



The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

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

We are Moving to Lenox Senior Center

Open House
Lenox/Historical Society
Open Lounge
When: 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
March 11, 2004

The move to the Lenox Senior Center is happening. About half of the furniture is there and the rest will arrive soon after the first of the new year. As the cabinets and filing cases have become available, the collection is being moved from the Depot.

The Lenox space is an open lounge area near the center of activity. Our furniture consists of sixteen lockable two drawer filing cabinets and four lockable stand up cabinets. The furniture is wood and was ordered unfinished. Members and volunteers finished them to match the decor of the existing space in the Center.

Although we remain a separate organization, the plan of the St. Louis Park Historical Society is to become an active member of the Center. Our

space is open and available to people who want to enjoy the exhibit or do some research. Currently someone from the Historical Society is available Monday and Thursday from 10:00 AM until noon and on Tuesday nights. Additionally, we intend to provide periodic events and exhibits. Once the designated files are at Lenox, our members and volunteers will begin organizing and using the materials. Our goals for 2004 are:

- *Produce an annual "current history" report
- *Produce a short history of the St. Louis Park schools
- *Produce a short history of St. Louis Park railroads
- *Expand Society membership with a minimum of 150 members
- *Continue to compile Park history since WWII

The response to our request for funds to finance the move has been generous, but we are only about half way to our goal. Additional effort is necessary not only for funds for the move but also for the many opportunities this provides for the Society to increase its value to St. Louis Park.

The Re-ECHO is published quarterly by the St. Louis park Historical Society and is edited 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 St. Louis Park High School since 1917.

Robert C. Reiss
(952) 470 1762
rcreiss@aol.com

The St. Louis Park Historical Society invites you to be a 2004 member

We need your help. If you live in town, join us at one of our meetings. Have some fun with us and see our new home. If you enjoy reading the Re-Echo but cannot join us, we want

to continue to send it to you. If you become a member it helps pay for the postage. Please fill out the membership form and send it to us at the Historical Society.

Dan Patch The Railroad

In 1913, the village received a request from the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester and Dubuque Electric Traction Railroad to build a railroad that would go through St. Louis Park on a north/south route. It would connect to the Twin City Rapid Transit lines and go south through St. Louis Park to the cities that were part of their name.

Railroads already ran long freight trains through the Park. Two had depots and made stops here. These and T. B. Walker's street car were thought to provide adequate transportation to Minneapolis. The railroad's request was for a passenger line only using gas electric cars. It specifically would not use steam locomotives or haul freight. On this basis the franchise was granted, with the added provision that the fare was not to exceed 5 cents. The president of the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester and Dubuque Electric Traction line was M. W. Savage. He was the owner of a famous trotting horse named "Dan Patch". His plan was to use the railroad to bring passengers to Savage so they could view his famous horse. The rail line became known as the Dan Patch line and was used as a promotion for the horse.

Originally the line was built to Savage, but later extended to Northfield. Tracks were never built to Rochester or Dubuque. Although the franchise was limited to light rail passengers, the line was originally built with 80 pounds-per-yard rails that were much more than needed. Passenger service was established from Minneapolis to Savage through St. Louis Park. Two self-propelled cars provided the transportation. No formal stops were established, but the car could be flagged down to pick up or discharge passengers. A "train" went through St. Louis Park into Minneapolis every morning between 8:00 and 9:00 AM and returned to Savage between 5:00 and 6:00 PM.

For M. W. Savage and Dan Patch there were two private cars. Dan Patch traveled in a converted baggage car painted white with gold lettering. His grooms wore white uniforms and traveled with the horse. The second car was for Savage and his family.

In 1915, the railroad asked the village of St. Louis Park for permission to use steam locomotives to haul freight. The request was turned down because of the added

dirt and noise. At that time the railroad was asked to secure stops at Excelsior Boulevard, Goodrich Ave. and Minnetonka Boulevard plus Superior Boulevard (Highway 12), Cedar Lake Road, Lake Street, Broadway and Brookside Avenue. Although the request was turned down, the railroad continued the abuse until the village served it with an injunction.

Both M. W. Savage and Dan Patch died in 1916. The railroad was then reorganized as the Minnesota, Northfield and Southern. In 1918, an organization called the Dan Patch Patrons Association asked the village again for a repeal of the requirement that forbade steam locomotives, the five cent fare and a limit of only five stops in St. Louis Park. Again they were refused and forced to adhere to the provisions of the charter.

The village received a letter from the railroad saying that they proposed to ignore the no-steam provisions. The village then found that it had very little way to enforce its ordinance or make the railroad take up their tracks. The village and the railroad reached an agreement and the railroad was allowed to haul freight with steam locomotives.

Although St. Louis Park already had several railroads and factories, the controversy over the addition of another steam railroad was a good indication that it was beginning to see itself as more of a residential community rather than a factory town.

Today the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern rails are part of the Canadian Pacific. Freight and grain cars are bought from southern Minnesota to St. Louis Park. There is a switching arrangement in Skunk Hollow, behind Methodist Hospital, that allows the railroad to transfer the cars to the east-west tracks of the Twin City Western.

"Something in the Water" a early history of St. Louis Park, written by Don Swenson, is available from the St. Louis Park Historical Society for \$18.00 plus \$2.00 for handling. Send your name and address to

Robert C. Reiss
5109 Stoney Bridge Ct.
Minnetonka MN 55345
952 470 1762

The St. Louis Park Historical Society meets at Lenox the first Tuesday of every month. The next meeting dates are:

February 3, 2004

March 2, 2004

May 4, 2004

You are invited to attend.

Dan Patch The Horse

In 1904, harness racing was a big sport and the most famous horse was Dan Patch. In 145 races, he lost only two. He was so fast that other owners would not race against him. At expositions, he had to race against the clock. He was racing against the clock when he set the world record of a 1:55 minute mile.

Dan Patch was owned by M. W. Savage who owned a home on the Minnesota River approximately where the Masonic Home is today. He was also the owner of the International Stock Food Factory

which manufactured and sold animal feed. As advertising for his company he highly promoted Dan Patch wherever he appeared.

M. W. Savage built a complex across the river for Dan Patch and his other horses. This complex included a one mile track, a half-mile covered track, and a heated stable. In honor of the horse and his owner the town changed its name from Hamilton to Savage. Dan Patch died in 1916 and his owner died the next day.

Rock 'n Roll in the

The sixties saw a proliferation of local bands in the Minneapolis area and St. Louis Park was definitely part of the action. Prominent Park musician David Rifkin played in several bands, including the Chancellors and Stillroven. He was also a member of the High Spirits, which had five members from the Park. (Rifkins brother, Robert, aka Bobby Z, was Prince's drummer in the eighties.)

One of the biggest rock 'n roll events took place in the Park on Halloween night, 1963. WDGY DJ Bill Diehl promoted a dance at the Roller Rink featuring the Trashmen. The Trashmen were a tremendously popular surf band and would soon release the national hit "Surfin Bird." They were one of the top bands in the area, and when word got out that they were playing at the Roller Rink 2100 kids showed up. The enthusiastic crowd shattered the building's glass front, and the police had to be called to control the crowd. Even at \$2.00 a head

the promoters made buckets of money. It was an unforgettable night.

The Beatles were very popular in 1965 and St. Louis Park's West Side VW dealership had a part of the ensuing Beatlemania. The dealership had a spinning Volkswagon on top of its building and the owner, Archie Walker, decided that the bus should have a Beatle wig. The task was given to Hoi-gaard's, which made the oversize wig out of dyed mop heads. St. Louis Park had its own mop top.

Elvis came to town in 1956, and nobody showed up. Mother's Day (fishing opener?) and a tornado watch were to blame. Similarly, the Rolling Stones played Danceland in 1965 and the crowd was sparse and unimpressed. Twin Cities teens were fiercely loyal to their hometown bands, but national acts apparently left them cold, at least in that era. [Thanks to Bill Diehl for sharing his memories].

Membership

Individual	\$ 25.00
Family	\$30.00
Individual Senior	\$15.00
Senior Family	\$25.00
Student	\$5.00
Business	Voluntary

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Street Address: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ During the winter months (_____ to _____) please mail to

Winter Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Make checks to: St. Louis Park Historical Society and mail with membership application to The St. Louis Park Historical Society 3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Wagner's Drive-in

Each year the seventh grade geography class at the St. Louis Park Junior High is asked to pick and research a subject of St. Louis Park history and submit a report on it. Alise Hofstad-Parkhill picked Wagner's Drive In at 3712 Quebec Ave. With her permission, this is her report.

R. M. Roles built the structure which is currently Wagner's Drive In in 1951 (permit No. 9631). It was constructed on 3712 Quebec Avenue at the intersection of Highway 7 and Quebec Avenue. (though at the time highway 7 was just a gravel road) Mr. Roles had a permit dated June 20, 1951 to build a building called Dairy Mor costing \$3,500 to construct.

Eventually Mr. Roles sold the Dairy Mor to Bud and Jean Rodberg. They changed the name to Bud's Big Boy. The name was later changed to Oak Hill Drive-in, in 1959 (permit No. 319), possibly by the Rodberg's.

At that time the menu was also different. A burger would cost 20 cents, a hot dog 10 cents, French fries, 10 cents, and a pop 5 cents.

Now days a burger would cost \$2.09 for a single and a double would cost \$3.59, a hot dog would cost \$1.49 a small French fry basket would cost \$1.25 and

a jumbo French fry basket would cost \$2.00, pop costs 85 cents for a small and a large is \$1.40. They even charge 25 cents for water.

Mr Rodberg, who happened to be a school teacher, died in 1960. His wife then sold the building to Dick Gapinski and Don Schlacler in 1961; the permit (No.179) indicates they built the steel awning covering the parking and picnic area. In 1963, they sold Oak Hill Drive-in to Pete Rodes. Pete kept it until 1979 when he sold it to Ed and Annalise Wagner. The Wagner's afterward changed the name to Wagner's Drive-in, and also expanded the menu. For example they added chicken and roast beef. (Roast beef is not currently on the menu today). They also added 30 ft setback of grass to the property (see letter April 8, 1975).

Yet after 22 years they had to sell Wagner's Drive-in because their son needed a kidney transplant and the sale would pay the bills. Food brokers, Bob Keening and Curt bought Wagner's from the Wagner's in about 1999. In 2001 they sold it to Jayne and Al Wohl, which are the current owners. By 2003, the Wohl,'s had increased the quality of Wagner's food to where it was acknowledged by the Mpls St Paul Magazine as the number one burger in the twin Cities.

You Can Help

John Reid has agreed to donate handsomely to our "move to Lenox" fund if we can identify a 1941 or 42 graduate of St. Louis Park High who got married in August of 1943 in EPARATA, Washington.

EPARATA was a B-17 transition base. John was there working construction

and met someone that he recognized from high school. This second lieutenant told John that he had gotten married the night before and John could have been his best man.

They parted and John does not remember his name but wonders what happened to him.

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