29<sup>th</sup> Street to Central Avenue had existed since the 1890s. The goal was to show how convenient living in Columbia Heights could be, especially with transportation available via streetcars. The new double line promised a 20 minute ride each way to and from the Union Depot in Minneapolis.

At the time, Columbia Heights was characterized by dairy herds and a small steel roller mill at 39<sup>th</sup> and Jackson Street (1893). The mill built houses for its employees, but Columbia Heights was still filled with

rolling grasslands and sloughs. The grassland provided pasture for the horses and mules used to move the earliest streetcars in Minneapolis. Most of the rest of the land in Columbia Heights was owned by the Arcade Investment Company.

Columbia Heights was incorporated as a village on March 14, 1898, when it separated from Fridley township. Soon, Arcade Investment Company laid gas pipes and water mains, and Minneapolis General Electric erected poles and strung electric wires, all in an effort to develop and promote Columbia Heights.

In 1905, Lowry acquired Abraham Lincoln's funeral car to continue his streetcar promotion in Columbia Heights. The funeral car was originally built in Alexandria, Virginia, for the president's use. It was a Pullman-style car designed to pull heavy loads and was outfitted with an office, sleeping quarters, sitting room, and parlor. Lincoln never used the car, but it later carried his body to Springfield, Illinois, for burial. According to some historical records, Lowry used the funeral car as a sales office and had it on public display at 37<sup>th</sup> and Quincy Street. After Lowry's death in 1909, the car was donated to the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs which planned to preserve it. It was stored in a shed at 37<sup>th</sup> and Quincy when a 1911 grassfire destroyed the shed, the Lincoln funeral car, and ten blocks of downtown Columbia Heights.

(For current news about the car, see page 4!)

As for the double line track promised by Arcade Investment Company, it never happened during Lowry's lifetime.

However, in 1908, an ordinance was passed giving the Minneapolis and St. Paul Suburban Railroad Company permission to lay streetcar tracks in Columbia Heights. In 1916 street car tracks were laid to 40<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. The tracks were abandoned in 1954.

Looking back, it's difficult to say why the streetcar never fully caught on as was anticipated. Perhaps it was the death of Lowry or the popularity of the Model T introduced in 1909. Whatever the case, the city of Columbia Heights came into its own in a large part due to the streetcar line and many people, during its soon-to-be 111 year history, have been happy to call it home.

*(Research information gathered from ACHS archives and books)*



Electric street-car of type first run in Columbia Heights, in 1890's. (Photo from Mpls. Public Library, Thos. Lowry File)

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Catherine Vesley

Vice President—Paul Pierce

Past President—Ray Steinke

District #1—Patti Kurak

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At Large D—Terri Cleveland

At-Large E — (Open)

County Commissioner Liaison—

Dick Lang

### **Staff**

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

Program Manager—Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant—Pat Snodgrass

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Office Staff—Gail Dahl

Don Johnson

Carol Dordan

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director's Desk...**

**By Todd Mahon**

Even Lincoln's History Isn't Easy  
In February, to recognize the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Abraham Lincoln, ACHS invited Bryce Stenzel, a Lincoln impersonator, to share Lincoln's story at a program at Anoka's City Hall. Portraying Lincoln in the first-person, he shared Lincoln's biographical story about growing up poor on the American frontier before studying law and entering politics. He also shared Lincoln's impact on Minnesota and Anoka County.

Lincoln's most direct impact on Minnesota is also one of the darker chapters of his life and Stenzel didn't hold back on the details. Lincoln presided over the Dakota Conflict of 1862. The cause of the conflict is rooted in the 1851 Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota. The treaties turned over large tracts of Dakota land to the United States government in exchange for money and goods. Terms of the treaty were not met, crops failed, and people starving, all contributed to the deadly conflict. After the Dakota surrender in November, military trials were held and 303 Dakota men were sentenced to death. Lincoln personally reviewed the trial records and attempted to differentiate between acts of war and criminal acts. The result was his decision to commute the death sentences of 264 of the condemned men. One of the remaining 39 men was granted a reprieve, but 38 men were hanged in Mankato in the largest mass execution in United States history.

So why is this little history lesson the subject of my column? It's not to debate Lincoln's legacy, but to remind everyone that history, even with one of America's great heroes, isn't always easy. On Presidents Day at the annual History Matters rally at state capital, Stenzel was invited by the Minnesota Historical Society to perform a dramatic reading of the Gettysburg Address in the capital rotunda. A small, but vocal group of protestors were on hand to voice their displeasure of Lincoln's role in the execution of 38 Dakota men. There, in Minnesota's grand hall for democracy, Stenzel, as Lincoln, delivered the address to several hundred people over the shouts of, "Lincoln, the Great Executioner!"

I'm not one to put individuals up on pedestals, so I wasn't very put off by the protestors, but I think their side of it, as I understand it, doesn't appreciate the complexities of history any more than the side that reveres Lincoln. History is populated by human beings that act and react to their circumstances. I hope that everyone at the History Matters rally left with their own ideas challenged and realized how complicated history can be.

## **From the President...**

**By Catherine Vesley**

Hello members,

This is my final column for the newsletter, as my presidential term will end in March at the Annual Meeting. Paul Pierce, our current vice president, will assume the role and hold the office for two years with the recent bylaws change. I wish him a successful term.

Our current Board is a wonderful group of talented and dedicated people, so it has been a pleasure to work with them. The various committees are active and responsible. The Development Committee particularly has done a great job of putting our Society on a sound fiscal basis and growing its assets with the future in mind. It has been terrific at securing sponsorships for our events. The events have been successful due to the great cooperation between the Board and the staff, with lots of mutual effort. The new Music and Art Committee has already produced an exhibition and has plans for another. This is a great example of the ability of your Society to change and grow.

Our staff has to be one of the best anywhere. They are so talented and capable with a genuine interest in our members and the general public that comes through the front door. Working with them has been interesting and fun. We also are blessed with an active group of volunteers, whose dedication to the Society is legend and allows us to do so much. I want to thank each and every one of you and hope you will remain active.

I have also had the chance to meet many of the members. I am always impressed with their knowledge and wide interests.

As we all know, "if you want to find out about a place, go to the local Historical Society." We are a well organized information treasure house. Someone there will always share your interest and probably have the information you need—or at least know where to go to find it. We certainly see this in our very active genealogy community.

Thanks to everyone who told me about their Heritage Plants (something I talked about in my previous column). There is probably a book in that subject, if I ever want to do one, complete with photos of the plants and their stories.

I wish all of you the best. Live well, prosper, and do history.

# The Story of an Artifact

Whew!!

The ACHS staff has been sorting through collections and trying to put provenance to as many of our “unknown” artifacts as possible. We suspected many of the objects that had no number or provenance really did belong to those very early acquisition records made before objects were given an identifying number. Getting the right object linked to its proper record has been both exciting and challenging.

So far, we have been able to identify 108 unmarked items and connect them with their donor and provenance. We always had both object and record, but were never able to link the two together until this project. When we connect an object to an existing acquisition record, we note its condition, fully describe the object, photograph it, attach the acquisition number to the object, assign it a locator number, carefully repack it in archival materials, and put it into our collections storage area. This means two good things have happened—an object in the collection is identified with provenance and a record for which we had no object attached to it—is complete! This is a tremendous step forward in our collections!

But it is not always easy. An example is men’s shirts. The old records are often vague, saying “man’s silk shirt” or “seven men’s collarless shirts.” The early objects were not marked and we have 12 unknown shirts. By looking for clues in each record (silk, blue, worn elbows, etc.) we could match up many unidentified shirts to their donor. When everything we could figure out descriptions for was matched to a record, we looked at what was left. With men’s shirts, we had only one record not matched to its object. That record said “seven men’s collarless shirts,” and we had exactly seven men’s collarless shirts left with no record matching them! We can logically conclude that the seven shirts with no record belong to the record that lists seven shirts. This process of elimination is documented in the permanent object record; so if someday in the future, new information is found to identify these shirts, a researcher will know why we identified them the way we did in 2009.



When we have an object for which we cannot find a record, we start examining the object, hoping to find some clue to tell us why it is in the ACHS collection. A good example is a wonderfully hand-quilted petticoat. The workmanship alone is incredible, not to mention the very idea of a quilted petticoat. These were used

and to help hold skirts out for a fashionable look. There was no record of ACHS ever receiving the petticoat, but a faded ink mark in the waistband provided some clues. *Maria (or Marion) Ann Geddes, Lockhart, Ill.* Now we have something to go on!



Research shows George Geddes, Sr., came from Will County, Illinois, to Anoka in 1869. Lockport is in Will County, a small town north of Chicago. George was born in

1839. He married Sarah and they had four children. Their one daughter was named Florence, but she also went by the name of Belle. Son, Thomas Timothy Geddes, ran the Colburn-Hilliard Clothing store in Anoka and the family lived on Van Buren Street. Son John went to California and George E. (Jr.) continued to live in Minnesota, but not in Anoka County. George Jr. married Ann.

While we do not know exactly who the petticoat belonged to or how it got to ACHS, we can connect it definitively to the Gedde family of Anoka. This information is now in the record and an identifying number has been attached to the petticoat.

Objects with unknown donors, unknown county history and not marked are evaluated against what we have in the collection. Even though provenance is missing, we sometimes choose to put an object in the collection as historically significant to telling Anoka County’s story. These objects are given a new record number, photographed, packed, and boxed. A note in the record states why we deemed the object significant at this time. This notation will allow future staff to de-accession the item if a similar item with county provenance should come in at a later date. We have added approximately 65 of these new records.

The project has also increased our vocabulary and expanded our historical knowledge base. We found an old record that noted “schiffli” lace. We had to do some research to find out that schiffli lace is a traditional Swiss lace with an all-over embroidery pattern made on a specific kind of loom. Armed with that new-found knowledge, we were able to identify which of the dozen or more unidentified petticoats the record referred to! The original recorder of that acquisition record knew how to describe the lace; and, even though the word is no longer in common use, it was accurate. We just had to learn it.

Other records we’ve been able to improve on are just plain funny. The best case of this was the “barp garters” we had a record for, but no one knew what “barp garters” were! We thought perhaps it was a brand name, but nothing matched that. Even Google didn’t turn up anything. When all else fails, we turn to the original handwritten record to see if we can place the item in a context to see if that will help identify something. We stared at the words “barp garters” for a long while before the real meaning became clear—it wasn’t BARP garters, it was BOYS garters!! We knew what BOYS garters were! The handwriting was hurried and what had been typed into the database was a misinterpretation of that handwriting.

Finding the typos, correcting the misinterpreted handwriting, or adding additional information about the donor or the object have all made our collection information better and more valuable. Those who come to interpret Anoka County’s history after we are gone will have a much better understanding of what and why we have what we do in the collections and will be grateful for the work we are doing today.

Or at least they’d better be or certain staff members will be back to haunt them!

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to February 17, 2009

## YEAR END APPEAL DONATIONS

Roland and Carol Freeburg  
Axel Fritz, Jr.  
Shirley G. Lynch  
Joseph Pelawa  
Rachel A. Peterson  
James L. Rootes  
Rebecca Loader & Michael Ritchie

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Anoka County  
Anoka Masonic Lodge #30  
Milfred & Lucille Banwart  
Joan Christenson  
Jody Hicks  
Eileen Rathbun  
Mary Sell  
Pat Snodgrass

## Welcome New Members!

Elise Blomberg – Coon Rapids  
Mark and Susan Freeburg - Anoka  
Earl L. Jacob – Naples, Florida  
Pam and Lynn Mahon, Richfield  
Brenda Malone – Brooklyn Center  
Dottie Picotte – Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan  
Brenda Malone – Brooklyn Center  
Sharon Steckler – Champlin  
Laurel Ulferts, Coon Rapids  
Stella Waletski - Anoka  
Rita Warpeha – Silver Spring, Maryland

## GENERAL DONATIONS

Ameriprise Financial  
Richard Barstow  
Charlie Boos  
David and Winnifred Conger  
Carol Dordan  
Tom and Kathleen French  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Hathaway  
Earl Jacob  
Melvin Larson  
Linwood Township  
Pat Moore  
Roger and Avis Opegard  
Leslie Ross  
Greg and Barbara Ann Smith  
Vietnam Veterans Chapter 470

## MEMORIALS

### **In Honor of Charlie Sell**

given by  
Robert Akin II  
Wallace and Naomi Johnson

### **In Honor of Jim Wennerlund**

Given by  
Roger and Dottie Carlson

### **In Honor of Art Bendiske**

Given by  
Roger and Dottie Carlson

### **In Honor of Uncle Eddie Thompson**

Given by  
Ron & Vickie Wendel

***The Anoka County Historical Society  
extends our sincere sympathy to  
the family of:***

***Arthur “Art” Bendiske***

*who died January 26, 2009.*

*Art was an ACHS member and friend.*

## ***Lincoln Funeral Car Artifact donated to ACHS***

Karl F. Wuest of Anoka went to Columbia Heights to pick up a piece of President Abraham Lincoln’s funeral car when it burned in 1911. He brought it home and kept it as a souvenir. It was used as a door stop in his parent’s home for many years.

When the Wuest family home was sold, Karl’s brother Ted took the funeral car piece to his home in Anoka. He occasionally shared the car piece and its story with school children. Eventually his son, Ken, inherited it.

Ken offered the piece of the car to his friend, Charlie Sell, a life-long Anoka resident. Charlie kept the car piece, its story, and did further research to document its authenticity. He loaned the car part to ACHS several times for special exhibits. Charlie died in September of 2008, and it was his desire that the funeral car piece be donated to ACHS. His wife, Mary, presented ACHS with the piece of the Lincoln Funeral Car in February of 2009, the 200th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth.



An expert on the Lincoln Funeral Car, Dr. Wayne Wesolowski, examined Charlie’s piece of the car (pictured at left) and verified its authenticity as a hand-wrought ca. 1860s ornate washer. It was probably on the end of an iron rod that ran under the wooden floorboards of the car. A threaded rod would have come through the hole, perhaps another washer and then secured by a nut. It was probably not visible from the outside of the car unless a person looked under the side and up to the bottom of the flooring.



## BALLOTS

Everyone with paid-up ACHS memberships will be mailed a ballot to vote for the ACHS Board of Directors in the first week of March 2009. If your dues are paid up and you do not receive a ballot, please give us a call at 763-421-0600.

All completed ballots must be received by ACHS by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 23, 2009. The name and address of EACH VOTER MUST be on the return envelope. To preserve anonymity, nothing should be written on the ballot envelope itself.

The results of the election will be announced at the Annual Meeting on March 29, at the Fridley VFW Post #363.

## Membership Approves By-Laws Changes

A special meeting of the Anoka County Historical Society membership was called on Sunday, February 1, 2009, in the community room of Anoka's City Hall. The meeting was called to address proposed changes to the ACHS bylaws. The 2004 Restated bylaws required ten percent of the membership or fifty members, whichever is less, to be present at a meeting in order to make changes to the bylaws. 63 members were present on February 1.

At issue were changes to the length of the president's and vice president's terms (changing from one year to two years), eliminating the two-term limit for board members, eliminating the position of past president, and changing the process for amending the bylaws to allow for a mail-in ballot.

Printed copies of the proposed changes were handed out and ACHS President Catherine Vesley called the meeting to order. She and Executive Director Todd Mahon led a brief discussion on the proposed changes. After some clarifications, a motion was made to adopt the bylaws as printed in the handouts. The motion was seconded and the resolution was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

The changes made affect the March 2009 board elections. The president and vice president positions are no longer separated from the At-large and District seats. Now, a board member holding one of those positions still holds his or her At-large or District seat. For example, in the past, if the director from district one was elected vice president by the membership, that person would vacate the district one seat and a new person would be sought for the district one seat. Under the new by-laws, the director from district one would remain the district one representative while serving as vice president.

## Help Save Postage Costs!

The Anoka County Historical Society currently uses a non-profit organization permit for mailing newsletters and event post cards to you. Under the permit policy, items with address changes or a "temporarily away" status are returned with postage due of 24¢ to 42¢ per piece.

We are pleased to be able to update our database, however, it would be great if you could assist us by giving advance notice of any move. This would save us the cost of mailing the first piece, paying to get it back and then paying yet again to send your mail to the correct address.

If you plan to be gone for a period of time, we can enter your alternative address and dates away into our database. Please call us at 763-421-0600 to report any address updates.

We'd love to have your email address, too! This allows us to occasionally send reminder notices and information by email. Send it to [ac-hs@ac-hs.org](mailto:ac-hs@ac-hs.org).

## It's Your History is Online

Submitted by Marilyn Craine Anderson, Webmaster

In 2004, ACHS, in cooperation with QCTV Cable channels 15, 16, & 17, began a half-hour program called *It's Your History*. The program reaches cable TV subscribers Anoka, Champlin, Andover, and Ramsey. It focuses on exhibits, upcoming events, and programs along with tips on how to best preserve family heirlooms.

The program is a wonderful way for ACHS to reach its membership and residents of the county. However, unless you have cable access to these channels, you miss the many stories featured in the monthly segment. While a great outreach, the vast majority of our county residents could not access the program.

Until now! QCTV has added this segment along with other featured programs to their website where full episodes can be viewed via computer. No longer is it necessary to have cable TV to keep in touch with what ACHS is doing. By visiting the ACHS website at: [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org), and clicking on the link to QCTV *It's Your History*, (<http://www.qctv.org>) everyone with an internet connection has access to the programs.

ACHS always welcomes suggestions for show topics. If there is a subject of interest you would like to see featured, please contact us at 763-421-0600 or email: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org) with your suggestions.

## Congratulations!

ACHS members Janet and Roy Hall celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on February 27, 2009.

# March is Women's History Month



Everyone is invited to celebrate the contributions women have made to life in Anoka County on

**Saturday, March 14  
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
Anoka County  
History Center.**

Many women featured in our current exhibits and have been invited to visit with members and friends in the exhibit galleries on this day. This is an opportunity to hear their stories first hand and to thank them for their part in making our county a great place to call home.

## Recognition dinner for Al Kordiak on Thursday, May 14, 2009

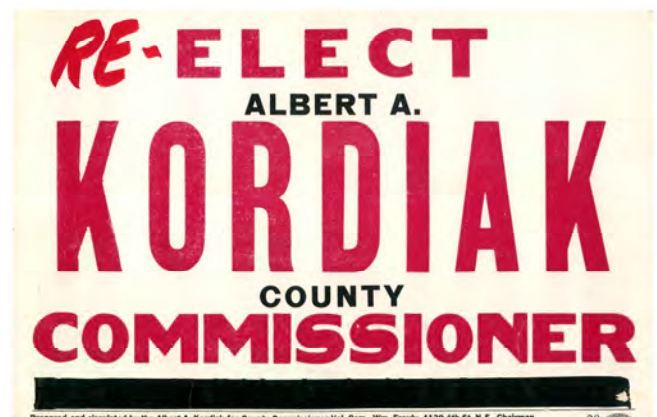
How do you quantify the contributions of a person who committed his life to public service? In Anoka County's 152 years of existence, few people have left as large an imprint on the county as Albert Kordiak. Elected to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners at the age of 26 to represent Columbia Heights, he was a new voice for a changing county.

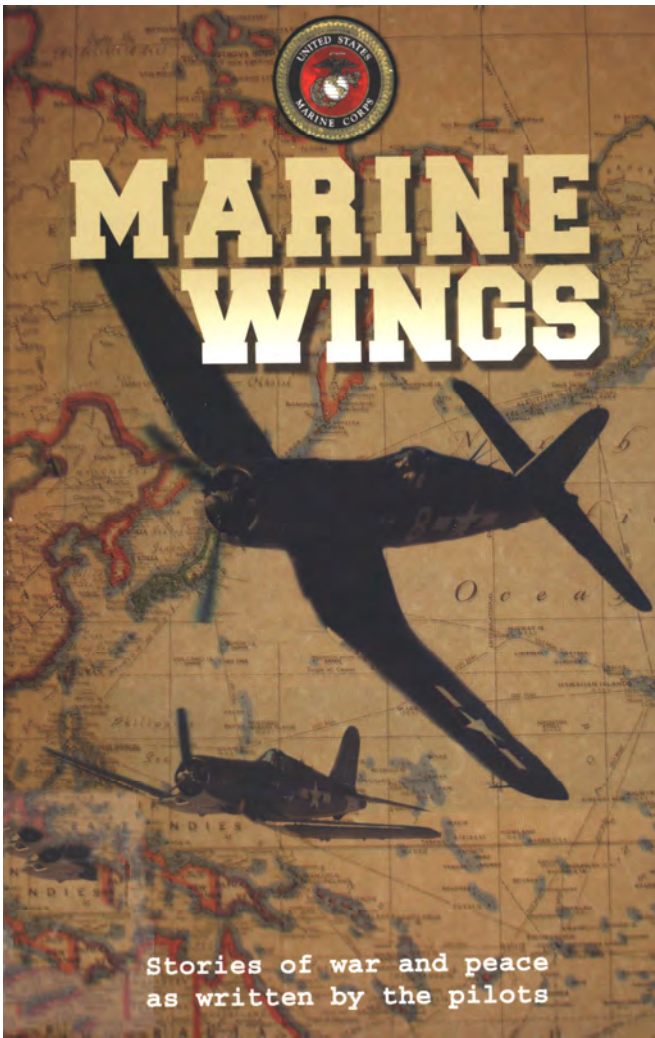
Born on the border of Columbia Heights and Fridley Township, Al grew up in a home near 42nd and Central. He was raised by a proud Slovak family with deeply held Catholic beliefs. Growing up, Al learned to speak English alongside Slovak. Early on, his family instilled many of the habits and perspectives he brought to government: hard work, honesty, and, perhaps above all, frugality. After he got his first paying job as a teenager, his mother told him, "Albert, you can either work for your money or have your money work for you."

Al took office in 1955, after defeating incumbent Alvin Ittner. The people of his district returned Al to the Board of Commissioners seven more times. He may have been best known for emphasis on what are now known as constituent services—Al simply saw it as accountability to his district. Newspaper articles remarked on his real estate and accounting office as a de facto county service center where Al answered his telephone with, "Kordiak. May I help you?" This popularity translated not only into votes, but a lack of campaign opponents. After winning his first election against an incumbent, Al ran unopposed for the Board seven more times.

Many of those years Al chaired the board. He oversaw the county's growth from a mostly rural county with two larger communities, Anoka and Columbia Heights (both of which were supported primarily through agriculture) into a post-war suburban county. This unprecedented growth called for new ideas in county government. In his time on the board, Al was instrumental in creating the position of County Administrator, creating the Anoka County Parks system, and abolishing the fee system of employees keeping fees charged for county services. Al retired from the board in 1987.

Al will be in attendance at a recognition dinner held in his honor on Thursday, May 14, at the Courtyards of Andover. The event is a fundraiser for the Anoka County Historical Society's endowment fund. For more information on the event, please visit the ACHS website [www.achs.org](http://www.achs.org). If you have memories or photographs of Albert Kordiak to share, please contact Todd Mahon at the Anoka County Historical Society at 763-421-0600.





**2009**

# ACHS Annual Meeting

Sunday, March 29, 2009

1:30 pm—3:30 pm

The Fridley VFW Post #363

\$5 for members, \$7 for non-members

Join the Anoka County Historical Society for our 2009 Annual Meeting at the Fridley VFW Post #363 where Lyle Bradley, pilot and one of the authors of *Marine Wings*, will speak. His stories of flying Marine Corps planes in combat fill the range of emotion from terror to elation and back. The book is filled with the stories of other Marine Corps pilots as well as Lyle's and has been very successful—it's almost sold out! Lyle will have some copies for sale and has promised to autograph them at our annual meeting.

Make your reservations for this special annual meeting with the form below.

VFW Post #363 is located at 1040 Osborne Road, Fridley, just west of the intersection of Osborne Road and Hwy 65.

## 2009 ACHS Annual Meeting Reservation Form

Attendee(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tickets--\$5 members/ \$7 non-members**

Member tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ Non-member tickets: \_\_\_\_\_

**MasterCard and Visa Accepted!**

You may call in your reservations by using your credit card to (763) 421-0600 during ACHS business hours!

Ticket subtotal: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Reserve your seat by returning this form and your payment **by March 25, 2009** to:

Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

*\*Your reservation(s) will be waiting for you at the registration table the day of the event\**

# Coming Events

## March 14, 2:00–4:00 p.m.

## Celebrating Women’s History

(Anoka County History Center and Library) Meet and visit with some of the incredible women featured in our *We Can Do It* and *Law and Ladders* exhibits. The stories of Anoka County women with America’s military, fighting fires, and enforcing the laws of the county are incredible. This is your chance to talk with many of them. See page 6 for details.

## March 29, 1:30—3:30

## ACHS Annual Meeting

Fridley VFW, 1040 Osborne Road, Fridley. Just west of the intersection of Hwy 65 and Osborn Road in Fridley. Mark your calendars to hear a special program by Anoka County resident, Lyle Bradley, speaking about the book, *Marine Wings*. The book is a collection of stories told by Marine Corps pilots in WWII and Korea. Lyle’s story is one of them. See page 7 for more details.

## April 24, & 25

## American Girl Spring Tea Party

(Anoka County History Center and Library) Welcome in the sunny days of spring with Samantha, the American Girl of 1904. Tea Party activities will showcase the dramatic changes our nation was experiencing at the turn of the last century. Girls, their dolls, and grown-ups will have a tea party to wrap up the event. **Reservations required.** Friday evening, April 24 at 6:00 and several sessions on Saturday, April 25. Additional teas may be scheduled based on demand.

## April 19, 2:00

## Volunteer Recognition Day

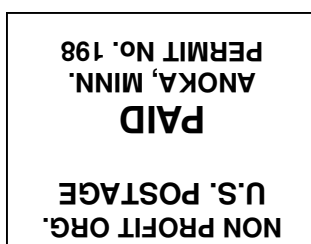
(Anoka County History Center and Library) If you volunteered in 2008, watch for your invitation to this special day set aside just for you! Look for your invitation to arrive in the mail in early April with all the details of the luncheon and ice cream social. If you didn’t write your volunteer hours on the calendar at ACHS, please call Maria to get those hours recorded ASAP. We’ll add your hours to the total and get your name on the invitation list. An RSVP is greatly appreciated! You can reach Maria at the History Center, 763-421-0600.

## May 14, 5:00 pm.

## Al Kordiak Recognition Dinner

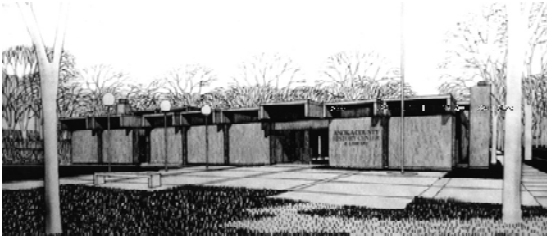
(Courtyard of Andover) Join Al’s family, friends and the Anoka County Historical Society in recognizing the contributions of Albert Kordiak. Commissioner Kordiak, first elected at the age of 26, took office in 1955 and helped shape many of the institutions we are so proud of today before he retired in 1987.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600





# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 3

May—June 2009

## *French Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Centerville*

SERVING:

Andover

Anoka

Bethel

Blaine

Centerville

Circle Pines

Columbia Heights

Columbus

Coon Rapids

East Bethel

Fridley

Ham Lake

Hilltop

Lexington

Lino Lakes

Linwood

Nowthen

Oak Grove

Ramsey

St. Francis

Spring Lake Park

*By Holly Broden, Contributing Writer*

Timber, plenty of water, soil good enough to grow crops, and grassland for grazing livestock were many of the attributes that attracted settlers to Centerville in the southwest corner of Anoka County. It was named Centerville because of its equal distance from Stillwater, St. Paul, and Anoka.

The earliest inhabitants of Centerville were the Dakota Indians who were attracted by the abundance of wildlife and a plentiful food supply including wild rice. In the late 1700s, the Dakota settlement was abandoned, although many Dakota still returned to the area every year for wild rice.

It was this same abundance in wildlife that attracted many of the early settlers to Centerville. The soil in the eastern part of Centerville was said to be good and productive. In the western part, it was sandy, but still able to grow crops. The chain of lakes and marshes, now known as the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes, had abundant supplies of fish and water fowl. It was a good place to put down roots; many did, starting in 1852.



**Cardinal Farm, 1983**

Although F.W. Traves built the first house in Centerville, it was a division between the French-Canadian and the German immigrants that really gave Centerville its character. The German immigrants settled in the west, (which is now Lino Lakes) and the French in the center portion of town. In the spring of 1852, names like LaMotte, Peltier, Cardinal, Dupre, and LaValle became common in Centerville. Soon development in Centerville took on a different tone with St. Genevieve Catholic Church becoming the focus.

In the book, *They Choose Minnesota*, by Jane D. Holmquist, the migration of the French-Canadians north out of Little Canada and Vadnais Heights to Centerville had a lot to do with Catholic Parish development. More importantly, with the establishment of St. Genevieve of Paris Catholic Church, a parish of the Archdiocese of St. Paul in 1853. Just two short years after the first immigrants came to Centerville, St. Genevieve's boasted of a

190 member congregation. Its first service was held at the home of Francis LaMotte, who owned the general store in town. The mass was conducted by Father Kaller.

When the people of St. Genevieve of Paris decided to build a church building, it was a small framed 16' x 25' wooden structure. The brick church was built in 1859 with the small wooden structure eventually being used as a parsonage. The church soon began to grow as more French-Canadian immigrants arrived in town and at St. Genevieve's doorstep. It was a busy parish.

From 1866 to 1891, the parish priest at Centerville recorded 1,366 baptisms, 210 marriages, and 114 funerals. According to Holmquist, the gravestones ceased to appear in French by 1900. Some sources state the congregation at St. Genevieve's had grown to 400 members by 1887. The population in Centerville was 876 in 1880, with two-thirds being French-Canadians in 1887.

It was first a Dakota Indian history, and then a French history that is celebrated in Centerville. According to the city's website, many of the streets were renamed in 1971 to reflect this heritage. Some of the names are:

Mound Trail—Indian mounds can still be observed in this area.

Sorel Street—Many of the first pioneers were born in Sorel, Canada.

Mill Road—Charles Peltier built a sawmill on Clearwater Creek

Goiffon Road—Named after the pioneer missionary from France, Father Goiffon, who served as rector of the Church of St. Genevieve of Paris from 1861-1881.

Centerville is one of the oldest Anoka County communities. At the center of its heritage, starting in the 1800s, are the French-Canadian immigrants and the Church of St. Genevieve of Paris. It is this church that gave the community its focus and its gathering place.

Wedding of  
Sylvia  
Bernier-  
Marier at St.  
Genevieve  
Church.,  
unknown  
date.



*(Information compiled from ACHS files and sources as noted.)*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

Vice President—Tom Sherohman  
(District #4)

District #1—Patti Kurak

District #2 — Bill Prugh

District #3—Dick Johnson

District #5 — Jan Anderson

District #6—Judy Hanna

District #7—Bart Ward

At Large A— Lori Yager

At Large B—Dan Frank

At Large C—Tom Ward

At Large D—Terri Cleveland

At-Large E — William Erhart

At-Large G — Catherine Vesley

At-Large H — Harvey Greenburg

County Commissioner Liaison—  
Dick Lang

### **Staff**

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

Program Manager—Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant—Pat Snodgrass

Volunteer Coordinator—Maria King

Curator Projects—Marilyn Anderson

Office Staff—Gail Dahl

Don Johnson

Carol Dordan

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director's Desk...**

**By Todd Mahon**

*Sitting Down With Al*

On May 14, the Anoka County Historical Society will host the Albert A. Kordiak Recognition Dinner, which will serve as a fundraiser for the Historical Society's fledgling endowment fund. As the Society's executive director, I am obviously excited and anxious to see that the event is a financial success, but I must say that I am even more excited to see former Anoka County Commissioner Al Kordiak given recognition for his career serving the people of Columbia Heights and Anoka County.

Not an Anoka County native, I didn't grow up with Al serving in public office. Having chaired his last County Board meeting in January of 1987, he was retired for almost eighteen years by the time I started working for ACHS in December of 2005.

However, it didn't take long for me to pick up on the impact Al has had in Anoka County. I've heard a lot of praise about Al, but I initially misunderstood what kind of personality he had. Knowing that he served in public office for 32 years and that he was well known for getting things accomplished and even has a county park named after him, I assumed he would be a larger-than-life personality. I guess I was picturing Lyndon Johnson, but with red hair and a penchant for loud ties.

In December, I got the chance to sit down with Al to conduct a two-part oral history. To prepare, I spoke with several of his friends and family members about him, hoping to get a little insight into one of the county's ultimate movers and shakers. Everyone had great things to say about Al and were extremely helpful in the questions that were asked.

Sitting down with Al on two consecutive Fridays showed me that I couldn't be any further off in my assumption of him as brash politician. He couldn't have been a more soft-spoken gentleman. I kept wondering how someone so reserved could be as effective as he was. But as he went over his story about his upbringing, his decision to enter politics, and the way he addressed his constituents' needs it became clear how he did it. The old adages of hard work, respect, and service to community seem to be embodied in Al. We are all pleased he agreed to be a part of this event as a benefit to ACHS.

I hope you'll join us and Al's many friends and family on the evening of May 14. It should be a great evening of Anoka County history. **For more information on this event see page 6.**

## **From the President...**

**By Paul Pierce**

There is an old saying about bad pennies always turning up, but I am at a loss to understand how a penny could ever be considered "bad." It is still worth a penny and that's a good thing, especially in today's economy! I tend to like the saying about "lucky" pennies more.

Pennies aside, I am back to serve as president of our venerable Society again. I have to thank our 17th president, Catherine Vesley, for doing a great job last year. She is always so generous about sharing her expert talents. Being comfortable and informative in front of a crowd or for the cameras for "It's Your History" and her past experience with various organizations and non-profits makes her a very valuable resource for us, and we appreciate her deeply.

Our resources at the society really are remarkable. Looking at the official list of past presidents, office holders, and board members of ACHS, it is interesting to see the longevity of some eras and the sometimes extraordinary long commitment and service given by individuals to our efforts.

For our first forty years (1934-1974), we had a total of eleven people serve in the position of director on our board. In the thirty five years after (1975-2009), sixty three people have served as a director on our board.

I am not sure of all the reasons for that, and it may be as simple as a smaller board and the much smaller degree of effort. Or, it could represent a longer commitment by those individuals. Whatever the reason, our society has an impressive spiral of ever-improving service and accomplishments over those seventy-five years. It is my intention as the president of ACHS to maintain those good works and carefully consider possible improvements that may present themselves along the way.

# Current History: Drainage Ditches

## A Functional Heritage

For over 50 years, central Anoka County has been a primary supplier of radishes, parsnips, and sod for the upper Midwest. Farming this area means dealing with soil that is droughty sand or very poorly drained peat and muck; not exactly prime farmland, but typical of the Anoka Sand Plain landscape that covers most of the county. With drainage, though, and some fertilizer, the peat can support crops.

To facilitate farming poorly drained land, the state passed Chapter 108 in 1883 allowing county commissioners to authorize the construction of ditches or water courses within the county, including the drainage of shallow, grassy, meandered lakes under four feet in depth. Drainage law set forth a process allowing landowners the right to petition for drainage projects; those who benefitted from the drainage were assessed to pay for it. In central Anoka County, a total of 13 ditches were dug from 1891-1918 in the drainage area (watershed) of Coon Creek. Ditching began with Ditch 11 in northeastern Ham Lake. Sand Creek, Ditch 41, was approved for ditching in 1904. Later, different parts of Coon Creek were ditched in different years (Ditch 44, 54, 57, 59).

The drained peat grew mostly root crops. Radishes were one of these, an important cash crop for several local farmers. Red Owl, Super Valu, and Lunds grocery stores were all supplied with radishes by Anoka County farmers. Surplus was sometimes sent off to California. Other crops grown were parsnips, potatoes, and carrots.

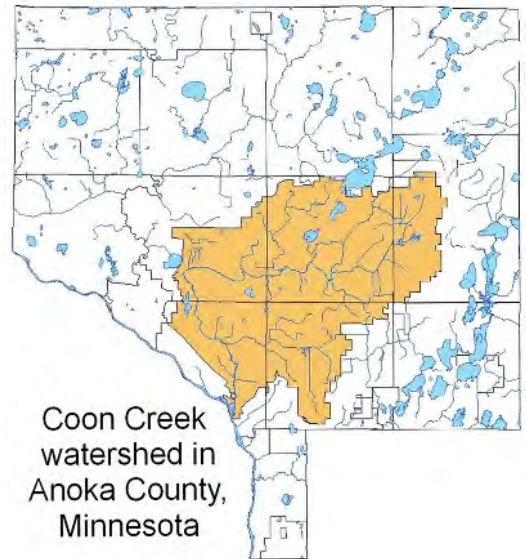
By the late 1940-50s, flooding became an issue affecting farming upstream and Coon Rapids downstream where rapid housing growth occurred for post-World War II families. In response, citizens from this newly incorporated city successfully petitioned for a federal P.L. 566 study of the watershed in 1954. A workplan was completed by the Soil Conservation Service in 1958. In January 1959, the county board petitioned the MN Water Resources Board to establish a watershed district, the 1955 Watershed Act. On May 28, 1959, the Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD) was established.



Stanley Knoll washing radishes for market, 1944. Photo by Loren Hentges.

With suburban growth in 1960-80, two changes occurred in the watershed: sod started replacing root crops as the local cash crop, and the drainage system began to function as a storm sewer system. Meanwhile, management of water resources became more complex. In 1972,

the Clean Water Act (CWA) was enacted to regulate discharge of pollutants. In 1982 the Metropolitan Water Management Act (MWMA) required watershed districts to manage natural surface and groundwater systems. In 1987, the CWA was amended to address industrial stormwater discharge with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), later expanded in 1999. In 1991 wetlands became regulated under the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). Agriculture remained prominent in the 1990s as housing expanded northward and public demand for water quality and aesthetics became dominant issues.



### Fast Facts

Coon Creek...

- ◆ is about 27 miles long with 23 ditched miles,
- ◆ has never been ditched from Highway 10 south to the Mississippi River,
- ◆ drains approximately 94 square miles entirely within Anoka County,
- ◆ includes drainage by Sand Creek about 8 miles long.
- ◆ watershed contains approximately 125 miles of public ditches and 130 miles of private ditches.

In May & June, Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD) will have a display on 50+ years of water resource management in the lobby of the Anoka County History Center. Please visit the display to learn more about water resources and visit CCWD on the web to listen to short stories on farming peatlands by Stanley and Jeff Knoll at [www.cooncreekwd.org](http://www.cooncreekwd.org), then click "Headlines."

*Information provided by Coon Creek Watershed District. Mission: To manage groundwater and surface water drainage systems to prevent property damage, maintain hydrologic balance, protect water quality for the safety and enjoyment of citizens, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat.*

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to April 14, 2009

## YEAR END APPEAL DONATIONS

Anoka County Genealogical Society

Lyle and Elsie Elverud

Roger and Avis Oppegard

M. Joyce Paul

## GENERAL DONATIONS

Anoka American Legion Auxiliary

Phil Blake

Jane Comee

William Erhart/Erhart & Associates, L.L.C.

Rosemarie A. Freeman

Eloise Graham

Harvey and Ellen Greenberg

David and Donna Legrid

Nancy Martin

Rachel A. Peterson

Melvin Rehbein

Rodger L. Sundstrom

Bertha Szyperski

Ralph Talbot

## DONATIONS FOR KORDIAK EVENT

Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd. — Platinum Sponsor

Richardson, Richter & Associates, Inc. — Gold Sponsor

Buetow & Associates, Inc. — Gold Sponsor

Springsted Public Sector Advisors — Gold Sponsor

Frank Dunbar/Dunbar Development Corp.

## EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial for Dan Frank

## HOME & GARDEN TOUR SPONSOR

Richard A. Theisen, Ltd.

## MEMORIALS

### **In Memory of Frances Beck**

given by

Vickie Wendel

### **In Memory of Carol Houser**

given by

Vickie Wendel

## Welcome New Members!

Dave and Holly Broden - Andover

William A. Erhart - Anoka

Harvey and Ellen Greenberg – Anoka

Pauline James – Elk River

Carol Janke – Coon Rapids

Bette M. Johnson – Coon Rapids

Ann Lindsey - Champlin

Diane L. Olson – Elk River

Melvin Rehbein – Lino Lakes

Alan Santoro – Coon Rapids

Alice Wagner - Anoka

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Melissa Anderson-Rossini

Jason Bongard

John Freeburg

Duane Houk

Gerald Koch

Stanlia Lang/Dick Lang

Susan Mattson

Al Paulson

Loni Payne

Eileen Rathbun

Gretchen Sabel

Joyce Bonnell Sage

Bart and Ellen Ward

Jeff Weaver

Martha Weaver

Amanda Wendel

***The Anoka County Historical Society  
extends our sincere sympathy to  
the families of:***

### ***Walt Theis***

*who died March 8, 2009*

*Walt was the father-in-law of ACHS Executive Director Todd Mahon and father of AHCS member Nikki Theis-Mahon.*

### ***Frances Beck***

*who died March 25, 2009.*

*Frances served in WWII as a Navy Cryptologist and her story is currently featured in the We Can Do it—Anoka County Women in Wartime exhibit..*

### ***Carol Houser***

*who died March 31, 2009.*

*Carol was the offices assistant for ACHS for many years.*

*She was a long time ACHS member and friend.*

*Carol served in WWII and her story is currently featured in the We Can Do it—Anoka County Women in Wartime exhibit..*

## ***ACHS Loves Its Volunteers!***

Our fantastic group of volunteers really outdid themselves in 2008! Now that all the hours are in and the calculations complete, a few interesting things become apparent.

Over 4,440 hours were documented! (We're sure there were many more that were not recorded.) The top ten volunteers compiled 2,918 hours or 66% of the total. The remaining 44% of the hours were shared by another 81 people.

Every hour is needed and every volunteer is precious! Even if you only worked for an hour at an event, the event would not have been possible without you! Every member of the Historical Society and every member of the communities we serve is enriched because of the achievements of our volunteers!

**VOLUNTEERS, WE SALUTE YOU!!**

## Up To Date

- ◆ The Board of Directors meeting for May will be held at the History Center at 6:00 on May 7, 2009. The June meeting will be on the 11th. The public is welcome to attend board meetings at any time.
- ◆ The reading collection at ACHS will be changing to a static reference-oriented collection rather than the rotating fictional books. Books can still be returned at ACHS, and patrons can continue to order books for pickup at the History Center. Patrons should expect to see the change this summer.

## 75 Years Ago at ACHS

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Anoka County Historical Society, this column will look back at the formation, founders, and first activities of ACHS. Watch for more of these pieces of our own history in the coming months.

From the *Minnesota History Magazine* (published by the Minnesota Historical Society), Vol. 15, Issue #3, 1934. The following appeared in the news and reviews section:

### LOCAL HISTORY ITEMS

*A step toward the organization of an Anoka County historical society was taken on June 28, when the superintendent of the state historical society addressed a group of people interested in the project at Anoka. A committee was appointed to work out plans for a local historical society. This committee has since drafted a constitution and planned a program of local historical work.*

## Membership Votes in Vice President and New Board Members

Congratulations to the newly elected members of the ACHS Board of Directors! Tom Sherohman from Columbia Heights was elected as vice-president. This means he will assist the new president, Paul Pierce, III, during Paul's two-year term and then take over the president's office for his own term as president.

Two new directors were elected to fill at-large seats on the board: Harvey Greenburg from Nowthen and William Erhart from Coon Rapids.

Catherine Vesley, having finished her term as president, now fills an at-large seat.

Paul Pierce, III, is back in a familiar role as president of the ACHS Board of Directors. Paul has been a loyal member of ACHS most of his life and has served on the board of directors in various positions for a number of years. For the next two years, he will be back in the role of president.

We welcome all of these dedicated people to their roles on the Board and look forward to working with them to continue gathering, preserving, and sharing Anoka County's rich history.

## Time to Get Out and GROW!

By Maria King

Spring is a great time to plant things and watch them grow. We've "planted" a few new projects here at ACHS, and we are already "harvesting" the "fruits" of our labors.

All obituaries since 2007 are now available electronically. That saves space, paper, and enables us to easily add to the file. A heartfelt thank-you goes out to Fran Bator for the index and to Kate Morphew and Jeorgette Knoll for the monthly updates.

Responsibility for the weekly column in the *Anoka Union* is going to a new committee of writers. Sharron Stockhausen filled this role for many, many years, and it's a measure of her worth to note that it takes an entire committee to replace her! Thank you, Sharron, for hundreds of great articles. Randy Getchell wrote several articles this spring, and now Holly Broden, June Anderson, Ryan Dawson and Jeanine Pratt will take responsibility for few weeks each.

Our oral history collection continues to expand with the most recent interviews concerning the police and fire departments. We have Dan Schink, a new volunteer, creating records for new interviews and updating the old records for uniformity. Welcome aboard!

Currently, there are four projects looking for a volunteer. We need someone to sequence and identify photos of past ACHS events., about a 12-hour project. We need someone to go through our archived boxes and duplicate the home location number from the lid to the box to prevent putting the wrong lid on a box after using it. Those who love to watch TV might be interested in compiling a topic index to our QCTV tapes of *It's Your History*. Another person is needed to go through our computer records and look for anything incomplete. It is uncertain how long that project may take, as it depends on how much needs to be altered.

There will be an opportunity in May for new Ghost Tour docents to be trained. This incredibly popular program reaches thousands every year and is one of our most successful outreach efforts. We need a team of trained guides to offer multiple tours. You get to wear a costume, and people hang on your every word! It's great fun!

For these and other opportunities to "grow" with ACHS, please call Maria at 763-421-0600.

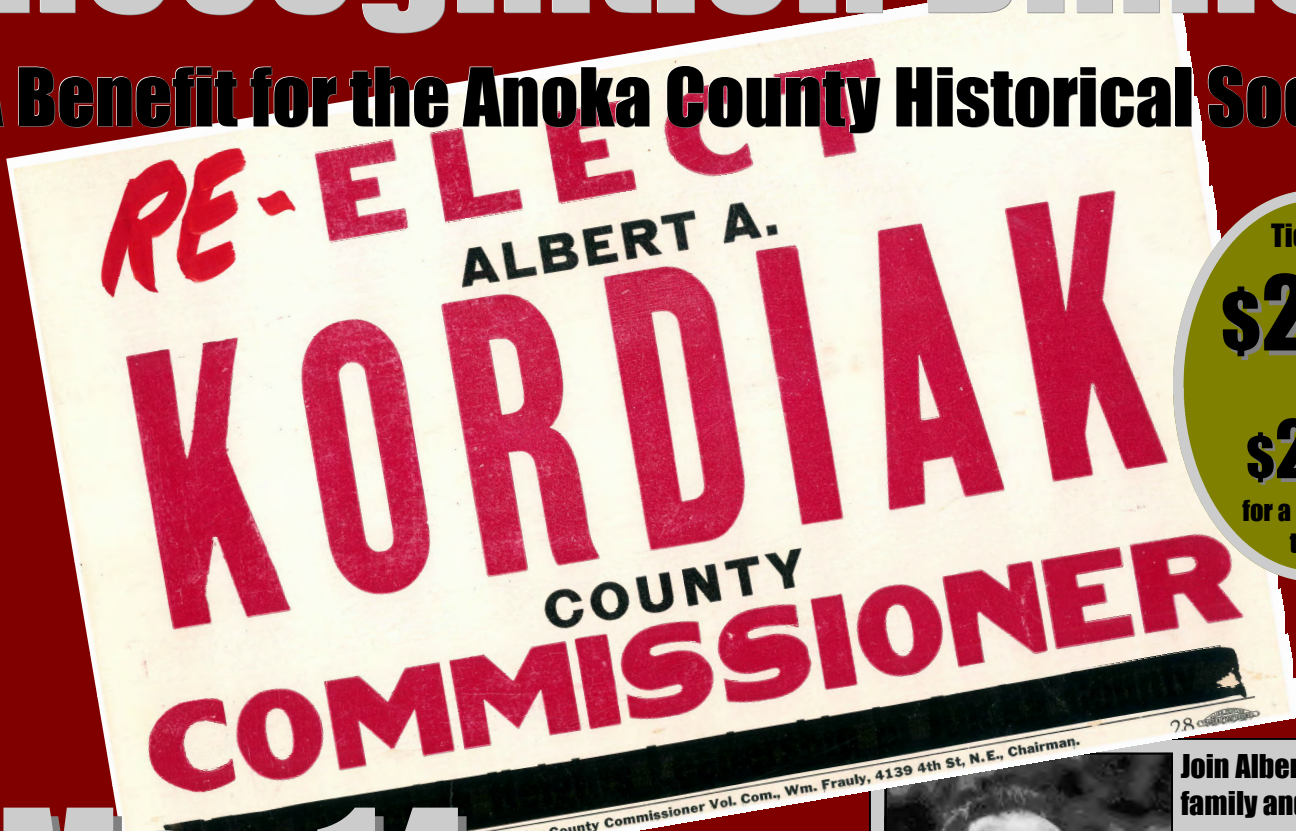
## A bit of foreshadowing?

The following is from the *Anoka County Union* newspaper, September 17, **1919**.

*The day is destined to yet come when there will be a telephone on every automobile so that the businessman when away from home at various distances may always be in communication with his home and his place of business.*

# Albert A. Kordiak Recognition Dinner

A Benefit for the Anoka County Historical Society



Tickets:  
**\$25** each  
or  
**\$225**  
for a reserved table

## May 14

5pm-9pm  
Courtyards  
of Andover



Join Albert, his family and friends, as we recognize the his contributions to Anoka County. For 32 years, Al served Columbia Heights and the surrounding area on the Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

More info: (763) 421-0600 ♦ [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

This Event is Proudly Sponsored by:



# History Repeating Itself

By Vickie Wendel

The 2008 senatorial election in Minnesota certainly seems to be going where no election has gone before--or is it? Determining a winner in the election between Norm Coleman and Al Franken has lasted six months beyond the election itself and there is still no clear victor. The haggling over which ballots should count and for whom with an office in the balance has been intense--and been done before!

The contest for the office of Anoka County Sheriff in the 1900 election has an eerily similar sound to today's news of the Franken/Coleman contest.

In the waning years of the past century, the sheriff's office was a coveted position in Anoka County. The 1896 election was a tie with each candidate receiving 1,256 votes. State election laws at the time stated only a loser could call for a recount and since neither man lost, neither could ask for a recount. The office of sheriff could not be decided by drawing a name from a hat and the provisions for holding a new election had conflicting requirements. The matter finally ended when the state attorney general suggested the county board appoint the incumbent sheriff until the state election laws could be amended. The Anoka County Board appointed the incumbent, John Tierney, sheriff.

The next election in 1898 did not end in a tie, but the winner, George Merrill, had a slim 20-vote margin. The loser, Tierney, did not challenge the count.

Then came the election of 1900. The ballot contained the name of the incumbent, George Merrill, and the man he beat in 1898, John Tierney.

Implications in the local newspapers indicate the campaigning was spirited and that Tierney was making the most of Merrill's inability to solve a murder case.



GEO. W. MERRILL.

When the ballots were counted, Tierney only had six more votes than Merrill. With the total being so close, Merrill asked for a recount, citing some voting irregularities suspected in Blaine. The recount began with the Blaine ballots. Judges found four ballots counted for Tierney that should have been counted for Merrill. That tipped the balance of the election to Merrill, but the recount also found that there were five ballots completely missing in Blaine. Does this sound familiar from our recent statewide recount?!

The 1900 recount began across Anoka County and more discrepancies appeared. The matter was taken before the court with judges trying to decide which ballots should be counted and which should not. Some of the problems included ballots with no election judge's initials, voters not entitled to vote because they were not citizens, votes cast by minors, and confusing, mismarked or double-marked ballots. The supporters and lawyers for both candidates argued, brought witnesses, tried reasoning and more, to get enough votes for their candidate to be declared the winner.

Despite the challenge brought forward and the recount it required, the canvassing board did certify Tierney as the winner of the election; but when he tried to take the office of sheriff, Merrill refused to give up the keys and books, insisting Tierney had not been legally elected. The county board swore Tierney in as the sheriff, but Merrill did not drop the challenge.

It took until mid March of 1901 to decide which ballots should be counted from several hundred disputed ballots presented by both camps, but in the end, Tierney won the election by 45 votes. The decision of the judge, printed in a voluminous document, said Merrill had received a total of 1113 votes, 119 of which were illegally cast. On Tierney's side, there were 88 illegally cast votes, leaving him 1039 votes in his favor. How many ballots were rejected as spoiled was not reported.

In April of 2009, Minnesotans heard the three judge panel ruling that declared a 312 vote advantage for Franken and Coleman announced his intention to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. As the 1900 Anoka County sheriff's election points out, the contest between Coleman and Franken is not the first time an election has been in such a contested position.

The fascinating parallel between a 1900 election and the election contest currently playing out in the news was discovered during a project of the Anoka County Sheriff's office to record their history. The project is on-going and is scheduled for completion in 2010. If anyone has photographs of former deputies, sheriffs, vehicles, or activities of the sheriff's office of Anoka County they are willing to share, the Sheriff's Office asks them to contact the Anoka County Historical Society. The Historical Society can scan and return your photos. Individuals may email a high resolution image to [vickie@ac-hs.org](mailto:vickie@ac-hs.org) or call Vickie at 763-421-0600 x101. As much as possible, please include a description of what was happening in the photograph, identify people in it, the date and location it was taken, and your contact information.

If you noticed there was no photo of John Tierney on this page, it is because neither the Sheriff's Office nor the Historical Society (ACHS or MHS) has one. If you do, please let us know!!

OFFICIAL COUNTY BALLOT.	
Put a cross-mark (X) opposite the name of each candidate you wish to vote for in the square indicated by the arrow.	
Member of Congress--PAGE MORRIS--Republican.	VOTE FOR ONE.
Member of Congress--HENRY TRUELSEN } Democrat. Peoplen.	
Member of Congress--PETER J. SEBEGGER } Midroad Populist.	
Member of Congress--JOHN P. JOHNSON--Socialist-Labor.	
Member of Congress--	VOTE FOR THREE.
Representative--N. K. HUNT--Republican.	
Representative--EMMET MARK--Republican.	
Representative--HENRY LEE--Republican.	
Representative--NELS N. NELSON--Democrat.	
Representative--CHARLES J. SWANSON--Democrat.	
Representative--	VOTE FOR ONE.
Auditor--SELDEN McGAFFEY--Republican.	
Auditor--W. E. SCANLON--Democrat.	VOTE FOR ONE.
Auditor--	
Treasurer--CHARLES W. LENFEST--Republican.	VOTE FOR ONE.
Treasurer--CARL L. JOHNSON--Democrat.	
Treasurer--	VOTE FOR ONE.
Sheriff--GEORGE W. MERRILL--Republican.	
Sheriff--JOHN TIERNEY--Democrat.	VOTE FOR ONE.
Sheriff--	
Register of Deeds--HERMAN G. PERSKE--Republican.	VOTE FOR ONE.
Register of Deeds--D. E. SHANNON--Democrat.	
Register of Deeds--	VOTE FOR ONE.
Judge of Probate--CHARLES E. GREEN--Republican.	
Judge of Probate--	VOTE FOR ONE.

Sample 1900 ballot as printed in the newspapers.

# Coming Events

## May & June

**Coon Creek Watershed District Display**  
(History Center Lobby) Anoka County has officially been digging ditches to control water flow and improve farm land since 1883. This special display will highlight some little known and fascinating history of water in our county.

## May 5, 6:00 pm.

### Ghost Tour Docent Training/Refresher

(Meet at the History Center) If you have ever thought about leading one of these incredibly popular tours, this is your day! We will provide training for new volunteers, share the latest stories we've heard, and dust off the tour guiding skills of our experienced docents. These tours are one of our most successful outreach efforts and we need a team of trained guides to offer multiple tours. You get to wear a costume, and people hang on your every word! It's great fun! Call Maria with any questions.

## May 7, 16, & 21, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

(Meet at the History Center) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and of unexplained things. Advanced tickets are highly recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you get your place on the tour.

## May 14, 5:00 pm.

### Al Kordiak Recognition Dinner

(Courtyards of Andover) Join Al's family, friends and the Anoka County Historical Society in recognizing the contributions of Albert Kordiak. Commissioner Kordiak, first elected at the age of 26, took office in 1955, and helped shape many of the institutions we are so proud of today before he retired in 1987. For more information, see page 6.

## June 4, 6, 18, & 20, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

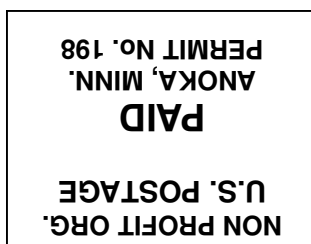
(Meet at the History Center) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and of unexplained things. Advanced tickets are always recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you get your place on the tour.

## July 12

### Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour

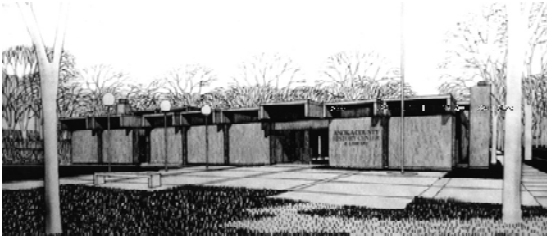
Save the date! We have a great line up of beautiful homes and gardens in Anoka's Swedetown neighborhood on this tour! Mark the date on your calendar and watch for more information in the next newsletter.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600





# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 4

July — August 2009

SERVING:

- Andover
- Anoka
- Bethel
- Blaine
- Centerville
- Circle Pines
- Columbia Heights
- Columbus
- Coon Rapids
- East Bethel
- Fridley
- Ham Lake
- Hilltop
- Lexington
- Lino Lakes
- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

## *Historic Swedetown—2009 Anoka Home & Garden Tour!*



### **1850 6th Avenue**

In 1927, George Green purchased half of the lots on this block. He and his father, Clarence, owned a real estate and construction business. Green sold portions of lots 17 and 18 to Emil Anderson in 1929 and 1931. Emil, a general contractor and developer, built at least three homes on this block, including this home, constructed about 1930.

In 1931, Frank and Emma Townsend purchased the property for \$6,000. They apparently rented out the property, as the Townsends are not listed in any local residential records. Phoebe LeRicheaux purchased the home in 1947 and lived here with her husband, Charles, an attorney. DeWayne and Sharon Johnson purchased the home in 1979 and remodeled the second story. (DeWayne was the Anoka High School football coach and 1987 Conference Coach of the Year.) An interesting fact about this home is that the last four owners, representing over 60 years of ownership, were all schoolteachers. Notice the shingled siding, lovely curved door, and decorative exterior tile work in the brick fireplace on this Cape Cod-style home.

### **427 Van Buren Street**

The Washburn Mill Company originally owned this land, as well as the lot on the adjacent corner. In 1909, Alexander and Elizabeth Allison purchased the two lots from William and Lizzie Washburn. A.J. Allison, a part owner of the Rum River Lumber Company, likely built this home from his company's lumber between 1911 and 1915. Here, the Allisons raised sons, James and Leonard. Leonard "Stub" Allison went on to become a famous college football coach, leading the University of California at Berkeley to their last Rose Bowl win in 1938. Alexander Allison died in 1928 at the age of 65 from complications of a stroke he had two years earlier. He was survived by his wife, Elizabeth, who continued to live in the house until her death in 1950.



Alvin and Lois Johnson bought the home in 1952 from the Allisons' sons. Alvin was a chemist for Federal Cartridge Corporation and the manager of its powder mix area. The Johnsons lived in this home until he passed away on Valentine's Day, 1990. Subsequent owners Peter and Molly Borchert remodeled portions of the home and the current homeowners are remodeling the kitchen. They also painted the home its current colors to highlight the Arts & Crafts-style details such as the exposed roof rafters and tapered porch columns.

### **432 Van Buren Street**



Joseph Bradeen constructed this home about 1870 after purchasing the land from Charlotte B. Stockwell for \$100. Born in Maine, Bradeen was a carpenter and likely built the home himself. Joseph lived here with his wife, Amanda, and their two children until October of 1873 when the house was sold to George and Sarah Geddes.

George Geddes ran a grocery store in Anoka until 1877 and later became a constable, chief of police, and the county auditor in March, 1881.

In the early 1930s, Charles Schmodt began living in this house and later purchased it in 1947 with his wife, Elsie. Many Anoka residents remember Elsie running a candy store out of the side porch during the 1950s and 60s. Kids from St. Anne's Covenant school (now St. Stephen's) would stop by after school with their saved up coins.

The house is built in the Folk Victorian style with a simple, rectangular plan and gingerbread detailing in the front gable end. By 1870, the railroad could ship affordable, mass-produced architectural materials, like gingerbread details, to any area of the country, making style affordable for any family. The current owners have lived here for seventeen years. In that time, they have refinished floors, replaced the first floors doors and trim, and replaced newer fixtures with ones more appropriate to the age and style of the home. Be sure to check out the fireplace mantle and painted floors upstairs.

*See page 7 for all the details of the tours in this historic neighborhood!*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

Vice President—Tom Sherohman  
(District #4)

District #1—Patti Kurak

District #2 — Bill Prugh

District #3—Dick Johnson

District #5 — Jan Anderson

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District #7—Bart Ward

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At-Large E — William Erhart

At-Large G — Catherine Vesley

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### **Staff**

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

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Don Johnson, Alan Santoro,  
Pat Montgomery

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director's Desk...**

By Todd Mahon

### **Generous Donors in Uncertain Times**

I know I'm not breaking any news here, but you've probably seen (and felt) the tough economy. We, here at the Anoka County Historical Society (ACHS), are no different. We, too, have felt the tightening of the economy.

With this backdrop, I am pleased to report that ACHS is still receiving strong support from our business and corporate partners in the community. On May 14, we held a recognition dinner for former Anoka County Commissioner Al Kordiak. The proceeds for the event were put towards our endowment fund. Northeast Bank; Barna, Guzy & Steffen; Ehlers; Kennedy and Graven; Richardson, Richter & Associates; Faegre and Benson; Springsted; Buetow & Associates; Forest Lake Contracting; ABC Newspapers; and Hollis Cavnar all joined us as sponsors.

Given these hard economic times, we are even more pleased by this strong showing of support from the business community. Resources are fewer and further between than they have been in recent memory and the decisions to donate to a charitable organization are more scrutinized than ever. We are grateful to these businesses for finding ACHS to be a worthy investment of their funds.

The same can be said for the sponsors for this year's Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour. This issue of *History Center News* has lots of information on the July 12 tour (see pages 1 & 7). This event couldn't be profitable without its sponsors. We give special thanks to the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce, The Artique, Patrick J. Walker, The Christian Hill Neighborhood, Ticknor Hill Bed & Breakfast, NaturaLawn of America, Truffles & Tortes, Main Floral, Avant Garden, Edward Jones (Tom Conneran), BOB 106, Counselor Realty (Rick Theisen), Plants & Things, Brook Park Realty, Devon's Gardens, The French Flea, and the Weaver Family.

We are currently seeking sponsors for the Harvest Time Barn Dance on October 3. Sponsors will be promoted at the event and in pre-event posters. They also get free tickets to the event and a tax deduction. Still, the most important element is your support of ACHS and making possible the preservation of our local history.

If you are interested in joining us as a sponsor, please call us (763) 421-0600.

## **From the President...**

By Paul Pierce

Anoka County has a rich and colorful history in music and arts. My favorite characters of our local history are all associated with music. Thaddeus Giddings, who said, "it takes a big man to bring real disagreement to a group of mature adults," is my favorite. It would require more space than this article just to scratch the surface of his many exploits.

My involvement with protecting the Amphitheater in Anoka has given me an appreciation for the impressive interest and talent in our county. The historical society has a new exhibit opening on July 11th, *Sounds of Anoka County: How Can I Keep From Singing?*, that covers some of the notable vocal talent in our county.

Thanks to the Music and Arts Committee: Jan Anderson, Tom Ward, Chuck Olson, Tom Sherohman, Sonja Chamberlain, Tom Fischer, Lin Schmitt, Joyce Paul, Pete Dahlstrom, and my father, Paul Pierce Jr., we have some great stories and artifacts!

You will want to arrive at the History Center by 11am on July 11th to enjoy the selections from *Meet me in Saint Louis* performed by singers from the Lyric Arts Main Street Stage on our lawn during Riverfest.

One notable artifact to look for when you visit the exhibit is a vest made for Roe Chase's role in *A History Agriculture*, the extravaganza first play specially written for and performed in the Anoka Amphitheater in 1916. Thanks to Roe's descendant (an Anoka artist with his own significant contributions to our music & artistic history), Peter Jablonski, the vest went on to appear in many other productions. The most famous performer to wear the vest so far was Michail Baryshnikov. Peter has graciously loaned this precious family memento to our exhibit.

Musical theater productions are a daunting task with so many details required to make the story work that costumes, props, and stage settings are often reused. In 1971, our theater class needed a horse for a play, so I made a quick chicken wire and papermâché horse head to do the job. Fifteen years later, I saw it with a new paint job at a high school pep fest! Waste not, want not!

I hope to see you at the exhibit opening on July 11th!

# Story of an Artifact

## Josiah F. Clark, A War Music Story

By Holly Broden, Contributing Writer

Touching the past is an amazing thing. It's a treasure hunt, of sorts, that often yields gems.

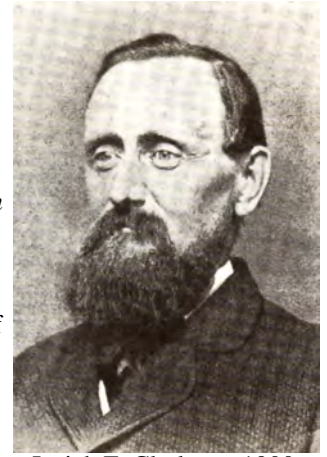
This treasure hunt started after reading the list "Some First Things" taken from the book, *History of Anoka County*. Next to number 24 on the list was entered, "First singing school-Taught by Josiah F. Clark in the winter of 1855-56."

There were a number of firsts in Clark's life including serving as the first probate judge in Anoka County after the State of Minnesota was organized. This was in the year 1858. He was elected County Treasurer in 1866, and continued in this job for four years. He was also a Justice of the Peace and the clerk of the school board.

Prior to that, Clark first arrived in Anoka County in 1854 and worked as a carpenter until he returned to farming. This really could be anyone of the first settlers' story, but it is during his farming stint when a different sort of Josiah Clark began to emerge. This difference came in the form of music.

Not only did Clark serve as the first vocal teacher in Anoka County, he also served as the principal musician during the Civil War. In 1862, he enlisted in Company A, Eighth Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers. His duty, as listed on the roster of field and staff officers, was "principal musician, age 39, mustered in Oct. 14, '63 and mustered out July 11, '65." In total, the Eighth Minnesota had 520 enlisted men with 20 commissioned officers. Nearly all of Company A were Anoka County men.

According to the book, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865, Vol. I*, the Minnesota regiment was battle tested and tough.



Josiah F. Clark, ca. 1900



Bill Crowder with Clark's music book.

*On September 15th, the regiment (except the Fisk detail) started for Fort Snelling, where it arrived October 15th, and where orders for the South awaited it. The Eight had been in almost constant motion for five months. With reveille from 1 to 3 a.m., starting at sunrise, riding all the long summer days in the blazing sun, over monotonous plains, and later in the season cold days and nights with nothing green to eat and much of the time only bad water to drink and buffalo chips for fuel, the service was in many respects more trying than in the South; but it was an excellent preparation for the South....no healthier or tougher regiment of men went into Southern service during the war than the Eighth Minnesota.*

What exactly would the chief musician do in a regiment of hardened soldiers? The answer came from local Civil War reenactor bugler, Bill Crowder.

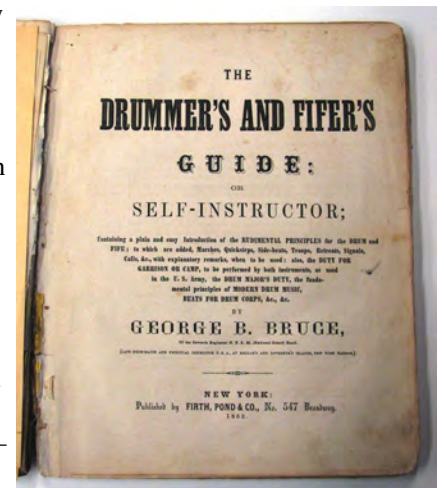
Crowder has spent the past nine years reenacting as a chief musician playing the bugle. He first played with the 4th U.S. Infantry out of Stillwater, and then with both the 2nd Minnesota Light Artillery and the Battery I, First U.S. Artillery. He says it is easy to underestimate the importance of a chief musician. "You really wanted a chief musician in camp for organization," he said. Each song played had a meaning and all of the soldiers

would know what that song signified. For example, *Tattoo* is played to signify return to camp or remain in camp. According to Crowder, fifteen minutes later, the drummer of the guard gave three distinct taps as a signal for putting out lights. Similar musical melodies, like *Roast Beef* were played for meal times or songs such as *Reveille* got the troops up in the morning. Other campo duties included playing songs to boost the morale of the men.

On the battlefield, the chief musician, typically a bugler, a fifer, or a drummer, would signal different maneuvers. "Whatever the Colonel called, the bugler would play," said Crowder. He went on to explain that a verbal call of "forward march" or "change of direction" would be difficult to hear for a thousand men. An instrument that could be heard clearly by all was crucial for carrying out commands. This is substantiated by sources that talked about using the fife in battle. They suggested a band of fife and drums could be heard up to three miles away over artillery fire. Such qualities made it useful for signaling on the battlefield. The musician also gave the call, when the battles were over, to come and get your dead. "A signal that was respected by both sides in the war," said Crowder.

When Clark's Civil War duty ended in 1866, he returned to Anoka and with him came his musician's book *Drummer's and Fifer's Guide: Self Instruction* by George B. Bruce and Dan D. Emmett. It was donated years later to the Anoka County Historical Society, notations and original music by Clark remain tucked in its pages. That book and the story of Josiah F. Clark are the gems that were found after following a simple statement that said, "First singing school—Taught by Josiah F. Clark in the winter of 1855-56."

Material from ACHS archives and others as referenced.



Title page (above) and worn cover (left) of Clark's music book.

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to June 15, 2009

## GENERAL DONATIONS

June Bendix  
Edward B. Cutter Post #102 Inc.  
S. M. Dilcher  
John Gallovich  
Janet "Pat" Douglass Johnson  
Janice Joyce  
James and Jane Knoll  
Tom and Linda Sullivan

## EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial for Dan Frank

## HOME & GARDEN TOUR SPONSOR

Avant Garden  
Furniture and Things  
Naturalawn of America  
Tim and Erin Nigh  
Patrick and Sharon Walker  
The Weaver Brothers Co.

## SPECIAL DONATIONS FOR THE VIETNAM TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Vietnam Veterans of America, Anoka Chapter 470  
Vietnam Veterans of America, Coon Rapids Chapter 375

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Anoka High School  
James Bauer  
Colleen Bell  
Robert & Lois Blewett  
Gary Erickson  
John Hawkins  
Peter Jablonski  
Clifford G. Johnson  
Stephanie Johnson  
Clare Mikesh  
Northstar Development Authority  
Patricia Sprague  
Charles Strike

## MEMORIALS

### **In Memory of Carol Houser**

*In loving memory of our Aunt Carol Houser.  
She was a special woman who we didn't  
see nearly enough.*

Given by Kent A. Smith  
& Craig R. Smith

### **In Memory of Carol Houser**

*In loving memory of Carol Houser...  
the best typist we ever had.*

Given by Maxine A. Larson

## KORDIAK EVENT SPONSOR

Northeast Bank  
Faegre Benson/Ehlers and Associates  
Forest Lake Contracting, Inc.  
H.C. Management, Inc.  
Kennedy and Graven

## DONATIONS AT THE KORDIAK EVENT

Lee Carlson/Main Motors  
Dennis and Debbie Christianson  
Sally Cleveland  
Chalisse Eldridge  
Judge Jim and Mary Gibbs  
Gerry and Mary Ann Herringer  
Tyler Hoch  
Laura Jamieson-Kordiak  
Robert and Frances Jensen  
Terry Johnson Family  
Mike and Maria King  
Robert and Linea Kirchner  
Al and Millie Kordiak  
Lisa Kordiak  
Paul and Lois McCarron  
Patrick McFarland  
Ralph McGinley  
Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO  
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Jeanette Ostergard  
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Dirk and Tammy Schmitz  
Natalie A. Steffen  
Anne Stokowski  
Tim and Rose Talbot  
Lael Theis  
Sandy Thorsen  
Ed and Jean Thurston  
Merle and Kathy Tingelstad  
Malcolm O. Watson  
Ron and Vickie Wendel  
Robyn L. West

## Welcome New Members!

Mel and Kathy Aanerud – Ham Lake  
Sally Cleveland – Andover  
Karen and Milton Dale – Linwood  
Jim and Mary Gibbs – Coon Rapids  
Judy Harig – Sioux Falls, SD  
Edna Hoium – Ham Lake  
Pauline James – Elk River  
Pat Montgomery – Ham Lake  
Ken and Cheryl Orttel – Andover  
Larry and Myrna Podany – Andover  
Tim and Rose Talbot - Anoka

***The Anoka County Historical Society  
extends our sincere sympathy to  
the family of:  
Robert "Butch" Flint  
who died June 9, 2009  
Butch was a long time member of ACHS.***

## Up To Date

- ◆ The Board of Directors meeting for July will be held at the History Center at 6:00 on July 9, 2009. The August meeting will be on the 13th. The public is welcome to attend board meetings at any time.
- ◆ The Albert Kordiak Recognition Dinner was a wonderful success. We collected some great history, had a lot of fun, and added over \$9,000 to the ACHS Endowment Fund. Funds are still coming in for this event and it is not too late to add your donation to the list. Be sure to clearly mark your donation KORDIAK.
- ◆ Sign up to be our fan and join the fun on Facebook! It's a quick way to see what's happening anytime. Click the link from our webpage:

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)



## 75 Years Ago at ACHS

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Anoka County Historical Society, this column will look back at the formation, founders, and first activities of ACHS. Watch for more of these stories of our own history in the coming months.

*Theodore Blegen, superintendent of the State Historical Society, in a talk before a group of Anoka people interested in the forming of an Anoka County Historical Society at Library Hall last Thursday evening, gave some practical reasons for having such an organization.*

*He stressed the value of history to the community, the knowledge which helps in the development of the present. It is like the synopsis of a story and helps us to enjoy the unfolding of the tale. Mr. Blegen further stated that live, unlike the motion pictures, is not run off a second time. History is our second sight and reveals a very important story for the present generation and the following generations...*

*Mr. Blegen spoke of the history of our fine library, which stands as an achievement of the past, adding to the culture of the future. He said that history gives a balancing standard so necessary to the present. He urged the preservation of the records of today including the newspapers which are the mirrors of the times.*

This report of a meeting about the importance of keeping local history could have been written yesterday instead of the summer of 1934. Though the words are copied from an undated newspaper clipping in the ACHS files, we know the meeting was held on June 28, 1934.

The conclusion of the article listed off several names of people who were charged by Mr. Blegen to beginning planning for an organization to keep Anoka County's history.

One of the things this committee did was to reach out to county residents to get people involved in gathering their own history. The enclosed "survey" with this newsletter contains a copy of their 1934 survey and a survey of today—the one we'd like you to fill out and return! See the colored insert and take a step to preserve your history today!

## Summertime Fun With History!

Summer is a busy time here at the Anoka County Historical Society. We have several annual events that are very important and very effective as outreach efforts. They are also heavily dependent on our volunteers. Please check your calendar and see if you could possibly give us a few hours.

All of the following are really fun! Some require only an hour or two, some involve a longer shift. Please e-mail or call me and I will find a spot for you! It's also a great time for new volunteers or for those who might be considering becoming volunteers. Suggest the idea to family, friends, and total strangers at cocktail parties!

See something you can help with? Please call Maria at 763-421-0600 or email at [maria@ac-hs.org](mailto:maria@ac-hs.org)

**Saturday, July 11** Sell Home and Garden Tour tickets at the Riverfest ticket booth, 9- noon, noon to 3 pm, 3-5pm plus take down.

**Sunday, July 12** Annual Heritage Home and Garden Tour, 1-5pm. There is an optional tour in the morning so volunteers can visit each house on the tour, so you won't miss a thing! A light lunch is provided.

**The Anoka County Fair, July 21-26** We need people to demonstrate historic crafts and skills. Volunteers staff the farmhouse to talk with visitors about our programs and local history. ACHS provides your ticket into the fair. Can you carve? Spin? Knead bread dough? Embroider? Knit? Basket-weave? Darn a sock? Use the treadle sewing machine? Weave straw? Make corn cob dolls? Make a kite? Quilt? Something else?

**Tuesday, July 21** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm.

**Wednesday, July 22** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm. This is senior day, so there will be higher traffic in the morning!

**Thursday, July 23** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm.

**Friday, July 24** Three people from 10am-3pm, and four from 3pm to 8pm. This evening always sees higher crowds.

**Saturday, July 25** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm. This evening always sees higher crowds.

**Sunday, July 26** Need two volunteers 11am to 3pm and two more from 3 until the crowd dies down, usually about 6pm.



# Fire Safety Fair at Riverfest!

See antique and modern fire equipment and talk with fire fighters from across Anoka County at the History Center on Saturday, July 11, from 9-5! There will be demonstrations, photo opportunities, safety tips, and tons of fun! The *Law and Ladders* exhibit, featuring the history of county fire and law enforcement agencies, is free on the day of Riverfest!

**Bring the Kids—and your camera!**



RIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVER

## Sounds of Anoka County:

### How Can I Keep From Singing?

See and hear the second phase of our musical history with this new exhibit highlighting the choirs and musical theater history in Anoka County. We have costumes, stage props, lots of music, and photos that will surely set your heart to song! To celebrate the opening day of this new exhibit on July 11th, members from the cast of *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the current production of Lyric Arts Main Street Stage, will perform at 11:00am!



**JUL 10-JUL 26, 2009**

Songs by Hugh Martin & Ralph Blaine, Book by Hugh Wheeler. Based on The Kensington Stories by Sally Benson and the MGM motion picture Meet Me in St. Louis

# Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour



Sunday,  
 July 12, 2009  
 1:00pm to 5:00pm

A highlight of the summer, the Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour features open house tours of some of the city's most beautiful and historic homes and some of its most well-tended gardens. Raffle prizes will be given away by local businesses on the tour. For more information on the tour and the homes participating, visit [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org) or call us at 763-421-0600.

## Hosted by:

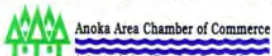
Anoka County Historical Society



Win a FREE one-night stay at Ticknor Hill Bed and Breakfast in Anoka!!  
 All ticket buyers are entered in a drawing to win.  
 Call 763-421-0600 for details.

Tour all sites for only \$13

## Proudly Sponsored by:



Patrick J. Walker

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The Weaver Family



# Coming Events

## July 11, 9am to 5pm

### Anoka Riverfest

(History Center lawn and parking lot) We're hosting a Fire Safety Fair to compliment the Law and Ladders exhibit! Fire departments from across Anoka County are bringing new and antique fire equipment to display, the Safe Escape House, demonstrations, and hands-on activities about fire fighting and fire safety will keep everyone busy! When you finish the Fire Safety Fair outside, come inside to tour the exhibit—NO ADMISSION for the ACHS Exhibit Gallery on Riverfest!

## July 11, 10am to 4pm

### Sounds of Anoka County: How Can I Keep From Singing?

(History Center Exhibit Hall) Come see and hear the second phase of our musical history with this new exhibit that looks at the choirs and musical theater history in Anoka County. We have costumes, stage props, lots of music, and photos that will set your heart to song! To compliment the exhibit, we invited cast members from Lyric Arts to sing at 11:00am.

## July 12, 1 to 5 pm

### Anoka Heritage Home & Garden Tour

(Anoka's Swedetown neighborhood) Get your tickets NOW for this fantastic tour of homes and gardens in the Swedetown area of Anoka. Several businesses are included in the tour where special displays and activities are happening. Stop by Ticknor Hill B & B to see if you are the lucky winner of a night's stay! Visit with "Doctor Flora" at the Artique! See page 7 for all the details.

## July 2, 4, 11, 16, & 18, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

(Meet at the History Center) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and of unexplained things. Advanced tickets are highly recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you guarantee your place on the tour.

## July 21-26

### Anoka County Fair

(Anoka County Fairgrounds Farmhouse) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and unexplained things. Advanced tickets are always recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you guarantee your place on the tour.

## August 1, 6, 15, & 20, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

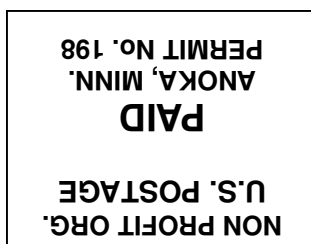
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## August 21-23

### Nowthen Threshing Show

(7415 Old Viking Blvd., Nowthen) Join in the fun as ACHS staffs the General Store at the Threshing show—but remember, when you walk through those doors, the year is 1920! The store is open for "business" from 10 to 7 on Friday and Saturday and 10 to 5 on Sunday.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600



One of the first steps taken to gather local history by the Anoka County Historical Society was this survey, ca. 1934.

*May we enroll you as a member?*

**SOME SUBJECTS FOR INVESTIGATION BY TOWNSHIP SECRETARIES AND MEMBERS OF A COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

1. Who were the settlers in your township prior to 1885? When did they come to Minnesota? to Anoka County? Where did they come from, and Why? Who among these pioneers is living today? What members of these families are still living in the County? Try to get them to write down their Reminiscences for preservation in the archives of the County Historical Society.
2. What Historic Sites are there in your township? i. e., Indian mounds and works, villages, battle grounds, fur trade posts, forts, the location of the first settlement, vanished towns, etc. What markers have been erected? Get copies of the inscriptions and the location.
3. What diaries, letters, account books, personal or business papers or records of individuals, pioneer commercial or business concerns, social organizations, lodges, clubs, etc., are to be found in your township? Try to secure them for preservation in the collection of the county or state historical society.
4. What old newspaper files exist in the township? Please list them carefully with their owners and locations. Still better, try to secure them for preservation by the society.
5. What county and township histories; broadsides; programs of entertainments, clubs, commencements, etc.; addresses and lectures, sermons, talks, etc.; reports of companies, committees, and individuals; and other printed material bearing upon the history of the county and state can you locate? Try to obtain as much of this as possible for preservation.
6. What museum relics: such as Indian articles like pottery (whole or fragments), stone axes and hammers, beadwork, baskets, etc.; hand made and pioneer tools, implements and household articles such as flails, grain cradles, spinning wheels, loom, churns, ox yokes, broad-axes, froes; and costumes, showing the lives and activities of the Indian and white residents of your region are there in your township? Try to arrange for their preservation in the county or state museum. Why not arrange for a township or county museum exhibit on a day when there will be many people in your area to see and enjoy them? In any event get a list of as much of this material as possible with the owners so that steps for its preservation can be taken.

*Please reply to Mrs. C. E. Chase,  
Cor. Secretary.*

## Recording County Resident History

Please help us preserve *your* story by completing this cover sheet and writing the answers to some or all of the questions posed here. Return your history to the Anoka County Historical Society where it will be placed in the permanent archives of the Anoka County History Center. Remember, this list of questions is only the starting point—you are *encouraged* to attach photos, more pages, answer questions not asked here, use a recorder to capture your story, or whatever means will best preserve your history.

**ACHS believes every person has a story worth preserving. Help preserve yours!**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: These questions are simply a guide to get your started writing/typing your own history. If you would rather email your history to ACHS, send it to [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org) with the words MY HISTORY in the subject line.

### Your History

Where were you born and raised? If not in Anoka County, when did you come here and why?

What was your family like? (siblings, parents, others in the household)

Where did you attend school? Describe the school. What were classes like?

Did your family attend church? Which one? What was it like?

Where was your family home (address if possible)—describe it. Did you have a garden, how many bedrooms, did you share rooms, was the driveway long, where did you play, etc.

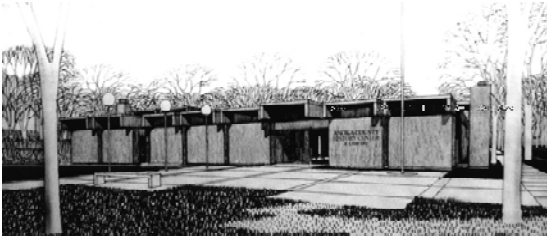
Do you work outside the home? Where and doing what? Why did you choose that?

What were/are your favorite things to do in Anoka County?

Tell us a story about your life in Anoka County. Be sure to identify people by their full names and give some dates, including the years.

When you have your story written, please mail or bring the form to:

Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North,  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600



# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 5

September — October 2009

## *Fifty Years and Counting*

by Holly Broden, *Contributing Writer*

SERVING:

- Andover
- Anoka
- Bethel
- Blaine
- Centerville
- Circle Pines
- Columbia Heights
- Columbus
- Coon Rapids
- East Bethel
- Fridley
- Ham Lake
- Hilltop
- Lexington
- Lino Lakes
- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

Situated in the northeast portion of Anoka County, East Bethel is a city with an interesting past. Although the township was organized in 1857, it was not incorporated into a village for another 100 years. It was the persistence of those early pioneers that helped establish East Bethel and set the course for its future.

The first postmaster and one of the early pioneers was James Cooper and evidence of his influence in the area is still present. A convenience store on the east side of Highway 65 that says “Cooper’s Corner” suggests the importance of the man to the area. His ledger book, with entries from 1842 before he came to Minnesota, is part of the Anoka County Historical Society collection. Cooper is credited with naming the city, “Bethel” which means “the House of God” in the ancient Hebrew language. He served as the first postmaster in 1863 in a storefront on the site of a former Quaker settlement. The Quakers were the first settlers in Bethel Village. They quickly established a school and a church, but left following the Indian Uprising of 1862. They never returned to Bethel.

Other settlers that left during the Indian Wars did return. In 1857, when Bethel Township was organized, names such as J.H. Canny, James Cooper, Elisha Day, Louis Mitchell, Edward Pratt, and James and John Dyer were prominent. Bethel Township had a population of 423 in 1880 and 617 in 1900. Life went on pretty much as expected for awhile. That is, until village status was sought by Bethel Township.

*Continued on page 5*



James & Rebecca Cooper



Cooper's Corners store and gas station, 23705 Hwy 65, East Bethel, July 1990.

## *ACHS — 75 Years of Gathering, Preserving, and Sharing County History*

They'd been already working on the idea for months before the first formal meeting, held in Library Hall at the Carnegie Library in Anoka, was called to order on September 15, 1934. It was the first meeting of the Anoka County Historical Society.

The group of dedicated people in attendance appointed a slate of officers that included president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and corresponding secretary. The corresponding secretary's duties included acting as a custodian of all the society's important papers. A motion to procure a “proper receptacle” for those papers was approved. The group then appointed a committee to review the “acceptability of all material offered with power to accept or reject the same.”

Change the date and the names and this could almost be a review of an ACHS board meeting from 2009! Today's board has many of the same offices with the same duties as in 1934, the most important of which was—and still remains—the “proper receptacle” in which to keep our county history.

In 2009, that receptacle is the Anoka County History Center rather than members' homes or a closet at the courthouse as in years past. Gathering, preserving, and sharing that county history was—and still is—the only mission of ACHS.

In 2009, we have a committee of staff and board members who review all items offered as donations to the collection, just as in 1934. Today they are called the Acquisition Committee and their job remains the same—they are charged with reviewing the offered items and accepting those things that best tell the county's story.

The second ACHS meeting, held on October 1, 1934, saw the approval of the constitution (today we call this document the by-laws) and a discussion of membership. Eleven people became members at the first meeting and more joined in October. Former county residents and their children were especially invited to become members, even if they lived out of the county. The 2009 membership list of ACHS has members from all over Minnesota as well as from 14 other states!

The 1934 board authorized payment of 80¢ to the *Anoka County Union* for advertising Society meetings and this same newspaper still carries notices of events at ACHS in 2009. It was a good partnership to continue 75 years later!

*Continued on page 7*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

Vice President—Tom Sherohman  
(District #4)

District #1—Patti Kurak

District #2 — Bill Prugh

District #3—Dick Johnson

District #5 — Jan Anderson

District #6—Judy Hanna

District #7—Bart Ward

At Large A— Lori Yager

At Large B—Dan Frank

At Large C—Tom Ward

At Large D—Terri Cleveland

At-Large E — William Erhart

At-Large G — Catherine Vesley

At-Large H — Harvey Greenburg

County Commissioner Liaison—  
Dick Lang

### **Staff**

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

Program Manager—Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant—Pat Snodgrass

Volunteer Coordinator—Maria King

Curator Projects—Marilyn Anderson

Office Staff—Gail Dahl, Carol Dordan,  
Don Johnson, Alan Santoro,  
Pat Montgomery

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director's Desk...**

By Todd Mahon

### **You Can Help the Barn Dance**

It's that time of year again; it's time for the Harvest Time Barn Dance on October 3. For those that have never attended this fun event, it is a major fundraiser for the Historical Society. It features great food from Those Pork Chops, Buggy Whipp's music will get everyone dancing and enjoying themselves. For many, the event highlight is the live and silent auction packages.

This year has been especially challenging for us to find sponsors for the event. We are still out there soliciting, but it looks like we might have only about half of the sponsorship revenue we have had in years past. This event is profitable as a fundraiser, but there are costs for the band, the building rental, publicity, and special event insurance that are the same, regardless of how many tickets are sold.

With that in mind, finding great items and packages for the auctions is more important this year than it ever has been. The better the quality, and the greater the quantity, the more funds that will be raised through the auction.

**This is where you, an ACHS member and friend, can really help us out.** Do you have season tickets for a local team or to one of the many Twin Cities theaters? If yes, please consider donating tickets to a game, event, or performance. You will receive a letter confirming the donation that can be used for tax deduction purposes. If you don't have tickets, perhaps you are a valued customer at a local business and can request a gift certificate for a service or merchandise. If you are a crafter or hobbyist, you could also donate high quality, hand-made items, like quilts, woodwork, or unique crafts.

All of these are great ideas. ACHS staff and board members are currently making dozens of requests. Some of us make our own substantial contributions to the auction. Please help us make the Harvest Time Barn Dance a great success. For more information on how to contribute an auction item, see page 4. If you have questions, call us at 763-421-0600.

## **From the President...**

By Paul Pierce

ACHS Ghost Tours are very popular! Most programs tend to have a fairly short life cycle—interest peaks highest at the beginning, then wanes. That is one reason why we often change our exhibits.

This is NOT the case with our tours of possibly haunted sites! The stories of those who have witnessed the apparitions or the evidence of their existence have continued to be in great demand. If you have not yet taken the tour, I highly recommend it. Make reservations or buy tickets at the History Center, but the tours at this time of the year are very busy and they are often sold out.

We have many great stories to share on our "Ghost Tours" and participants often add their own experiences of mystery and the unexplained. It has given us a lot of new leads and material for possible new ghost tours. We keep these stories in our files.

Unless you have experienced something you can't explain, you are probably skeptical. I am naturally inclined to disbelieve in ghosts and I need substantial evidence to change my view. The phenomenon of hauntings and apparitions has been studied by competent professionals for a hundred years without a definitive answer or indisputable proof. Add to that the overwhelming number of shams with magician-like tricks and double exposures and we should be doubtful. The proliferation of digital formats and computer generated graphics and effects allow almost anyone to "doctor" pictures, film, or audio making it impossible to detect a phony.

The idea is well worth pursuing. Definitive proof of an afterlife would have important implications for the concepts of the soul, reincarnation and religion in general. Could the stories in the ACHS files add to our already diverse array of sources for answers?

I have never personally experienced definitive proof, but I had a tenant who said she often saw a ghost in her apartment. She took a Polaroid photo and it showed a half side view of an old man's face. When her kitchen light bulb popped during one of his visits, she told him to "go to the light" and he never appeared to her again. Six years later, another tenant in that same apartment told about seeing a ghost and she described that same old man.

If you take the tour and find you want more, call Maria King at 763-421-0600 and become a ghost tour guide. It is only because of our dedicated volunteers that we have been able to keep up with the tour's popularity. Thanks to the volunteers especially—and keep watching for ghosts!

# Story of an Artifact

## A Story in Stitches

A group of Anoka County women gathered, probably sometime in the 1940s, and began a quilt. They chose fabric they had at hand—often printed cloth sacks from flour or feed. They removed the seams, washed and pressed the fabric to use in sewing. They came up with an unusual pattern of stars separated by white hexagons. Some of the women carefully added their names and where they lived to their hexagons. Making a signature or memory quilt was fairly common in the 1930s and 1940s, especially if the recipient was moving away.



The quilt top was assembled, but for some reason, it was not finished. For the next 70 years, give or take a few, the quilt top disappeared. Who had it or where it traveled is unknown.

In June of 2009, a letter came to the Anoka County Genealogical Society. It read: *I live in a retirement community near Tucson, Arizona. We have a communal sewing room where fabric and other articles are often donated. Someone brought a charming quilt top started by women in Minnesota. The fabrics look to be from the 1940s. There are a few names embroidered on the top. Two of the women were from Anoka. I would love to mail it to you if you would like to have it.*

The letter was signed, *Segrid Salmon* and she attached several photos showing the quilt top with its embroidered names.

The Genealogical Society gave the letter to ACHS and began researching the names on the quilt. Indeed, this quilt top was made by Anoka County women!

Mrs. O.E. Olson was from Ham Lake. She had been born Pearl Danforth in Hope, North Dakota, where she grew up to marry O.E. Olson in 1901. They moved to Ham Lake Township where they farmed and raised their children. Pearl outlived her husband by almost six years. She was 72 years old when she died in 1957. Her



hexagon noted she was from Constance, a neighborhood in Ham Lake.

Mrs. B.H. Titterud was Nellie Hanson when she was born in Cedar in 1880. She married Berger Titterud in 1900 and they continued to live in the Ham Lake area where both had been born. Nellie was known to suffer with asthma. She raised their family on the farm and it was said that “handiwork was her diversion from household tasks.” One kind of handiwork she did was obviously quilting. Asthma took Nellie to the hospital in 1943 where she died unexpectedly from a heart attack.



Ruth McClurd stitched her given name on the quilt rather than Mrs. Zennan Phelps McClurd. She also put the rural mail route that brought their mail to them from Anoka, *Route 4*. She was born Ruth Danielson in Ham Lake, daughter of Bessie and Oscar. Oscar died in 1918 and Ruth’s mother moved to Andover where she married Jack Cull. The family moved back to Ham Lake when Ruth’s mother inherited the land her grandfather had homesteaded so many years earlier. Ruth married in 1935 and during WWII, her husband enlisted in the Navy. They moved to Washington State in 1946 and retired to California in 1972.



Using what is known about the women who signed the quilt, we can put a good date to it. Ruth McClurd was not married until 1935, so the quilt had to be started after that since she signed her married name, but before they moved to Washington in 1946 because of the address Ruth signed. We can further narrow that window of creation for the quilt because Nellie Titterud died in 1943, putting the quilt between 1935 and 1943.

Further research on other names may provide more information, but without question, this unique and well traveled quilt top has a place in Anoka County history. If one of these women was a member of your family or a neighbor and you have information about the quilt top, please call ACHS and help us piece even more of the quilt’s story together.

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to August 14, 2009

## GENERAL DONATIONS

Anoka Business and Landowners Association  
Lyle and Jerene Anderson  
Richard V. Bergling  
Bruce Derscheid and Marilyn Haubrich  
Lucille Elrite  
Janet Galvin  
Mike and Wendie Lapham  
Lynne M. Larson  
Orval and Jo Anne Leistico  
Linwood Township  
Jean M. Morehouse  
Joseph Pelawa  
Dorothy L. Peterson  
Donald and Joyce Sage  
Dodie and Herm Talle  
Julienne Wyckoff

## EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial for Dan Frank

## HOME & GARDEN TOUR SPONSOR

Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce  
Brook Park Realty  
Century 21/ShillMann Realty  
Edward Jones Investments  
The Artique

## SPECIAL DONATIONS FOR THE VIETNAM TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Vietnam Veterans of America, Anoka Chapter 470

## MEMORIALS

**In Memory of Lucille Lehn**  
Roger and Dottie Carlson

**In Memory of Carol Houser**  
Roger and Dottie Carlson

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

City of Anoka	Lawrence Langmade
Anoka County Highway Dept.	Alice Packer
Laurel Bendix	Robert Porter
Diane Buganski	The Pospisil Family
Marlys Burman	Registered Abstractors
East Bethel Seniors	Segrid Salmon
Elise Chang	Lorraine Soderquist
Foster W. Dinwiddie	Ron Wendel
Chuck Drury	
Edward Evan	
Janet Galvin	
Joan Gorham	
Mary Ann Hoyt	
Don Johnson	
Jim Kordiak	

## KORDIAK EVENT DONATIONS

Jim Kordiak

## IN HONOR OF

**David Legrid's service to ACHS**  
Roger and Dottie Carlson

## BARN DANCE SPONSOR

MinnCo Credit Union  
Village Bank  
Luther North Country Ford

## Welcome New Members!

Christine N. Drew – Brooklyn Park, MN  
Linda Kelly – Sunfish Lake, MN  
Lynne M. Larson – Anoka  
David and Judie Schink with Dan, Ben, and Tom – Champlin  
Gary and Karen Siewert - Anoka

## Barn Dance Donations needed!

We need your help during these more challenging economic times to make the ACHS annual Barn Dance fundraiser the success it has always been. We are seeking items for the silent and live auction packages. Do you have tickets to a play or a game you can donate? Can you knit a beautiful wool sweater to donate? Build an elegant wooden chair? Be creative! Can you offer a package to mow someone's lawn and weed their garden? Think of things you could do or create that are quality items people would be excited to place bids on. Call ACHS to donate to the Barn Dance Auction. All donors receive receipts for tax deduction purposes.

***The Anoka County Historical Society  
extends our sincere sympathy to  
the family of:***

***John "Jack" Galvin***

*who died January 29, 2009*

*Jack was a long-time member of ACHS.*

***Lucille Lehn***

*who died July 5, 2009*

*Lucille was the "face" of ACHS for many years as she served on the board and as an active volunteer.*

## Up To Date

- ◆ The Board of Directors meeting for September will be held at the History Center at 6:00 on September 10, 2009. The October meeting will be on the 8th. The public is welcome to attend board meetings at any time.
- ◆ **ACHS WISH LIST — can you help?**
  - +Anoka High School yearbooks from 1937 to 1943 and 1955 to 1961.
  - +A heavy duty, good quality, paper shredder.
  - +Stories and photos about prior uses of the theatre building on Main Street in Anoka.
  - +Stories and especially photos of the Anoka County Sheriff's patrol stations, people, and equipment.
- ◆ Sign up to be our fan and join the fun on Facebook! It's a quick way to see what's happening anytime. Click the link from our webpage:

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)



## Volunteers, you did it!!

By Maria King

Summer is a busy time and July is probably *the* busiest month at ACHS, leading us to count even more on our outstanding volunteers who came through in a big way. Just in the month of July, 71 people volunteered 543 hours to ACHS! This covers the Home and Garden tour, the Ghost Tours, Riverfest, the Fair, not to mention all of those everyday needs to keep the library and museum operating. A heartfelt THANK YOU goes out to each an every volunteer.

The fair is an example of the outreach our volunteers accomplish. We see about 75 visitors an hour in the farmhouse. Multiply that by ten hour days for six days and you can see why these events are so important to our outreach efforts! Special thanks to Pete Karpe for his help with the butter making equipment!

The summer may be winding down, but our volunteer needs are not. The enthusiasm for our "Ghost of Anoka" walking tour never seems to diminish. As fall approaches, more tour guides are needed. It's not too late to get trained and be in place for the Halloween rush (making the tours even more fun!)

We need the indexes in our community boxes updated as new material is added to these collections almost daily. Computer familiarity is required for this job.

Lived in the county our whole life? We can use your special talents to help us sort and identify slides donated to ACHS. This could be a really fun project for a pair of people with long memories in the county!

Call Maria at 763-421-0600 to get involved!

## Fifty Years and Counting, *continued*

In the spring of 1957, a committee was formed to take necessary legal steps to incorporate as a village. The incorporation was approved by a 232 to 161 vote on June 4, 1957. A subsequent court challenge was put forth by Coon Lake residents who claimed the population statistics weren't met for incorporation. The group asserted that the Coon Lake Beach district was not contiguous with the new village and should not be included in the new village, according to an August 12, 1958, Anoka County Life newspaper article. For nearly two years, legal proceedings challenging the incorporation went on. There were times when it looked like village status for East Bethel was doomed. A judge in the Minnesota Supreme Court case ruled in Aug. 1958 that the township was too large and rural to be a village. It was only through an intercessory act by the Minnesota legislature, (passing bill no. 666) that validated and legalized the incorporation of East Bethel Village. An Act of the Minnesota Legislature in 1974 changed the status of all villages in Anoka County to cities, including the City of East Bethel.

*Information compiled from ACHS files and sources as noted*



Minnesota's Governor Orville Freeman signed the bill making East Bethel a village on April 27, 1959, shown here with members of the East Bethel council.

## Newest ACHS Member!



ACHS Executive Director Todd Mahon and his wife, Nikki, have a new baby girl!! She was born Monday, August 17th, 2009, and her name is Alexis Evelyn Mahon. She weighed 7 lbs, 4.5 oz. Mom, Dad, and Alexis are doing fine at home together

for a couple weeks before Dad returns to his office at ACHS. Congratulations, Nikki and Todd!

Come on down to the

# Anoka County Historical Society's Sixth Annual

# Harvest Time

# Barn Dance



Kick up your heels  
to the music of  
Buggy Whipp!



\$25

Advanced  
Tickets

## Saturday, October 3, 2009

### 6:00pm to 10:00pm ♦ Anoka County Fairgrounds

Join us for a harvest feast, catered by "Those Pork Chops," and then put on your dancing shoes for the live sounds of Buggy Whipp. Waltz your way over to the auction tables and walk away with a "barn good" auction item. From gift certificates to fine art—there's something for everyone. Proceeds from this event will provide support for the Anoka County Historical Society.

**Dinner and Dance Tickets:**  
\$25 (advance) ♦ \$30 (at door)  
**Dance Tickets (after 7pm): \$15**  
**More Information:**  
(763) 421-0600 ♦ [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

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# Monuments to Life Cemetery Tours

Explore the stories of those who reside in our “silent cities” during the Anoka County Historical Society’s *Monuments to Life* cemetery tours. These tours are evenings filled with stories, traditions, characters, history, and symbolism.

**Tuesday, October 6—Forest Hills Cemetery, Anoka**  
**Thursday, October 8—Joyce Chapel Cemetery, Coon Rapids**  
**Saturday, October 10—Old Bethel Cemetery, East Bethel**

*Come to one or come to all three!*

Tickets for individual tours are \$6.00 (ACHS members)

\$8.00 (non-members)

Ticket Packages 3 Tours for \$15.00 (ACHS members)

\$21.00 (non-members)

**Tickets are limited and must be purchased in advance!**

You will receive maps with your ticket purchase.

Get your tickets at the Anoka County History Center,

2135 Third Avenue, Anoka,

or by calling 763-421-0600 with your VISA or Mastercard

**All tours begin at 7:00 p.m.** and go on rain or shine, so dress for the weather. Be prepared for walking in low light and standing as we visit graves and hear the stories they have to tell. Tours last about an hour.

## ACHS — 75 Years, continued from page 1

The second meeting was also when a list of “county chairmen” was handed in by Mrs. Lena Chase. County Chairmen’s duties were not defined in the meeting minutes, but it appears chairs were expected to represent their areas and help collect the history of their communities. This kind of county-wide representation has taken different forms through the years at ACHS and is most currently reflected in the election of our board members by Commissioner District. This ensures our focus is the complete county and not any one area within it.

With all the foresight those founding members of ACHS displayed, it is no surprise that they took their business of keeping history very seriously. Still, they knew how interesting and how much fun history could be, too. At only their second meeting, they decided they needed to have history programs at the meetings to continue their mission to not only gather and preserve history, but to share it, too. The minutes do not tell us what that program was, but they do tell us about another way they shared history and it’s a way we still use today.

After the business meeting in October of 1934, various members stayed around, chatting and telling stories about the Anoka County history they knew. *Mrs. Faherty gave an account of an early wedding and its watery consequences; Mrs. Chase told of Elder Twitchell and his cow, Mrs. Goss distinguished between the early Marys, and Dr. Scipio Bond spoke of his difficulty in getting back and forth across the Mississippi with his fiddle.*

This storytelling, too, is still done after (and even during!) ACHS board meetings, special events, exhibit openings—indeed in everything we do every day! This sharing of history is our connection to history and our role in it. Besides that, it’s fun and we always learn something!

Unfortunately, not all of those stories, like those at the end of the early minutes, are recorded in our files. We have made and continue to make efforts to document these “reminiscence” kind of stories through oral history interviews.

We have also invited people to write down their stories and submit them to ACHS. We have received some of the survey sheets mailed with the last *History Center News* and we’ve included the survey in this newsletter again. Fill it out, return it and be prepared to see it used in an upcoming exhibit. We’ve got plans in the works for an exhibit that will look at the everyday history of our lives and your history could be a part of it!

At a time when things around us are changing so rapidly, it is almost comforting to look at the mission of ACHS and find it comparing so favorably with the original mission set out 75 years ago. Yes, we’ve certainly up-

dated and changed how we do it, but the mission remains the same. Gathering, preserving and sharing Anoka County’s history was a passion in 1934, just as it is today and we are glad you share that excitement and passion. Let’s pass it on and let the next 75 years be envious of the way we kept our history part of history!

The image shows a handwritten list of names and locations, likely the 'county chairmen' mentioned in the text. The list is written on a yellowed piece of paper with a spiral binding on the left. The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat faded. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and locations on the right.

Mrs. Lena Chase handed in the following names of County Chairmen -	
Mrs. Hazel Bradley	Ramsay
Miss Maud Grant	Linwood
Mrs. E. J. Hanks	Centerville
Miss Maud Parks	Columbus
Miss Margaret Coleman	Tridley
Mrs. Nell Banglow	Grow
" Charles McCullum	Burns
Miss Clara Mickelson	Osago
Mrs. A. E. Vrooman	St. Francis
" Mill Clarke	Ham Lake
" E. J. Gessner	Iron of Anoka
" Arthur C. Anderson	Bethel

The “county chairmen” from the ACHS 1934 minutes.



# Coming Events

**September 3, 5, 17, and 19 at 7:30 p.m.**

**Ghosts of Anoka Tour**

**October 1, 3, 15, 17, 24 & more Halloween week 7:30 p.m.**

Meet at the History Center. Tickets required. This special Ghost Tour takes guest to places where something unexplained has happened and lets them decide what it might be! This tour is just over a mile long and is in the twilight and evening hours. Adult tickets are \$7 for non-members, \$5 for members and \$3 for children under 18 years. Get your tickets early, as we sell out of these popular tickets *fast!* Remember, we accept VISA and Mastercard.

**September/October Lobby Exhibit**

**Anoka Masonic Lodge**

(Anoka County History Center Lobby.) This special guest exhibit takes a look at the 150 years of history behind the Masonic Lodge in Anoka. Members of the Lodge have put together a great display to highlight some of their projects and accomplishments as well as answer a few questions about their organization. This exhibit will remain in the lobby through the fall.

**September 12, events scheduled all day**

**Linwood Family Fun Day**

(Linwood Town Hall) This family fun event is a Linwood tradition and ACHS will be a part of it this year with the traveling Vietnam Exhibit in the Grange Hall. Expect pancakes, music, a silent auction, displays from the Linwood Fire Department, and even Elvis!! See the Linwood website or call Linwood Town Hall for more information. Everyone is welcome!

**September 26, events scheduled all day**

**City of Nowthen Heritage Day**

(Nowthen City Hall, 19800 Nowthen Blvd.) Celebrate the history and heritage of Nowthen! The day begins with a pancake breakfast starting at 7:00 am and is filled with historical displays, crafts, food, games, music, and more! ACHS will have an exhibit on Nowthen history from 10:00-4:00.

**October 3, 6:00 p.m.**

**Harvest Time Barn Dance**

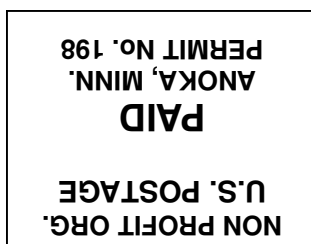
(Anoka County Fairgrounds) Dust off those dancing shoes and come for a great meal, wonderful music, fun, and fabulous auction items at the Historical Society's biggest event of the year! This is a not-to-be-missed event, so get your tickets now! For more information, see page 6.

**October 6, 8, and 10, 7:00 p.m.**

**Annual "Monuments to Life" Cemetery Tours**

The 7th annual Monuments to Life cemetery tour series. This year's tour starts at **Anoka's Forest Hill Cemetery on Tuesday, October 6th, at 7:00 p.m.** Next is the **Joyce Chapel Cemetery in Coon Rapids on Thursday, October 8th at 7:00 p.m.**, and the tours wrap up on **Saturday, October 10th, at the Old Bethel Cemetery in East Bethel at 7:00 p.m.** Buy a single tour ticket or save money with a ticket package for all three! See page 7 for more details.

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600

# Recording County Resident History

Please help us preserve *your* story by completing this cover sheet and writing the answers to some or all of the questions posed here. Return your history to the Anoka County Historical Society where it will be placed in the permanent archives of the Anoka County History Center. Remember, this list of questions is only the starting point—you are *encouraged* to attach photos, more pages, answer questions not asked here, use a recorder to capture your story, or whatever means will best preserve your history.

*ACHS believes every person has a story worth preserving. Help preserve yours!*

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: These questions are simply a guide to get your started writing/typing your own history. If you would rather email your history to ACHS, send it to [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org) with the words MY HISTORY in the subject line.

## Your History

Where were you born and raised? If not in Anoka County, when did you come here and why?

What was your family like? (siblings, parents, others in the household)

Where did you attend school? Describe the school. What were classes like?

Did your family attend church? Which one? What was it like?

Where was your family home (address if possible)—describe it. Did you have a garden, how many bedrooms, did you share rooms, was the driveway long, where did you play, etc.

Do you work outside the home? Where and doing what? Why did you choose that?

What were/are your favorite things to do in Anoka County?

Tell us a story about your life in Anoka County. Be sure to identify people by their full names and give some dates, including the years.

When you have your story written, please mail or bring the form to:

Anoka County Historical Society  
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Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 6

November-December 2009

SERVING:

- Andover
- Anoka
- Bethel
- Blaine
- Centerville
- Circle Pines
- Columbia Heights
- Columbus
- Coon Rapids
- East Bethel
- Fridley
- Ham Lake
- Hilltop
- Lexington
- Lino Lakes
- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

## *Moving to Coon Rapids*

*By June Anderson*

The 1950s saw a population explosion in the village that would officially become the City of Coon Rapids by the end of the decade. What caused so many people to pull up stakes in the civilized world and move out to the boonies? Old time residents writing their stories for the Coon Rapids History project, "Fifty Stories for the Fifties" share their reasons.



Sharon Clark Marsolais's family moved into their new home in Coon Rapids in 1952. She remembers that when her father told her mother about the house he had purchased, she asked, "Where is Coon Rapids?" His answer was that it was between Fridley and Anoka. Her mother's response was, "I have lived in Northeast Minneapolis most of my life, and there is nothing between Fridley and Anoka." And, by many standards, she was not all that far wrong.

When Marie and Chuck Austin pulled up stakes and moved from Des Moines to Coon Rapids in 1960, it was similar to the pioneers heading west 100 years before. Coon Rapids had about 6,600 residents at that time living in several developed pockets across the community from Ghostly's Poultry Farm to Dingman's Horse Ranch up to Thompson Park and in Thompson Heights with lots of sand dunes and empty spots in between.

In 1955 Janet Rupprecht and her husband, Everett, were living in low-income housing in North Minneapolis. Their friends had just bought a new home in the Thompson Park, 1st Edition Housing Development for \$10,250 and they encouraged the Rupprechts to look at the houses in Coon Rapids so the Rupprechts could buy one and be their neighbors.

In 1960, when Jackie Dingley's husband was hired as a 6th grade teacher in the Anoka-Hennepin School District, they began to look for housing. While driving around Coon Rapids they came across the model homes in the "new" Thompson Heights development where Orin Thompson was building three-and-four bedroom ramblers. With prices so reasonable, they purchased a three-bedroom home.

In December of 1960, two months before they were married, Warren Woods and his wife bought their first home, a two-bedroom rambler with an attached garage on Partridge Street for the princely amount of \$12,350. Monthly payments of \$71.00 to the bank covered the principal, interest, tax escrow, and insurance expenses the first year.

### **The Orrin Thompson Construction Company**

The Orrin Thompson Construction Company announced a plan to build 600 tract homes in Coon Rapids in November of 1954. "Tract" housing in the 1950s and 1960s referred to the idea of a single builder laying out the streets and building many homes throughout that tract of land. To keep prices affordable, prospective buyers were given a limited choice of floor plans, usually only two or three different plans. There were a few options that could be added; but, for the most part, the houses looked very much alike. Since the developments were done on a large scale, the streets, lots sizes, boulevard trees and landscaping were also quite uniform. The first Orrin Thompson homes in Coon Rapids were built in the plat called "North Dale" but was later renamed Thompson Park.

The Orrin Thompson Company was recognized as one of the nation's outstanding builders in 1958. The firm sold more than 1,100 homes in the first eight months of 1958, an all-time record for this part of the country at that time.

The "Orrin Thompson era" in Coon Rapids lasted over 15 years and saw the completion of more than 4,000 homes in the community.

*Moving to Coon Rapids continues on page 6*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

(763) 421-0600

Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

Vice President—Tom Sherohman  
(District #4)

District #1—Patti Kurak

District #2 — Bill Prugh

District #3—Dick Johnson

District #5 — Jan Anderson

District #6—Judy Hanna

District #7—Bart Ward

At Large A—Lori Yager

At Large B—Dan Frank

At Large C—Tom Ward

At Large D—(vacant)

At-Large E — William Erhart

At-Large G — Catherine Vesley

At-Large H — Harvey Greenburg

County Commissioner Liaison—  
Dick Lang

### **Staff**

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

Program Manager—Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant—Pat Snodgrass

Volunteer Coordinator—Maria King

Curator Projects—Marilyn Anderson

Office Staff—Gail Dahl, Carol Dordan,  
Don Johnson, Alan Santoro,  
Pat Montgomery

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director...**

*By Todd Mahon*

### ***Anoka County's History is Community History***

On December 1, the Anoka County Historical Society is opening our newest exhibit *Tell Me a Story*. It's the perfect partner for another event happening that same evening, the presentation of ornaments to ACHS's holiday tree from East Bethel and Coon Rapids. Both cities are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their incorporation. It's a wonderful occasion to consider the importance of community history in Anoka County.

It's fair to say that the stories and families in the legal boundaries of each city have little connection to the dates that they satisfied Minnesota statutes and incorporated. I don't deny the extra services and legal powers that a city has doesn't attract larger populations and enable development and all of the other things associated with growing communities. But referring to Coon Rapids and East Bethel history is really just short hand for the stories of the individuals that contributed to and built those areas, regardless of where the boundary lines were drawn and when it happened. I am as guilty of this short hand as anyone else is. How many times have I, for brevity's sake, referred to Anoka County as being made up of 21 cities and townships? It's an easy—and often necessary—thing to do. But let's never forget that the county is made up of people. And those people form groups, organizations, and those things we generalize as "community."

So as these cities celebrate their 50th anniversaries, let's take the opportunity to remember and tell the stories that make up what we casually refer to as Coon Rapids and East Bethel. Read June Anderson's front page article, *Moving To Coon Rapids* to get those reminiscing and sharing juices started—and then share those stories in the *Tell Me a Story* exhibit!

## **From the President...**

*By Paul Pierce, III*

ACHS is now at work on a new exhibit. You probably remember the yellow flyers in the previous newsletters and this exhibit will take that request to share your story for our archives to a higher level.

It is called, *Tell Me A Story* and it will open on December 1<sup>st</sup> at 7pm, featuring stories of people from Anoka County and displaying the artifacts we have in our collection that are associated with those stories.

We will share some of our best stories and artifacts from the society's 75 years of existence. Like our A-Z exhibit, we have so many great things that we will swap items on a regular basis, so you have to keep visiting the museum to keep up with its changes.

One unique feature of this new exhibit will be a "soundproof" booth with a set up you can use to share your story and the equipment will record it for our archives. Bring in someone to interview—like Mom, or Grandpa, or your first boss, the neighbor, your babysitter. Ask them what is the most important experience or event they have witnessed and tell us all about it.

Our historical society was formed because a small group of people recognized the tragedy of so many stories being lost as the old pioneers of our county passed away and their stories were gone forever.

That problem didn't go away when the last pioneer or last veteran of the Civil War passed away. We have all witnessed or lived through important events that need to be recorded and saved by the Anoka County Historical Society. Fill out that yellow flyer and stop into our new exhibit to give us your story to share with posterity.

# The Story of an Artifact by Vickie Wendel

With as many great stories as we have with our artifacts at ACHS, we don't usually repeat a story in the newsletter; but this time, we want to make an exception as this story now has a very happy ending. It started with the collection project we have been working on all year. We have been trying to find provenance for the artifacts in our collections and sort out those things that were never meant to be in the collection in the first place. In the March/April issue, we described finding a hand-quilted petticoat with no provenance and, by following some leads, we were able to make a connection to an Anoka County family, even though we did not know much about the actual wearer of the petticoat. Because of the project and as a result of that article, we now have the rest of the story!



One of our new ACHS members, Diane Resvick, saw the article about the petticoat and contacted us for more information. Research indicates the petticoat belonged to her great-great-great-grandmother! Diane was able to provide a good deal more information about the woman who put her name in the petticoat. The name in the petticoat, which we thought was Maria or Marion, *is* Maria. She was born Maria Ann Van O'Linda in Cohoes, Albany County, New York, on April 5, 1812. On the 4th of July in 1829, Maria married George Geddes. George, too, was from New York, born there in 1811. George and Maria remained in New York until 1843, when the family moved to Will County, Illinois, an area north of Chicago.

George, Maria, and the children lived in Homer, Will County, Illinois, during the 1850 census. George farmed and Maria, called Mary on the census, kept house.

By the 1860 census, George and—now the census called her Mary Ann—lived in the town of Frankfort, Will County, Illinois. Exactly when they moved is unknown; but by 1870, they lived in Lockport and the children were all gone from home. Only a person listed as a servant lived with them. George must have scaled back on his farming as the 1870 census lists his occupation as a gardener rather than a farmer. Mary's name on this census was Mary, not Mary Ann. By then, their son, John, was living in Lockport, and they may have moved into town to be near him as both Maria and George were getting on in years. John ran a meat market in Lockport. Maria died in 1877, George in 1892, and both are buried in Lockport.

George and Maria's third son, George, Jr., somehow ended up with his mother's petticoat. George, Jr., moved to Anoka in 1869 and ran a grocery store. He may have brought the petticoat with him or received it later, perhaps after his mother died. That part of the story is still unknown. George, Jr., became known as George, Sr., after he moved to Anoka, married, and named his own son, George. A second son was named Thomas Timothy. He was known as T.T. in Anoka; he ran the Colburn-Hilliard men's clothing store. Anoka's George, Sr., died in 1889 and rests in Anoka's Forest Hill Cemetery. It was probably either T.T. or George, Jr., who gave their grandmother's quilted petticoat to the ACHS. It was a very early acquisition, and "everyone knew" whose petticoat it was, so the story was not written down. That information, unfortunately, did not carry through. In 2009, ACHS had a petticoat with only a hint of its real story still attached.

Thanks to Diane, we now have a lot of the story behind this precious artifact. Just recently, she came in to see the petticoat that belonged to her great-great-great-grandmother just recently and made a generous donation to cover the costs of boxing and preserving the petticoat. She took photos of it for her family history, and we took some photos of her with the petticoat, too, to add Diane's chapter to this wonderful tale that is indeed, a "happily-ever-after" story!



Diane Resvick with her great-great-great-grandmother's hand-quilted petticoat. Staff at ACHS is always happy to bring out a family artifact for the next generations to see. (Please call to make an appointment.)

# New Exhibit Opening on December 1!

## *Tell Me A Story*

**December 1  
7:00 pm!**

This very fun exhibit is about the stories we all have and how important it is to preserve those stories. Artifacts in this exhibit were chosen with an eye to the story they tell about the person who used it. Artifacts include a drum first played during the Revolutionary War, a kayak that took its rider down the Mississippi and past the Statue of Liberty in New York, the quilted petticoat owned by Maria Geddes, the Coopers Corner desk, and more great stories of Anoka County's people.

The focal point of the exhibit is a "story booth" where visitors can tell their stories into a recorder, either alone or in an interview style with a family member or friend to preserve a little of who we are in 2009. This is the place to ask Grandpa about his experiences working at Medtronic or Mom about the way she felt as the first woman on a project team. Get the story about your neighbor, who ran for city council, to see what they wanted to accomplish; leave behind a special story about life in Anoka County for generations not even born yet. We all have stories, and this is your opportunity to get those incredible stories out of Grandma, Sister, Best Friend, and preserve their story for future generations! It's an incredible legacy—yours for the leaving!

### *New County Library Resource at ACHS Dedication!*

The Anoka County Library and The Anoka County Historical Society collaborated to create a permanent reference collection with an emphasis on local history, genealogy, and other subjects of regional interest. This collection, created to better serve the needs of the community, will be housed in the heart of Anoka at the Anoka County History Center.

The Anoka County Library and the Anoka County History Center and Library extend an open invitation to the dedication of this collection on Tuesday, December 1st at 7:00 pm. Be among the first to explore this new collection!

### *Anoka County Historical Society Keeping History for 75 years!*

What a milestone to know ACHS has been working to keep this county's history for 75 years! We've seen so many changes in Anoka County—transitioning from an agricultural to today when there are only a handful of farms left. We changed how we keep history—from a display cabinet at the courthouse to a modern History Center with award winning exhibits!

Celebrate and remember some of the milestones along the way as we look back and reflect on how we have kept our county history and what the future holds in the next 75 years!

Everyone on hand for this special commemorative event will receive a booklet with highlights from 1934 to today, looking back at where ACHS has been and to the future of where our history will take us next!

### *TWO Holiday Ornaments in 2009!*

Two of our county communities are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their incorporation in 2009—Coon Rapids and East Bethel! City officials and community members from both will present 2009 ornaments for the Anoka County Holiday Tree on Tuesday evening, December 1, 2009, at 7:00 p.m., at the Anoka County History Center.

This holiday season is the fourteenth annual "Anoka County Holiday Tree" celebration at the Anoka County Historical Society. Just as each state is invited to provide the National Christmas Tree in Washington, each community in Anoka County is invited in turn to provide an ornament for the County Tree. Each ornament reflects a unique aspect of its community along with the year of presentation. Many ornaments on the tree are uniquely handcrafted and one-of-a-kind, each telling a story from the community it represents.

These ornaments are not shown to anyone until the ornament is presented on December 1st, so come get in on the surprise!



The ornament presented by the City of Nowthen in 2008. It was created by Nowthen resident, Joel Greenberg, and features elegantly embossed wood images of old and new from Nowthen.

## Up To Date

### Announcements and News

◆Just a reminder that the November 12 and December 10 ACHS Board of Directors meetings will be at 6:00 p.m. All are held at the History Center. Board meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome.

◆ACHS was honored to be invited to the Wisconsin Historical Society's History Conference to present a workshop on our *Vietnam: The Veterans Experience* exhibit on October 9-10. Their goal is to have local Wisconsin history organizations work with Vietnam veterans to capture these stories and share them with the public in meaningful ways. Our exhibit was held up as an example of superior history and community involvement!



### Volunteer News

By Maria King, Volunteer Coordinator

By the time you read this, the Ghost Tours will be over; and once again, our fantastic volunteers have come through!

ACHS led over 40 tours *just in October*, and our incredible volunteer tour guides made it all possible! Veteran Gary Greb alone has done 18 tours; and June Anderson, who was new last year, has come through with 11 tours to her credit. Darlene Bearl, Jeri Bates, Faith Kammerdeiner, Lynne Rickert, Ellen Ward, and Ann Steen have all helped out too! Because tours average 25 people each, it is clear that the Ghosts of Anoka tours are an effective outreach. A heartfelt thank you goes out to each tour guide!

Volunteers, you can catch your breath on Ghost Tours until next spring—but we'll be calling on you this winter for other projects, too, as history never stands still around here!

### And the winner is...!

Maria King made a Double Irish Chain quilt for the Harvest Time Barn Dance raffle this year. The Irish Chain, or in this case the Double Irish Chain, is a very traditional pattern common in the United States at the start of the 19th century. Resurgence in popularity came in the 1980s, when author, Eleanor Burns, streamlined the cutting and sewing process for her series entitled, "Quilt in a Day." Maria says it took more than a day!

Maria used scraps given to her three years ago by her friend, Judy Frank, an avid sewer of clothes, pajamas, and costumes for her grandchildren. The scraps did not include enough of any one fabric, but by grouping similar shades and textures, Maria was able to give the illusion of a uniform color. The fancy border, called a "Seminole" border, required very precise placement so the points meet at the corners of the quilt.

Here's the irony—when the name was drawn from the raffle box, who do you suppose won? Judy Frank! I guess "what goes around, comes around!"

Congratulations, Judy!

## Northstar Rail Inaugural Ride!



The long-anticipated Northstar Commuter rail service is set to begin! ACHS was asked to provide history for the special station celebration at the inaugural ride event, set for November 14.

That day, each station will have a special train for its stop to take people on a ride to the Minneapolis

station and back. Since tickets are limited, it was decided to hold a random drawing for these coveted tickets. More than 5,000 people entered the drawing for a ride on that first day! All ticket winners were notified by mail by October 26th. If you did not get tickets, don't despair! Attend the inaugural event at your local station on November 14, when each suburban station will have a limited number of additional tickets for distribution on a first-come, first-served basis. The Northstar's grand opening has been anticipated for a very long time and you are invited to be there to celebrate!

Continued from Page 1



Arlene Cook's "starter" house, 1956.

Arlene Cook and her husband bought a little "starter" home on 108th Avenue in the Village of Coon Rapids in 1956. She writes; "All our friends thought we were crazy to move 'way out in the boonies.' Little did I think at the time that more than half a century later I would still be living in the same house."



Arlene Cook's "starter" house 2009.

These new neighborhoods were unique in that they were made up of young people, all about the same age, all buying their first home. Since few women worked outside the home at that time, lifelong friendships were formed. Many of the people who purchased homes in Coon Rapids during that era are now retiring in them.

## *Celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Coon Rapids at the* **CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS** **IN COON RAPIDS**

*For one day, Coon Rapids is going back in time to what Christmas was like during the Civil War. Visit a Civil War camp inside the Coon Rapids Center to share the day with soldiers and their families getting ready for Christmas in 1864. Share the day with them!*

### **Join Soldiers and Ladies to:**

- Experience a Civil War Camp*
- Visit with Soldiers of the Civil War*
- Attend a Special Presentation on the History of Christmas – 1:00*
- Participate in Cannon Drills*
- Learn Lincoln's Connection to Anoka County*
- Make Christmas Arts and Crafts*
- Visit with Santa - 2:30*
- Sing Period Christmas Carols*



*Lincoln's 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday*  
1709- 2009



**Saturday, December 5**  
**11:00 am to 5:00 pm**  
**COON RAPIDS CITY CENTER**  
**11155 Robinson Drive**



Admission:  
Adults—\$2.00  
Children 6-17 years—\$1.00

*Presented by the Coon Rapids Historical and Arts Commissions with assistance from the Anoka County Historical Society. For more information, please call (763) 421-0600.*



# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

(All lists are current to Oct. 28, 2009.)

## Welcome New Members!

Debbie Clark - Andover  
Michael J. MacIntyre-Andover  
Serhy & Marcia Matushenko - Anoka  
Linda & Ralph Potter-Ramsey  
Joann Sivertson - Anoka  
Ron Sorensen - Ham Lake  
Roxanne Tersteeg - Ramsey

## DONATIONS

Robert W. Akin II  
Sandra Karasch  
Lyle and Elsie Elverud

## MATCHING GIFTS

Ameriprise Financial/Dan Frank

## BARN DANCE SPONSORSHIP

Bank of Elk River  
Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd.  
Lee Carlson's Main Motors  
Superior Heating, Air Conditioning  
& Electric, Inc

## ARTIFACT DONORS

Robert Blewett  
Diane Buganski  
Maria King  
William S. Lundberg  
Robert Lynn  
Alice Packer  
Bert Runquist

## SPECIAL GIFTS

In Honor of William and Virginia Ridge on  
their 60th wedding anniversary.  
Given by Roger and Dorothy Carlson

## BARN DANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Advanced Automotive Care  
All About Dogs & Cats  
All About Yarn  
Anderson Lanes  
The Artique  
Lyle Anderson  
Andover Cinema  
Anoka County  
Anoka County Historical Society  
Anoka County Sheriff's Office  
Anoka County Parks and Recreation  
Anoka Ind. Grain & Feed  
Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts  
Dennis Berg  
Better Values Liquor Store  
Billy's Bar & Grill, Anoka  
Billy's Neighborhood Bar & Grill,  
St. Francis  
Bridge Street Coffee Box  
Shirley Christenson  
Jane Comee  
County Market  
Cub Foods  
Devon's Gardens

Carol Dordan  
The Front Porch  
Furniture & Things  
Gerdin Auto & Tire  
Grand Casino  
Great Lakes Aquarium  
Green Haven  
Greenberg Implement  
Guthrie Theater  
Hair Designer's of Blaine  
Hakanson Anderson Associates, Inc.  
Heights Theatre  
Jam Hops Gymnastics, Dance & Cheer  
James Peterson Company  
Joe's Barber Shop  
Keys Café  
Tom and Patti Kurak  
Lake County Historical Society  
Maria King  
Todd Mahon and Nicole Theis-Mahon  
Gen Meyer  
Mickman Brothers  
Midwest Comic Book Association  
MinnCo Credit Union  
Minnesota Orchestra  
Minnesota Opera  
Minnesota Twins Community Relations  
Minnesota Twins Fastbreak Foundation  
Moon Rock Bar & Grill  
Muller Family Theatres - East Bethel 10  
Northgate Liquors  
O'Reilly Auto Parts  
Paul's Barber Shop  
Al Pearson  
Plymouth Playhouse  
Ponds Golf Course  
Eileen Rathbun  
River City Saloon  
Rum River Inn  
St. Francis American Legion  
St. Francis Barbershop  
St. Francis Bottle Shop  
St. Francis Foods  
Sammy Perrella's Pizza and Restaurant  
Sarna's Classic Grill in Columbia Heights  
Joyce Schmidt  
Serum's in Anoka  
The Service Garage of Blaine  
Lois Spadgenske  
Wes Spadgenske  
Stages Theatre Company in Hopkins  
Natalie Haas Steffen  
Target  
Tasty Pizza  
Theatre in the Round  
Lael Theis  
Sandy Thorsen  
TopLine Credit Union  
True Value Hardware in St. Francis  
Truffles & Tortes  
Twin Cities Comics  
Catherine Vesley  
Village Bank  
Wells Fargo  
Amanda Wendel  
Vickie Wendel  
Shirley Ziegler

## ***Barn Dance Wrap-up***

The Anoka County Historical Society would like to offer a big **thank you** to everyone who made the 2009 Harvest Time Barn Dance a success! The event raised over \$10,000 for the Historical Society's general operations.

The ACHS Special Events Committee worked extra hard this year to find sponsors, great auction items, and make the commercial building at the fairgrounds look great. A special thanks for decorating goes out to Sam Hermanstorfer, Ray Steinke, Jan Anderson, Paul Pierce, and Cathy Glynn. Al Pearson of Ramsey kindly loaned well over 100 straw bales; Darren Jensen, of Anoka's Devon's Gardens, created a charming display; and Anoka County Commissioner, Dennis Berg, of Nowthen, brought dozens of gourds and corn shocks.

The evening began with a great harvest meal from Those Pork Chops. Dinner included music from Buggy Whipp. After dinner, Buggy Whipp brought the crowd into the next room with a few songs before a special presentation. ACHS Program Manager Vickie Wendel was recognized by Executive Director Todd Mahon and Commissioner Berg for her 20 years of service to the Historical Society. A short video about Vickie and her work was shown after the presentation.

From there we rolled into the live auction. Auctioneer Steve Brastead coaxed high bids and pried open tight wallets as we auctioned off ten live auction items, including dinners, travel packages, a preview trip on the Northstar Commuter Rail, and tickets to the final Minnesota Twins game at the Metrodome. After the live auction was over the evening was turned over to Buggy Whipp and twelve tables of silent auction items.

This is likely the final year for the Harvest Time Barn Dance. The Special Events Committee is planning on a **new** fall event next year! We hope you'll join us next fall.

Please join us in thanking our sponsors for this year's event. Without their support the Barn Dance could not happen. Main Motors was our presenting sponsor for the second year in a row. Barna, Guzy & Steffen; Village Bank; BOB 106; the Bank of Elk River; and North Country Ford, Lincoln, Mercury joined us again, and Minnco Credit Union and Superior Heating, Air Conditioning, and Electric were first-time sponsors this year.

Hats off to salute a fantastic event we can all be proud of!

# Coming Events

## November 25, 12:00 noon to 1:00

## Celebrating PIE!

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) Bring your favorite holiday pie for all to sample as we share stories and history about this holiday favorite! Since it's the day before Thanksgiving, pie is the perfect choice of topic to discuss. Many people will be baking pies for the big meal the next day, so bake one early, take a break and join us for some fun history about pies during this informal discussion. The format is a roundtable discussion where everyone is welcome to share their own stories about PIES they've made or eaten. It's okay to eat dessert before your lunch—after all, time never stands still and you'd hate to miss out on dessert! We'll provide the coffee, but no one is allowed to count carbs at this special lunch time history event.

## December 1, 7:00 p.m.

## County Holiday Ornament Presentation

## Tell Me a Story Exhibit Opens

## ACHS Celebrates 75 Years

## New County Library Collection Dedication

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) Wow, what a night it's going to be! Two communities present their ornament for the County Tree, we celebrate 75 years of keeping history at ACHS, a new exhibit opens, AND the Anoka County Library will be dedicating a special new collection housed at the History Center! It all starts at 7:00! The new exhibit involves *you*, so come prepared to tell *your* story! See page 4 for more details.

## December 5

## Civil War Christmas Celebration in Coon Rapids

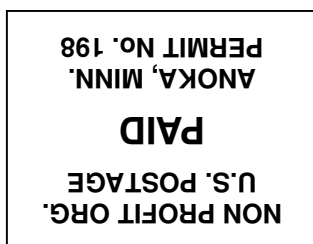
(Coon Rapids City Center, 11155 Robinson Drive.) What was this celebration like in Anoka County in the 1860s? Did they put up a Christmas tree in their homes? Did they send gifts to the soldiers serving in the Civil War? Come to this special event and learn more about one of America's favorite holidays. Admission is \$1 for student 6-17 and \$2 for adults. See page 6 for more info.

## November 19 and 21

## American Girl Christmas Tea Party

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) Come to the History Center for a tea party to discuss the *American Girl* story and to learn more about daily life in Anoka County during that time period. Celebrate the season with Julie, the American Girl of the 1970s. Activities highlight experiences that would be familiar to girls during these turbulent times in Anoka County. Girls, their dolls, and the grown-ups share a tea party to wrap up the event. **Reservations required.** Thursday evening, November 19th, and several sessions on Saturday, November 21st. Ask for times when making reservations. Tickets for girls are \$7, adult tickets are \$10. Dolls attend free!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600

# New Exhibit Opening on December 1!

## *Tell Me A Story*

**December 1  
7:00 pm!**

This very fun exhibit is all about the stories we all have and how important it is to preserve those stories. Artifacts in this exhibit were chosen with an eye to the story they tell about the person who used it and include a drum first played during the Revolutionary War, a kayak that took its rider down the Mississippi and past the Statue of Liberty in New York, the quilted petticoat owned by Maria Geddes, the Coopers Corner desk, and more great stories of Anoka County's people.

The focal point of the exhibit is a "story booth" where visitors can tell their stories to a recorder, either alone or in an interview style with a family member or friend, and give the future a little more insight to who we are in 2009. This is the place to ask Grandpa about his experiences working at Medtronics or Mom about the way she felt as the first woman on a project team. Get the story about your neighbor who ran for city council to see what they wanted to accomplish; leave behind a special story about life in Anoka County for generations not even born yet. We all have stories and this is your opportunity to get those incredible stories out of Grandma, Sister, Best Friend and preserve their story for future generations! It's an incredible legacy—yours for the leaving!

### *New County Library Resource at ACHS Dedication!*

The Anoka County Library and The Anoka County Historical Society have worked in collaboration to create a permanent reference collection with an emphasis on local history, genealogy, and other subjects of regional interest. This collection, created to better serve the needs of the community, will be housed in the heart of Anoka at the Anoka County History Center.

The Anoka County Library is extending an open invitation to the dedication of this collection on Tuesday, December 1st at 7:00 pm. Be among the first to explore this new collection!

### *Anoka County Historical Society Keeping History for 75 years!*

What a milestone to know ACHS has been working to keep this county's history for 75 years! We've seen so many changes in the county—from mostly agricultural to only a handful of farms left—and in how we keep history—a display cabinet at the courthouse to a modern History Center with award winning exhibits!

Celebrate and remember some of the milestones along the way as we look back and reflect on how we have kept our county history and what the future holds in the next 75 years!

Everyone on hand for this special commemorative event will receive booklet with highlights from 1934 to today, looking both back at where ACHS has been and to the future of where our history will take us next!

### *TWO Holiday Ornaments in 2009!*

Two of our county communities are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their incorporation in 2009—Coon Rapids and East Bethel! City officials and community members from both communities will present 2009 ornaments for the Anoka County Holiday Tree on Tuesday evening, December 1, 2009, at 7:00 p.m., at the Anoka County History Center.

This holiday season is the fourteenth annual "Anoka County Holiday Tree" celebration at the Anoka County Historical Society. Just as each state is invited in turn to provide the National Christmas Tree in Washington, each community in Anoka County is invited in turn to provide an ornament for the County Tree. Each ornament reflects a unique aspect of its community, along with the year of presentation. Many ornaments on the tree are uniquely handcrafted and one of a kind, each telling a story from the community they represent.

These ornaments are not shown to anyone until the ornament is presented on December 1st, so come get in on the surprise!



The ornament presented by the City of Nowthen in 2008. It was created by Nowthen resident Joel Greenberg and features elegantly embossed wood images of old and new from Nowthen.