



The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

A Newsletter for the Members of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

Do you want to be able to learn about the history of St. Louis Park?

Please help us!

Letter from the St. Louis Park Historical Society.

We are pleased to announce that the St. Louis Park Historical Society has reached an agreement with the Lenox Senior Center to store and display part of our collection at the Center. This is an exciting opportunity and a major step forward.

The function of the St. Louis Park Historical Society is to document and preserve the historical events and accomplishments of St. Louis Park. Since its formation in 1971 the Society has collected and stored artifacts and documents that record the milestones and stories of the businesses and many people that have contributed to making St. Louis Park the outstanding community that it is today. Thanks to a few dedicated Society members, including Marie Hartman, we have a collection of which we are proud.

Our collection is currently stored in the depot in Jorvig Park. The depot lacks temperature control, which not only puts our collect at risk but severely limits its accessibility. Lack of rest rooms further complicates its use. To be an asset to you and the community, these documents must be where they can be seen and used. Moving part of our collection to Lenox will provide the access needed.

We need your help to take advantage of this opportunity. The move requires a major expenditure for storage facilities and display cases. To cover these costs we are asking for a donation from you.

The St. Louis Park Historical Society has never received outside funding. The City of St. Louis Park has allowed us to use the depot for no charge. Membership dues only cover the cost of mailings and other incidentals.

If you enjoy history and want more access to information about your city please send a generous check to help us toward our goal. Please send your check for the "Lenox Move" to:

The St. Louis Park Historical Society
3800 Monterey Ave.
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

The Re-ECHO is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society and is written by Robert C. Reiss. Its purpose is to acquaint the members, volunteers and friends on how the activities, programs and resources of the Society are used to preserve the history of St. Louis Park. The name was inspired by the ECHO newspaper published by and for the students of the St. Louis Park High School since 1917.
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Ernie's Beltline Pay Dump

Taking your disposables to Ernie's Beltline Pay dump was a fun experience for many people. Even today, when reminded about the dump, they smile and say, "Sometimes we brought back more than we left."

In about 1954, Ernie's Beltline Pay dump was located in the northeast

corner of Excelsior Boulevard and Highway 100.

The entrance to the dump was at the northeast corner of Highway 100 where Wooddale,

at that time, crossed at grade level. Wolfe Lake was its eastern border. It was right in the center of what is now downtown St. Louis Park!

The site started out as a potato field but in the 1940's, Rice Sand and Gravel excavated sand to approximately the same elevation as Byerly's and the Target store. Dumping eventually filled it back up to its current level.

"Ernie" was Ernie Jacobsen, who with his partner, Cliff Andresen, were the owners and operators of the dump. They took over the ownership in 1952 from William Smith after the City fathers threatened to close it down because it was a nuisance.

Ernie and Cliff were determined to be good neighbors. They drilled a well and used water to keep the dust down. They allowed no garbage to be dumped. They bought bulldozers and graders and made sure they ran a clean dump. They sprayed for flies and provided rat control. They planted trees and bushes to make the place look better.

The original plan was to fill the land back up to its original elevation so it could be used for commercial development and make a profit selling the land. Between the dumping fees (\$0.35 per car load) and the salvage, the dump turned out to be very profitable. Sometimes as many as six people were employed to pick out the copper wire,

aluminum pots and pans, cast iron, steel and rags that were thrown away. The dump made the partners a great deal of money.

A story, that may be true, is that Ernie, in his dirty overalls, came into a real estate office to buy a house. No one recognized him and none of the four

agents wanted to be bothered with this type of customer. Imagine their surprise when he paid cash for the house he purchased. Ernie and Cliff



very careless about what they threw into the dump.

They spent many hours searching through the trash to find diamonds, \$100 bills, valuable scientific instruments, wallets and a wide variety of things that were accidentally thrown out. Many of these items were never found and are still buried there. The most expensive item that was never found was \$7000 worth of radium lost by a medical firm. It had been sealed in a lead box and was never found even though geiger counters were used in the hunt.

The biggest mystery was a full size empty casket that showed up. Many caches of jewelry settings without stones were found and assumed to be from stolen jewelry. There is probably more history buried in this land than we have in the Historical Society.

In 1959, the dump reached its capacity and was closed. Ernie and Cliff started another dump but were not as lucky or successful, perhaps because of location. AAA and Park Nicollet purchased six acres on this site in 1966 and built their respective buildings. Ernie Jacobsen successfully ran for the Minnesota Legislature and served St. Louis Park very well for several terms.

Thank You Bridget

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is deeply thankful to Bridget Wynn. After many years of dedicated service to the St. Louis Park Recreational Department she has retired. She was our liaison with

the City as well as an active member and dedicated to our mission. We will miss her as a liaison but welcome her to continue work as a member.

The Old Swimming Hole

The need in 1963 was for more parks and recreational facilities in St. Louis Park. Ken Wolfe was the mayor, and one of his pet projects was what is now known as Wolfe Park.

The area to be designated Wolfe Park included a lake called Johnson Lake. It was located near Highway 100 and W. 36th Street. It was not much of a lake, it was well hidden, and all manner of activities took place here. The local kids found it great for swimming although that activity was not authorized by the City and probably not even by their parents. Bathing suits were optional. The name of the lake was changed in 1963 to Wolfe Lake, and plans were instituted to make it into a real swimming lake with sandy beaches and lifeguards. A unique part of the plan for Wolfe Lake was that it would be dredged to increase the size from one acre to eight acres and the sand from the dredged area sold. The receipts would be used to improve the rest of the park system.

In the summer of 1964 work was completed, and Wolfe Lake was ready to be officially opened for swimming and summer activities. Before the beaches could be opened, a report from the Minnesota Department of Health showed unhealthy levels of bacteria in the lake. Although the lake was spring fed, there was not enough water circulation to prevent the build up of bacteria. In spite of the report, the City Council decided to

open the lake for the balance of 1964 on an experimental basis while it studied a possible solution to the problem.

One solution was to pump water into the lake from an unused well on the adjacent Freidheim Gravel property and let it discharge into a swampy area south of the lake. Because the existing well pump was too small to pump the needed amount of water and the discharge into the swampy area would also need to be pumped the project was too expensive. The only other alternate was to build an \$80,000 filtration plant which was also deemed too expensive. The Minnesota Department of Health in its reports strongly advised St. Louis Park to build a municipal swimming pool rather than spend money on Wolfe Park Lake. For the 1965 season the beach was never opened and the site was abandoned as a swimming pool. The failure of the Wolfe Park swimming beach had two positive consequences. First, it provided a net profit of \$24,000 from the sale of sand. This money was then designated to be used in the development of the St. Louis Park park system. Secondly, it increase the interest in park development. Plans for parks and recreation in St. Louis Park took on higher priority. As a result, a referendum was put to a vote and passed to provide money for parks. In 1972, the new Recreational Center with its swimming pool was opened.

Meeting Date Change

The St. Louis Park Historical Society has changed its meeting time to 7:30 PM the first Tuesday of each month. For the summer,

the meetings are held in the depot at Jorvig Park. Members and visitors are welcome.

This and That

When the St. Louis Park High School was located in what is now the Central Community Center on Highway 7, the water tower at 36th and Brunswick was always a challenge. Just about every year, somebody (or bodies) climbed to the top and painted some famous words. Of course then nobody stepped forward to take the blame (or credit?) Who were these mysterious souls? Please step forward. Who climbed with you? What year? What brilliant words did you leave for the world to see?

The teachers that taught at Lenox its first years in the early 1930,s were Lois Greip, Evelen Heindrich, Mrs Buxton and Greta Northey.

Were the founding offices of the National Car Rental agency originally

located in St. Louis Park before they moved to Edina?

This summer our historic depot in Jorvig Park is open every Sunday from 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM 9 (through September 7). The depot is the archival location of our historic documents. Members of the Society will be available to help anyone interested in St. Louis Park history.

More St. Louis Park history is available at WWW.Jeanneandersen.com.

Don Swenson's book about the history of St. Louis Park titled "Something in the Water" is still available. For information on how to obtain a copy call 952 470 1762.

Beehive Cooker Update

The St. Louis Park Historical Society continues to promote and monitor the efforts to preserve the historic stone structures along Highway 100. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has determined that when Highway 100 is updated (planned for 2008), the site at Minnetonka Boulevard will not be preserved. However, the site on Highway 7 will not be affected. Discussions are being held with the City of St. Louis Park, MnDOT, the Historical Society and Hennepin County. Although no decisions have been made the following Three options are being considered

1. *The park on Highway 7 is also adjacent to the Southwest Corridor Trail. It*

could be developed as a resting spot for the hikers and bikers using this trail.

2. MnDOT is the current owner of this park. St. Louis Park or Hennepin County might assume ownership and maintainance.

3. *The beehive cooker and remaining tables at the Minnetonka Boulevard site could be moved to the Highway 7 site, Wolfe Park or some other City location.*

It is estimated that funding of \$175,000 would be needed for the Highway 7 site and \$60,000 for moving the equipment from the Minnetonka Boulevard site.