



History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 42 No. 6

November – December 2012

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

Anoka County's First Enclosed Mall — Northtown

When Northtown Mall opened in October of 1972, it was the third largest shopping area in the Twin Cities and the first such mall to not be owned by Dayton's. The site, 137 acres purchased in 1965, was chosen based on the roads that intersected near it, connecting Blaine, Spring Lake Park, Coon Rapids and a very short distance to Fridley. In 1971, some 500 local people were set to work to build the mall that opened 13 months later. The first major department stores to open in the mall were Montgomery Wards, Powers, Woolworth, and Young Quinlan with Walgreen's the following year. The cost to build the mall was \$30 million dollars and it had more than 900,000 feet of floor space in 1972.



The sunken rest area of the mall, ca. 1970s.

Northtown Mall offered more than just shopping. The fully enclosed mall had a sunken rest area surrounded with tropical plants, a man-made waterfall, and a walk down aquarium.

It hosted a 30 foot replica of the *Titanic* from the 1953 movie, glass blowing demonstrations, model railroads shows, student art fairs, antique shows, craft fairs, doll shows, non-profit organization showcases, and much, much more. The 15th anniversary celebration featured a "Miracle Mile of Quarters" and raised \$11,000 for the Children's Miracle Network. Dance



The champagne fountain used at the celebration of the mall's opening in October of 1972.

teams, choirs, and boy/girl scouts did performances and demonstrations. The mall saw it all, including the beginning of "mall walkers" who make their daily miles in the climate controlled comfort of the enclosed mall.



One of the original mall entrances. These were remodeled in 2010-11.

Ownership of the mall has changed from the Robert Muir Company, who built it, to Rein Northtown Associates in 1985. The selling price was \$33 million. Rein only owned the mall for nine months before selling it to the Angeles Corporation. In 1998, Glimcher Realty bought the mall for \$54 million and continues to own it today.

Special thanks to the Blaine Historical Society for sharing their information and photos about Northtown Mall.

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

Anoka County History Center & Library

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History Center Hours:

Tuesday 10-8

Wednesday-Friday 10-5

Saturday 10-4

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District #3 – Orville Lindquist

District #4 – Lotus Hubbard

District #5 – Kate Morphew

District #6 – Judy Hanna

District #7 – Bart Ward

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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

Change is a part of history and it is a part of the Anoka County Historical Society, too. We are committed to regularly changing our exhibition galleries. The reason for this is twofold. We want to bring in new audiences to the History Center as well as give everyone who has visited a reason to come back. The second reason is that our mission is to preserve Anoka County's history and with that, we need to ensure that we are taking proper care of the objects in our collection.

Perhaps the most important thing the Anoka County Historical Society accomplished with our move from our old home in Colonial Hall to the History Center in 2002, was creating space to properly store the collection instead of having most of our objects on permanent display.

The objects in our collection tell stories about the county's history and connect us in a very direct way to that history. This is both why we exhibit them, and why we have to keep them in storage, away from the light and environment that breaks them down. All physical objects age, but there are many steps a museum can take to slow down that process so the object will last for future generations to see and learn from.

Ultraviolet light is probably the universal culprit in breaking down any object. You've certainly noticed this with the fading of any photos you may have had hanging on your own walls over the years or an old quilt that has covered your bed for a period of years. Certainly, we have taken precautions to filter light coming from the windows and from bulbs, but all light, even filtered light, will eventually break down any physical object. Fading color is the visible part of the damage—light is also breaking down the physical structure of the object beneath that surface color.

We balance between sharing the objects with the public and preserving them for the future. But the happy part of this balance means that we get to bring new things out and examine different aspects of our history.

Which means that there is probably something new at the History Center if you haven't been here since this summer! Come "cast your ballot" in the exhibit *A Democratic Process* which opened in August or check out *Safe For Democracy: A Closer Look at Anoka County in WWI* before it closes at the end of the year.

From the President...

By Al Pearson

The following is an article taken from the *Anoka County History* book published in 1982. This location is part of our farm at 8846 Hwy. 10. I wonder how many of us know this part of Anoka County history?

Ramsey Township, on the south and west corner of Anoka County, has a rich and interesting history that includes a period when it contained the first permanent settlement in the area. The area was once considered a contender for the Minnesota territorial capital, the fact is well known to those interested in local history. In the more than 125 years of history, Ramsey has many times been on the verge of developing into a large urban center.

Ramsey had an area of 21,000 acres, now reduced to 19,851 acres following the annexation of a portion by the City of Anoka. The Mississippi River borders the south and the Rum River on the east. Trott Brook flows in an easterly direction across the northern part. Several lakes still exist, others have disappeared.

In 1852 the town site of Itasca was laid out on sections 19 and 30 in Ramsey, near the trading post which was near the present Hwy 10 Wayside Rest. The proprietors were Hatch, Beatty, Wilkinson and Ramsey, whose name was later given the township. One of the famous old buildings built by the group was the Itasca Hotel. Itasca also boasted several houses, trading post, stage coach barn, railroad station and post office. The first government wagon road, was established in 1852, passed through Itasca coming from Point Douglas, St. Paul, St. Anthony and Anoka then north to Fort Ripley. The stage coaches traveled this trail and in mid-July, 1855, 300 Red River ox carts passed through on their way to St. Paul with loads of furs and pemmican.

The township was organized in 1857 and named Watertown, but changed to Dover in 1858, then later that year changed to Ramsey.

Ramsey Township was incorporated as a City Nov. 12, 1974. The first sermon preached in Anoka County was in Ramsey. It has been said that the County's first post office was at Itasca in Ramsey, but there is claim now to one at Manomin (now Fridley) 20 days earlier. One of the first schools was in Ramsey. The first breaking of land for farming was in Ramsey. In 1860, the population was 192 people. In 2012, the population is estimated at 23,000.

So much history!

“Dewey” on Display

The loss of a beloved animal is heartbreaking. People go to great lengths to deal with the loss of their pets, from fishy funerals in the bathroom to the pet taxidermy portrayed in Animal Planet’s “American Stuffers.”

About 100 years ago, one Anoka County family, the Ruffcorns, faced that dilemma when their horse, Dewey, died. Douglas Ruffcorn (1866-1943) and his wife Mary Ann (1867-1934) raised a large family on their farm in Linwood Township. When Dewey died, they had his hide tanned, and turned it into a sleigh blanket and several pair of mittens. This “waste not, want not” approach meant that Dewey continued to serve his family with warmth for many years.

Horsehide leather is not a novel idea. As long



The blanket made from the Ruffcorn’s horse is large, 58” x 68”, and backed with a thick black wool.



Two pairs of mittens made from the Ruffcorn horse’s hide.

as people have been using horses for labor, they have also used them for leather.

Horsehide is less prone to stretching than cowhide leather, and so, for decades horsehide was the preferred material for the covering of baseballs. Leather jackets, gun holsters, and shoes are other items that are often made of horsehide. Since the 1980s, the cost of horsehide has become prohibitive. Subsequently, baseballs are now covered with cowhide, and the price of other horsehide goods has gone up considerably.

The Ruffcorn’s horsehide blanket and mittens are now in the care of the Anoka County Historical Society and will be on

display with other winter clothing as a part of the ongoing “Clothing the County” exhibit. The exhibit will also feature a bison fur coat, as well as more traditional coats, hats, mittens, and cold weather gear from the 1880s to the present.



While it is known that this is the Ruffcorn family on their farm and there is a light colored horse in the photo, we do not know if that horse is Dewey.

Time to Write Those Christmas Letters!

Whether you love them or hate them, the season of holiday letters is upon us! ACHS has been collecting holiday letters for several years now and we are looking forward to adding even more to the collection this year. Please put us on your mailing list!

Holiday letters provide great snapshots of our lives in right here and right now: what we were doing, what was important to us, how we changed, what we hoped for, and more. Historians of the future will love these treasure troves of information. With that in mind, there are websites and articles now devoted to helping people write better holiday letters, but many aren't taking history in mind. We'd like to give you some tips for not only writing a more enjoyable letter, but one that will be read 50 or 100 years from now with the same wonder and enjoyment as during the holiday season of 2012. Some of these tips appeared in the December 2008 *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine, but we've added our own historical hints as well.

1. Put the year and your name on the letter somewhere! It is amazing how many letters give no clue as to the writer or the year it was written, the writer just assuming the reader will know from the card and stamp cancellation. What if the letter is separated from the card and envelope? History will want your name with this story—don't leave history guessing!
2. Keep it short. This isn't a novel you are sending, it's a quick recap of the high points of your life in the past year. Since you are sending more than one of these letters, be careful not to assume the readers all know the background. Choose only those high points that will connect and make sense to your readers and leave the inside jokes and lavish details out.
3. Include milestones in your life such as graduations, weddings, births, major moves, etc. Genealogists appreciate these milestones and major events help your readers mark a place or time. This is especially good if your letter goes to

people you usually only keep in contact with during the holidays. If little Suzie was married last summer, she's not 12 anymore and reading about her wedding will make an impact!

4. Use a little humor to keep the letter enjoyable. Everyone likes to laugh and it is an instant connection between reader and writer. If the fire department sent you a letter saying after the 15th time they rescued your cat from a tree, future rescues will incur a charge, tell that story. Your readers will smile and know your cat is still in the family.
5. Be careful how much boasting you do. Sure, tell the world that little Johnny was the valedictorian of his class, it is something to be proud of and something your friends and family will want to share. Tell this kind of news in a creative way or use humor to diffuse some of the "bragginess." And keep this list to a minimum!
6. Put the most effort into the words you use, not the clipart and type faces. Overdone art makes a letter hard to read and takes away space for real news. Choose a font and color that is easy to read. Don't make your readers work to get your news.
7. Keep a positive tone, even if you feel compelled to talk about a death or disaster. Don't dwell on these, no innumerable list of downers about aging or illnesses, and skip the gory details. People want to feel good at this time of year and you don't need the pity, do you?
8. Be yourself when you write. Let it be a conversation with your reader. Avoid the flowery phrases and \$100 words you would never use in conversation. These are your friends you are writing to—talk to them like friends.
9. Add a hand written note with your letter to that specific person, something only they would know about or be interested in. It takes away the impersonal nature of mass produced letters.



2012 Ornament Presentation & Christmas in the Trenches

Join ACHS in welcoming in the holiday season on when we debut our 2012 community ornament for the County Tree that will be on display in our lobby throughout the holiday season. This continues a tradition started to ask each community in turn to provide a special ornament for the County Tree with a presentation night in early December. The date will be announced soon! You'll have to attend to find out which community and see what they will hang on the tree to represent them for 2012!

The holiday season is a time for miracles and one of the most "famous" miracles is the story of the

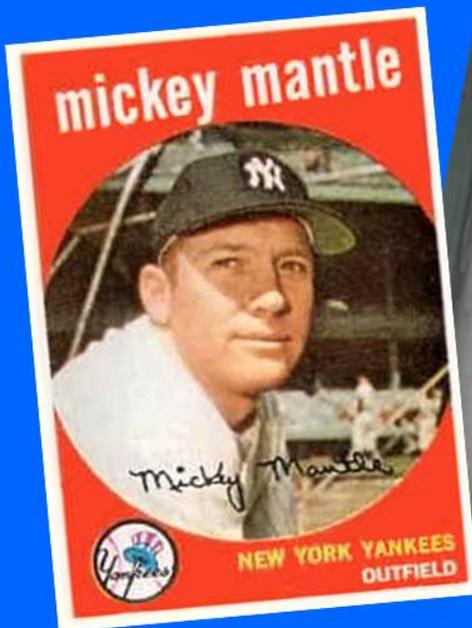
Christmas Truce of World War One. A brief program will share some of the words of the soldiers who experienced it and the history of the event on an evening in early December. We'll be announcing the date soon! In addition, we'll look at what was happening in Anoka County that holiday season of 1914, even though America was not yet involved in the Great War.

This will also be an excellent time to take one last look at the World War One exhibit, *Safe for Democracy*, before it closes forever in January of 2013.

Is it

Trash or Treasure? A Road Show Event

from the Anoka County Historical Society
and the Coon Rapids Historical Commission



Bring your antiques and mystery objects and let our experts tell you if the item has value, how you can care for it, and even advise you how you can sell it for its fullest value if you choose.

Bring a donation for the ACBC Emergency Food Shelf.

Tuesday, November 13 ♦ 7:00-9:00pm

Coon Rapids Senior Center ♦ 11155 Robinson Drive, Coon Rapids

Bring in up to three (3) items and a specialist will let you know if they are "trash or treasure"!

- No large items, please!
- You are responsible for the moving and the safety of your items while on City of Coon Rapids property.
- There will NOT be any buying or selling at the event.

Please bring one non-perishable food item for each item reviewed or a cash donation. If you have questions, please contact the Anoka County Historical Society at (763) 421-0600. No advance registration needed but doors may close early, so the event can end at 9:00 PM.

Up To Date

Announcements and News

◆Just a reminder that the November 8 and December 13 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.

Greetings Volunteers! *By Elaine Koehn*

By the time you read this, the Ghost Tour season will be finished and another successful Halloween season will be behind us. The community has supported ACHS enthusiastically, with a final total that will be more than 45 tours in the month of October alone. Some of the nights were rainy and cold, but from the number of tickets sold, it is evident that Minnesotans are a hardy lot!

A special thank you to this year's Ghost tour docents, without whom the tours would not be possible: Gary Greb, Darlene Bearl, Maria King, Ann Steen, Lynne Rickert, June Anderson, Jeri Bates, Faith Kammerdiener, Sara Given, Shana Schmitz, Lyle Bradley, Dan Schink, and Wayne Chevalier. I also want to welcome new docents this year: Emily Hall, Jean McFarlane, and Monique Walraven. Everyone did a fabulous job. THANK YOU ALL!!

Along with Ghost tours, many of the docents played characters, helped with research or scripts, and led cemetery tours. A special thank you to June Anderson, Maria King, Darlene Bearl, Madonna Mochinski, Wayne Chevalier, Ken Dufresne, and Terrie Rihs who volunteered during the Twitchell, Constance and Calvary Cemetery tours—some volunteered at more than one cemetery!

As one season ends, another one begins. We will soon be approaching the holiday season. Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays for many reasons. I was born on Thanksgiving Day and have been very thankful to my parents ever since. Thanksgiving is also the time of year when we can express our gratitude for all those who touch our lives. It is America's harvest festival—a time to acknowledge the help of family and friends and a reminder of what a gift it is to be alive. It's a day to overindulge in the here and now, even as we reflect on the past.

When I look at the volunteer sign-in sheet, I am reminded every day of all of the people who deserve our thanks. Some of you come several times in a month, some of you dedicate your time to a specific program or share a special skill, and some are on our "call list" for special projects when we need you. All of these gifts weave together an outstanding group of dedicated volunteers.

In the words of William Arthur Ward, "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

A very special thank you to each of you for all you do to make the Historical Society such a success.



Congratulations!

Beatrice Helen Frey was born on August 31, 2012 (ten days late!) to ACHS staff member Caitlin Frey and her husband, Dan. Beatrice is happy, healthy, and starting to sleep more at night.

As hard as it was to leave that sweet baby, Caitlin is back to work at ACHS and will be happy to help you at the front desk.

Sweaters & Jackets with Stories Needed!

Do you have a **holiday sweater** with an angora snowman? Or a big knitted Santa with a pompom or bells on his hat? We've all seen them, bought them, worn them, and maybe even laughed at them, but ACHS does not have a single one in the collection!

How about a **ski jacket**? These are a must-have item for even non-skiers, but ACHS doesn't have a ski jacket in the collection.

We are looking for just a couple of these ubiquitous sweaters and jackets from Anoka County with **good provenance** (a good story) to add to our clothing and textile collection. If you have such a sweater or jacket and would be willing to donate it, please call Vickie at 763-421-0600.

Contributions & New Members – Thank you

(All lists are current to October 19, 2012.)

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Jackie Bergman-O'Brien, Dayton
James Collins, Anoka
Gloria Harwig & Fred Blume, Coon Rapids
Bonnie Karl, Coon Rapids
Carol McCellips, Ramsey
Madonna Mochinski, Coon Rapids
Bob O'Brien, Dayton

DONATIONS

Robert W. Akin II
Ann Essling
Edward and Margaret Faherty
Gloria Harwig
James and Sandra Karasch
Dean Klinkenberg
Michael Nelson
Philolectian Society
Alice Pickering
Gary and Karen Siewert
Ralph "Buster" Talbot
Adam Walker

EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial—Dan Frank

SPECIAL DONATIONS

IN HONOR OF BUSTER TALBOT

Robert Akin II	Bette Johnson
Carl Anderson	Jim Kordiak
Merle Anderson	Jenice Kunzman
Jerry Cain & Devaine Trossen	A. Lavonne Lyons
Jon & Mary Caine	Pam Mahon
Marlys Chutich	Bill & Kate Morphew
Casey Clark	Steve & Paula Neubauer
James Collins	Philip Pinewski
Beverly Dehn	Steve & Linda Schmidt
Duane Dingmann	Jennifer Schwarzrock
Caroline Dixon	Steven Stodden
Ed & Marg Faherty	Jerry & Marlene Stone
Dale & Judy Frank	Bill & Toni Talbot
Mark & Susan Freeburg	Lael Theis
Scott Gemmill	Donald Venne
John & Carolyn Hall	Tom Ward
Carolyn Harves	Maude-Ruth E. Watson
Gloria Harwig & Fred Blume	Vickie & Ron Wendel
Bette Haug	Marvin & Sally West
Ormelle Hedblad	Ed Wilberg
Diane & Charles Henning	Carl Youngquist
Sarah Hughs	

MEMORIALS

In memory of Jerry Jacob

From Dottie Carlson

In memory of Joyce Sage

From Donald Sage

ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Dave and Jeanie Almgren	Curtis Dahlin
Anoka County Sheriff's Office	James Ernst
Anoka Masonic Lodge #30	Don Johnson
Dennis Berg	Maria King
Bonita Blomiley	Georgette Knoll
Juanita Reed Boniface	Brent Lee
Tom Brandl	Charles Lucas
Diane Buganski	Marilyn Martin
Mike Clark	Robert Muskovitz
Mrs. Eva Mae Cleator	Shirley Pierce
City of Columbia Heights	Shirley Reich
Coon Rapids Senior Center	Lorraine Soderquist
Gail Dahl	Bart Ward

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Tom Sherohman
Remembering where we have been is as crucial as knowing where we are headed.

Nonprofit Information:
2135 3RD Ave
Anoka, MN 55303
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EIN: 411375036

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Guidestar

Make a Donation

\$

Donate

Minnesota's "Give to the Max Day" Returns on November 15

Minnesota's nonprofit organizations ask Minnesotans to give to their favorite charities at GiveMN.org during the fourth annual "Give to the Max Day" on Nov. 15, with hopes of raising as much money as possible for nonprofit organizations in 24 hours (starting at midnight on Nov. 15 through midnight on Nov. 16).

The Anoka County Historical Society is a part of "Give to the Max Day" and we are encouraging everyone to support the preservation of local history by making a special donation on November 15 through the Give MN program. GiveMN has raised more than \$33 million for more than 5,000 nonprofits since its 2009 debut. Last year's "Give to the Max Day" drew an astounding 42,596 donors. As a result, more than \$10 million was raised for the 3,663 participating nonprofit organizations.

GiveMN offers several incentives to encourage nonprofit organization and donor participation in "Give to the Max Day." There are three tiers of prize grants of matching cash awards for the top three nonprofit organizations (colleges and universities excluded) which receive the most dollars during "Give to the Max Day." Additional prize grants will be awarded to nonprofits in 4th through 10th place on the main leaderboard.

Other matching cash awards will be given to organizations through randomly chosen individual donors.

This is a great time to make a special donation to your nonprofit with a chance to win them additional money throughout the Give to the Max Day event!

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

James Johansen, who passed away on October 12, 2012.

Jim was the owner operator of the Johansen Bus Company for many years, a long time supporter of history and ACHS member.

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

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Coming Events

November 10, 2:00 pm

The Soldier's Aid Society

(Rum River Library, 4201 6th Avenue N., Anoka.) The patriotic fervor that swept across the North when the first shots were fired in 1861 did not just affect the men who enlisted in droves—women were caught up in the excitement of supporting the cause as well. This living history presentation shares stories of the work of these women and the results of what they accomplished. FREE

November 13, 7:00-9:00 pm

Trash or Treasure?

(Coon Rapids Senior Center, 11155 Robinson Drive, Coon Rapids) Bring your antiques and mystery objects and let our experts tell you if the item has value. We'll also share tips on how to care for them. See page 5 for full details.

November 21, Noon — 1:00 pm

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! 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. This is a roundtable discussion where everyone is welcome to share their stories about PIES. FREE

December—Date TBA, 7:00 p.m.

Christmas in the Trenches & Ornament Presentation

(Anoka County History Center and Library.) We will unveil the 2012 ornament for the Anoka County Tree—you'll have to attend to know which city it's from and the share a program about the 1914 Christmas Truce of WWI. This brief program will share some of the words of the soldiers who experienced it and the history of the event. We will also look at what was happening in Anoka County in that holiday season of 1914, even though America was not yet involved in the Great War. See page 4 for more details. FREE

December 15, 10:30-1:30

A Civil War Christmas

(Circle Pines City Hall, 200 Civil Heights Circle, Circle Pines) What was this celebration like in Anoka County in the 1860s? Did they put up a tree in their homes? Did they send gifts to the soldiers serving in the Civil War? Come to this special event to learn more about one of America's favorite holidays with hands-on activities and lots of holiday history. FREE