



History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 42 No. 3

May – June 2012

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Honoring Anoka County's Longest Serving Sheriff

By Todd Mahon, Executive Director

Anoka County's longest serving sheriff was Ralph "Buster" Talbot. He was elected by the people of Anoka County in six consecutive elections between 1962 and 1982. He retired at the end of his four-year term in 1986. But he may have never been in that position had it not been for his appointment to the position of sheriff by the Anoka County board in the fall of 1960.

In October of that year, Sheriff Mike Auspos informed the county board that he would retire on December 1, 1960, with two years remaining in his elected term. Sheriff Auspos was a larger-than-life figure in the county with many press accounts of his high speed chases, shootouts, and his physical stature, turning him into a figure of near mythological proportions.

The task of replacing the legendary Auspos fell to the five-member Anoka County Board of Commissioners. In his letter of resignation, Auspos gave his endorsement and recommendation to Irv Barrett, a deputy in the office. Commissioners Gus Johnson and Fred Knodt supported Barrett for sheriff; Johnson was the chair of the board. The only other name that received any serious consideration was Talbot's.

When asked about what his thoughts were on the possibility of him serving as sheriff Talbot said, "I was young and cocky and I thought 'why not?'" Talbot explained how he and Barrett had discussed the issue of them both wanting to be the next Anoka County Sheriff. "I told him if I got it, I wanted him to work for me and if he got it, I would work for him."

Talbot had the support of Commissioner Ed Fields. Commissioner Al Kordiak knew he would have to work with whomever was appointed sheriff. He had a man from Columbia Heights who he preferred, but he couldn't get support from any of the other commissioners for his candidate. He felt both Barrett and Talbot were capable men and could handle the job, so he was interested in supporting the winner of the board vote. The unknown vote belonged to Commissioner Mervale Stinson.

How the final vote played out was effected by the board's rules of procedure and Kordiak's political canniness. On the day the vote was to take place, Knodt made a motion to appoint Barrett. As chair, Johnson was unable to second the motion and none of the other three commissioners offered to second the motion. Then Stinson made a motion to appoint Talbot and Fields seconded it. The standard was to vote in order of district



Sheriff Buster Talbot at his desk, ca.1970s.

numbers. Knodt, representing district #1 voted no. Johnson, representing district #2 voted no, and Ed Fields, representing district #3 voted yes. Next came Kordiak, representing district #4.

Kordiak was still uncertain what Stinson's final vote would be, despite the fact that it was Stinson who had made the motion to appoint Talbot. If Kordiak voted for Talbot and Stinson voted no, then Kordiak would have voted on the losing side. Instead he chose to hold his vote—the only time in his 32 year career that he would do so. Stinson held true to his motion and voted for Talbot, which gave Kordiak the chance to break the tie and give Talbot the 3-2 vote.

The citizens of Anoka County would have their say on Talbot's qualifications two years later when he ran on the ballot in 1962. He was elected in a landslide—his first of many during his 26 years serving as Anoka County's top law officer.

The Anoka County Historical Society will hold a recognition dinner for Buster Talbot on Thursday, September 20, 2012. Watch for more details in the coming months. If you would like to help or participate in some way, contact Todd Mahon, ACHS Executive Director, at 763-421-0600 or todd@ac-hs.org.

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

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History Center Hours:

Tuesday 10-8

Wednesday-Friday 10-5

Saturday 10-4

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Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

From the Director...

By Todd Mahon

Volunteers Make ACHS Happen

The month of April is National Volunteer Month, and it is the perfect time to reflect on the state of volunteerism at the Anoka County Historical Society. For our part, ACHS celebrated the month by holding a luncheon for our volunteers that have been with us for ten years or more and held our Volunteer Appreciation Day for all of our volunteers.

It was incredibly gratifying to get so many of our volunteers together in one room. I'll admit, even for me, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture of what our volunteers provide. Our volunteers work in many different areas of our organization. They catalog newspaper and magazine articles in our clippings file, they scan and create records for the photographs in the collections, they conduct tours, they help researchers in the library, they build in the exhibit hall, and so much more.

Each of these smaller things adds up to a larger whole that is the high quality service and programming that ACHS provides. Bit by bit and piece by piece, 125 different ACHS volunteers gave 5,164 hours in 2011. That is the equivalent of two and a half full-time employees. What an incredible way to extend the resources of ACHS.

Those of us that volunteer all do it for our own reasons. For some of us, it's a personal connection to the mission of the organization. For others, it is a bond with the people that we work alongside, whether it be other volunteers or the staff. It's no different with our volunteers. Some are here because they love our mission and want to promote Anoka County's history. Others have formed deep friendships and bonds that surpass the mission (I am happy to count many of our volunteers among my personal friends). Whatever the reason, we're happy to have each and every one of our volunteers support us with their valuable time.

I've written it before in these columns, and said it to our volunteers, but I never overlook the gift of time given to the Historical Society. We all have busy lives and each of only get 24 hours in the day. To give any of that precious time to us will forever be appreciated. We all have different capacities to give financial gifts, but no one person has any more time in the day, week, or month than anyone else does. To give some of that precious commodity to us is a true gift.

Thank you to all of our volunteers.

From the President...

By Al Pearson

Over the years I have had the opportunity to do some unusual jobs, one of which I'd like to tell you about now. It involved history in a way I never expected.

About ten years ago, I was asked to restore a 1944 Russian army tank. This was a very well-known and deadly tank during WWII. This particular tank was said to have been captured by the Germans, moved to Poland and the insignias changed to German so they could use for the rest of the war. It somehow wound up in Missouri where our neighbor bought it. It took a considerable trouble to find a truck that could haul something that heavy. The permits for that type of load were a nightmare to get. I had told the owner if he could get the tank to our farm my son, Dan, and I would see what we could do with it to get it running again.

The owners plan was to operate a business called Tank Ride.com, where for \$100.00, a person could have a ride and shoot the guns.

He got it to us and we got the tank running. We painted it with the German markings and mounted two 30 caliber machine guns. Then we designed and installed a gas-oxygen devise in the canon barrel.

On the evening we were going to try out the cannon, the tank was sitting in front of my shop facing US Hwy 10 and the Links Golf Course. Dan put 3 seconds of gas and oxygen in the barrel and fired it. It worked, but we didn't think the report was impressive enough. I told Dan, "Try 10 seconds and I'll add some diesel fuel for a little realistic smoke effect."

WOW!

That rocked the tank with 10 feet of flames and smoke from that cannon!

There happened to be two ladies on the golf course ready to tee off just as we fired. They called the police and reported there were two lunatics shooting across the highway at them. So, the realism was unique and that did become the standard—after we explained to the police what we were doing!

My 14 year old grandson, Doug, helped us fix the tank and started running it for the owner at his business site. So, for the price, six people could ride in the tank and shoot the guns in a simulated battlefield in a rock quarry/gravel pit.

This was a really fun project and certainly gave us—and anyone who rides in the tank—a new perspective on what combat in such a vehicle might have been like. That's history you don't get from a book.

The Story of an Artifact

Prom History

By Caitlin Frey

Prom night has become an iconic rite of passage for many American teenagers, but in the late 19th century, it was an occasion reserved for an elite few. In many ways, the history of prom tells the story of the growth of the middle class and the increasing democratization of the nation's schools.

Here in Anoka County, the prom took hold in the 1940s and 1950s, but it evolved out of an earlier tradition, the Junior-Senior Banquet, that dated back to the 1910s.

"Prom" is short for "promenade" which was the procession into a debutante ball that high-society girls would complete in order to present themselves to society (and signal that they were ready for marriage). Around the turn of the century, colleges and universities took to throwing their own dances with "proms" that mimicked the debutante balls of the upper crust. While college students came from well-to-do families at this time, they were not necessarily from the highest echelon of society, so the prom became just a little more democratic. Eventually, students' use of the term "prom" to describe the entire dance – as opposed to just the march – would stick and become the popular usage we know today.

During the first decades of the 20th century, proms took hold in the high schools as more students began seeking an education beyond the eighth grade. This happened for several reasons. First, social reformers sought to make public education available to more students in an effort to Americanize the growing number of immigrants coming into the country. Second, with the growth of a middle class, more families could afford to let their children stay in school instead of joining the workforce – whether on the farm or in the factory.

This was true in Anoka County, where a new high school opened in Saint Francis in 1914, providing an opportunity for children in the northern half of the county to continue their education



The 1965 Prom in St. Francis.

without commuting to Anoka. Part of the effort to get both working- and middle-class students involved in school was to teach them "acceptable" social behaviors. Dances and banquets that imitated the upper class provided just such lessons in social etiquette, while also giving students a chance to have some fun.

In Anoka, high school students had a chance to show off their finest manners and clothes at the Junior-Senior Banquet. This event is documented in yearbooks as far back as 1911. The Junior class was responsible for selecting a theme, hosting the banquet, and giving a program of entertainment for the seniors. Decorating themes ranged from "Japanese" to "Dutch" and "Pirate" to "Night Club." The first banquets were held in February of each year, but during the 1920s, the date switched to the early May season that we now associate with prom. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the banquet was held in varying venues across Anoka, including the Masonic Temple and the Knights of Columbus Hall. With the onset of the Depression, the banquet was moved to the school gymnasium.

Continued on page 6



A Junior-Senior Banquet dress, ca. 1930s.



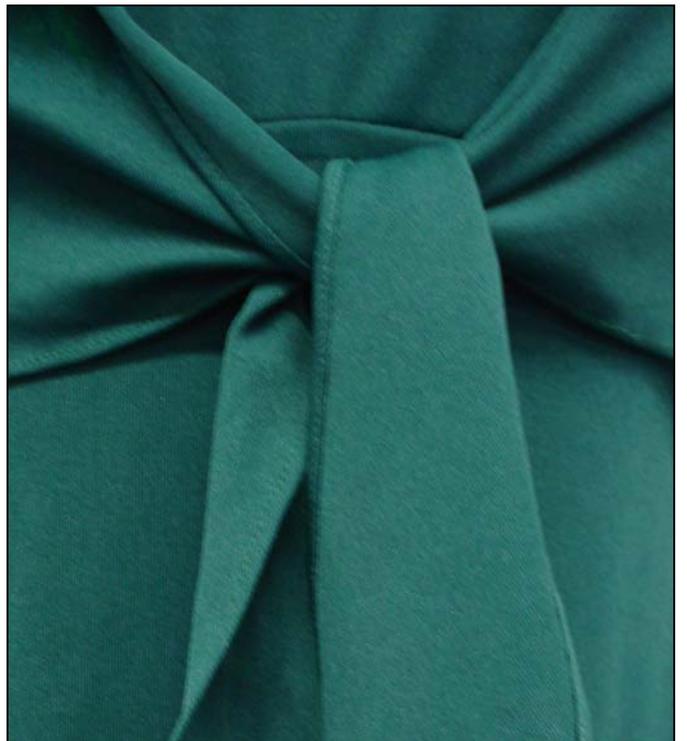
Anoka High School Prom, 1961.



Clothing the County

Fashion for Every Occasion

Join us on May 1 at 7:00pm for the opening of our newest exhibition featuring more than two dozen garments from the permanent collections.



Preserving Your Textiles

Now that our past and present exhibits have everyone thinking about preserving even recent garments, quilts, and other textiles, it is time to share some tips about how to care for and preserve those precious textiles we all have.

Clothing, quilts, towels, blankets, anything made from any kind of cloth can be considered a textile. Most textiles can be treated in the same ways for preservation purposes. The tips here are meant to be a guide to home preservation, not a professional conservator's assessment.

In his book, *Saving Stuff*, by Don Williams, a senior conservator at the Smithsonian Institute, he says to think of your textile like you think of Grandma. You wouldn't leave Grandma closed up in a hot car on a summer day, would you? Or put her in an unheated garage over winter? Or let the dog chew on her? Of course not! Williams says you should treat your precious textiles the same way you would treat Grandma.

- Always keep your special textiles in a clean, moderate environment (not too hot, too cold, too dry, or too damp).
- Resist using or wearing heirlooms. Use for display only.
- Rotate the textiles on display every six to nine months.
- Limit exposure to sunlight, bright lights, and fluorescent bulbs.
- Use acid-free tissue paper and boxes or tubs* for storage.
- Watch for insect infestations!
- Consult with a textile conservator before washing or repairing.
- Wood (i.e. in trunks, cedar chests, dresser drawers) releases acids that can damage fibers. If you want to use a wooden storage container, line it with Mylar (Mylar is a trade name for an inert, clear polyester based plastic sheeting. It is safe for most archival uses). You need to protect your items from the wood, which will off-gas and discolor your textile.
- Rolling smaller textiles can eliminate fold lines. Separate items from each other with cotton sheeting or acid-free paper.
- Plan folds so that any previous fold lines are not used repeatedly.
- Plan size to fit in your box (not too loosely, not too tightly).
- Do not use plastic bags! Cotton or muslin storage bags make excellent dust covers. Cotton sheets can be used to make a storage bag. Do not bleach or use harsh detergents when preparing your cotton sheeting for a storage bag. Rinse it well to remove all residues.
- Air your textiles once or twice a year. Spread them out flat in a low light, fresh air area.

- When displayed, hang the textile so that stress of its own weight is evenly distributed across the entire width of the item. Displaying textiles flat, such as on a bed is the best way to show off the item without stress on the fabric. Avoid beds near windows, especially south facing windows. When the item is not being viewed, put a clean white sheet over it to protect it from dust and light. Make sure the dog/cat is not allowed in this room!

Did you note that * next to the “tubs” as a storage container? There are many kinds of plastic boxes for storage available and not all of them are bad. Certain kinds can be excellent storage containers, but choose carefully! Before you buy a tub for storage, look for the plastic code (recycling code). Codes 1, 2, 4, or 5 are okay, but 5 is the best.

Those plastic codes identify what chemicals are used in the manufacturing of the plastic. The most common plastics are:



PETE polyethylene terephthalate, code #1. This kind of plastic is often found in peanut butter jars as it is an excellent oxygen barrier, necessary to keep peanut butter fresh. It will also slow down the tarnish on your silverware.



HDPE High density polyethelene, code #2. This is the very dense, harder kind of foam often found in packing materials.



LDPE low density polyethelene, code #4 is also used in packing materials, but has a more foamier feel to it. Neither will feel like the brittle “Styrofoam” we are so familiar with. That is another chemical and not appropriate for any kind of archival use.



Polypropylene, code #5, is the plastic used in most quality storage tubs such as Rubbermaid or Sterlite.

Plastics with the #3 code are usually polyvinyls and are NOT APPROPRIATE for archival uses. Vinyl off-gasses and many materials can be damaged by this off-gassing. Think new car smell. That is most likely off-gassing from the vinyls used to make that new car. Plastic tubs are especially good if your area is prone to moisture (floods), but be careful in areas of high humidity. Trapping too much humidity inside a plastic tub is a recipe for mold.

While this certainly is not a complete list for preserving a special prom dress, great grandma's quilt, or a christening gown, following the tips presented here will help preserve those textiles for generations to come, making them true heirlooms. If you have further questions, please call ACHS and we'll be happy to help or find another expert who can help you.

Up To Date

Volunteer News – by Elaine Koehn

Celebrate Mothers Day at the History Center on Thursday, May 3 & 17th 6-8 pm.

On May 13, 2012, mothers from around the world will be honored. The first attempts to establish a "Mothers Day" in the U.S. were mostly marked by women's peace groups. A common early activity was the meeting of groups of mothers whose sons had fought or died on opposite sides of the American Civil War. There were several limited observances in the 1870s and the 1880s, but only on the local level.

In 1868, Ann Jarvis created a committee to establish a "Mother's Friendship Day." Her purpose was to reunite families that had been divided during the Civil War. She wanted to see it expand into an annual memorial for mothers. Jarvis died in 1905 before the celebration became popular.

Mothers Day was established by Anna Marie Jarvis, the daughter of Ann Jarvis, with the help of Philadelphia merchant, John Wanamaker, following the death of her mother.

Jarvis campaigned to establish Mother's Day first as a U.S. national holiday and then later as an international holiday. The holiday was officially declared by the state of West Virginia in 1910, and the rest of the states followed quickly.

On May 8, 1914, the U.S. Congress passed a law designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day and requested a proclamation. On May 9, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation declaring the first national Mother's Day as a day for American citizens to show the flag in honor of those mothers whose sons had died in war.

And here is a suggestion for Mother's Day! Treat your mothers, daughters, and grandmothers to a Ladies Night Out at the Museum. This adult program will feature a tour of the new exhibit with models portraying history from 1860s to the 1960s, and a presentation on the history of aprons. Best of all, you will have time together to learn, talk, and enjoy tea and pastries.

Many volunteers are involved in planning and presenting this new program. I would like to extend a special thank you to Ann Steen, Jean McFarlane, Julie VanderBloomer and Sara Given for the time and efforts they put forth in planning the Ladies Night Out at the Museum program.

Other programs we will be offering in May and June include the Dolly and Me Teas for younger girls, Ghost Tours of Anoka and we will be soon approaching the Anoka County Fair. Call the History Center for more information on these events.

Happy Mother's Day!

Announcements and News

◆Just a reminder that the May 10 and June 14 ACHS Board of Directors meetings will be at 6:00 p.m. All meetings are held at the History Center. Board meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome.

Prom History, Continued from page 3

The popularity of the prom as an event didn't take hold across the country until the 1940s. In the 1930s, with the emergence of psychology as a discipline, adolescence began to be understood as a separate stage of life from adulthood.

With the boom of the postwar years, advertising firms identified a new group of consumers: teenagers. Because of this discovery, the number of products aimed at teenagers grew exponentially, including makeup, soda, records, clothes and more. Prom became a part of this teenage culture.

In Anoka and St. Francis, kids began informally referring to the Junior-Senior banquet as "prom" by 1944. By the late 1950s, the event, as commemorated in year-books, was officially known as the Junior-Senior Prom.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, prom has continued to evolve. The banquet portion was dropped and the dance became the main focus. Now, kids usually go out to dinner at a nice restaurant in a group. Live bands, like the Neumann's Nightingales that played at the 1927 Anoka banquet, gave way to DJs who played the latest top 40 hits. Dressing up has always been a part of the prom experience, and ACHS has several prom dresses in its collection, including a salmon taffeta dress with rhine-

stone ornaments (1930s) and a dark green polyester dress with a matching bolero jacket trimmed in ostrich feathers (1970). These dresses are on display as a part of the Fashion exhibit. The featured garments in this exhibit will change throughout the year, so stop in this spring and take a look at these dresses during prom season!



Contributions & New Members – Thank you

(All lists are current to April 16, 2012)

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Lawrence Elrite, Lucille Lehn, Joyce Paul,
Bob Schwappach, and Don Smith

From Maxine Larson

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Diane Pederson
Lorraine Soderquist
Marlys Talbot
Tom Ward
Sharon Wisdorf

NEW MEMBERS

Gerald Glaeve, Mt. Horeb, WI
Dale & Sandra Wucher, Anoka



Give to the Max Day comes only once a year, but the GiveMN site is available all year to make donations right from your smart phone or computer!

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

James Swisher, who passed away May 19, 2011. James was a long time member of ACHS and a great supporter of local history.

Collecting for the Future!

Thank you to those who have checked their closets for items on our list and helped us fill in some gaps in the ACHS garment collection. We appreciate your help and trust with these textiles.

There are still some things we're looking for, so please check the amended list and see if there is something you might have that will fit into the collection. **We are specifically asking for garments that someone from Anoka County wore along with any details—when, where, what was the occasion, maybe even a photo of the person wearing it.** These details give the garment provenance, a story, that can be archived with the garment and make it more meaningful to someone in the future.

Clothing does not need to be in new condition; a few wear spots, missing button, or a stain might help tell its story, but it must be clean and in reasonably good condition.

If anything on this list is in your closet or up in your attic, please consider donating it to ACHS to help us continue to build on the fine clothing collection we already have. Call Vickie or Marilyn at 763-421-0600 to discuss what you might have to help us "fill the holes."

Do you have:

- Work clothes—shirts with work logos, uniforms, work boots, work jeans, protective gear, etc.
- Wrist watch, any era, style, or price
- Swim suits, bathing caps, nose/ear plugs, bikini, man's Speedo, children's swimwear, any era.
- A belly band (maternity clothing)
- Wide legged bellbottom hip huggers from the 1960s
- A mini skirt from the 1960s or early 1970s
- 1980s Urban cowboy men's boots, shirts, jeans
- A current day baby sleeper or snowsuit
- A current day baby dress or shirt and pants
- A current day disposable diaper or cloth diaper system
- Baby plastic pants that fit over a diaper
- Current day pajamas for adults
- Current day undergarments, men's, women's, and children's (Still don't have any Victoria's Secret!)
- A man suit from the 1980s or 1990s (with shirt and tie)
- A fringed leather jacket from the 1970s
- Halloween costumes (any era)
- A prom dress (2000 or newer)
- Tuxedo, any era after 1930
- Current day costume jewelry

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Coming Events

May 1, 7:00 pm

Clothing the County: Fashion for Every Occasion

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) The new exhibition *Clothing the County: Fashion For Every Occasion* features more than two dozen dresses, uniforms, gowns and more from the Historical Society's permanent collections. The exhibit examines the influences that have dictated the choices that Anoka County residents have made. Free.

May 3 & 17, 6:00 pm

Ladies Night Out

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) Tour the new Fashion exhibit with live models, then have tea and treats with a dash more fashion history! \$7 for members, \$10 for non members. Make your reservation—space is limited!!

May 5, 2:00 pm

Women's Walking Tour of Anoka

(Meet at the Anoka County History Center and Library.) In partnership with Anoka's Diva Days, guests are invited to a walking tour in downtown Anoka focusing on the stories of women who shaped the community—a female doctor, a Civil Rights activist, business women, and more. Tickets are \$5 and limited to 25 people. Call for your reservation.

May 12, 2:00 pm

Fashion Trends

(Northtown Library, 711 County Road 10, Blaine) Why were bustles, hoopskirts, leisure suits, and more, popular clothing of their times? Find out at this interactive fashion program. This event is FREE, funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

May 12 & 19, various times

Dolly and Me Teas

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) The day includes a guided tour of our new fashion exhibit, making your own hat, and enjoying a tea. \$7 for girls, \$10 for adults and dollies attend free. Call for times and reservations.

June 9, 10:00 am—2:00 pm

Live at the Library: Civil War Artillery & S.A.S.

(Rum River Library, 4201 6th Avenue, Anoka) Every library has unique event on this day and Rum River will host a Civil War Artillery Camp and a group of ladies hold a Soldier's Aid Society meeting just as might have been done 150 years ago. This event is FREE, funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.