



RE-ECHO

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

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CANDLESTICK PARK THE STADIUM THAT NEVER WAS

Summer's here and thoughts turn to baseball – and stadiums – and taxes to pay for them. But did you know that St. Louis Park was intended to be the site of a major league baseball stadium?

On December 14, 1948, the New York Giants baseball team announced that they were building a \$1.5 million stadium called Candlestick Park on the corner of Highway 12/Wayzata Blvd. and Zarthan Ave. (southwest quadrant). The site was mostly an abandoned gravel pit, although it appears that houses were removed on Zarthan and Yosemite, and that a section of Yosemite was vacated.

The stadium would be built for the Minneapolis Millers, which was the Giants' minor league team, but the hope was that the Giants themselves would move to the new 17,500-seat stadium. The Millers' general manager, "Rosey" Ryan, was a St. Louis Park resident, and may have had a lot to do with the Minneapolis Baseball and Athletic Association (MBAA) purchasing 33 acres from McCarthy for \$33,000.

But the stadium was never built: there wasn't enough room for parking, the Korean War caused a steel shortage, and by the time the war ended, plans for Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington had already begun. The Met opened in Bloomington in 1956 on a 161-acre site.

The Giants eventually moved to San Francisco and broke ground for their Candlestick Park in 1958. (This was the site of the Beatles' last concert in 1965.) Although one source says that the Giants chose the name Candlestick Park after a name-the-park contest on March 3, 1959, there is evidence that the name was chosen while Minnesota was still in the running – early plans for the Doubletree site made mention of Candlestick Drive. And to this day, Candlestick Pond is located at 16th Street and Park Place (possibly the 2.8 acre water hole, also mentioned in the Doubletree plans.) We would like to know more about Candlestick Pond (is it really full of VW bugs?), so please write to us.

After the deal went south, McCarthy's sued the MBAA to get the land back, but they held onto much of it for another 20 years, watching it quadruple in value. The Cooper Theater (1962-1992) was built on part of this property. In 1974 the MBAA was forced to sell, and today the parcel is the site of the Doubletree Hotel, Park Plaza East, Stahl Construction, and TGI Friday's.

Know more of the story? Please contact us!

HIGHWAY 12 REVISITED

We recently received an inquiry about the Jolly Troll, a famous smorgasbord back in the 1960's. After some checking we realized that it was on the north side of Highway 12, and therefore in Golden Valley. But it made us curious about what was on our side of the street.

About the name. First it was called Superior Blvd., graded in the 1920s. On November 4, 1931, the Village Council approved the request of Rufus R. Rand, Mayor of Wayzata, to change the name of Superior Blvd. to Wayzata Blvd. A Minneapolis councilman reported that Wayzata means "North of the Pines." Rand reasoned that the name Superior was misleading, in that it did not go anywhere near the city of Superior. In the early 1950s, Highway 12 was finished. And in 1968, there were plans for Highway 894 – changed the next year to 394. Now the highway is called I-394 and the service road is called Wayzata Blvd. Further on down the road, it turns back into Highway 12.

There are some landmarks along Wayzata – ghosts of places remembered fondly but not always so well. We encourage you to revisit this area and see what you remember. These are the most historic buildings:

The **Ambassador Hotel** was located at 5225 Wayzata Blvd. It operated from 1961-1991. An Olive Garden and a Chili's are there now.

McCarthy's Café is vexing; was it 5600 or 5601 Wayzata Blvd.? Was it on the north or south side of Wayzata? Was it in the Park or Golden Valley? Did it look mansion-like or tudor? Clarification would be appreciated! It was a very elegant place – the Minnesota Historical Society has a series of pictures of the interior with its curved booths, rich wood, and deep carpet. Rumor has it that it was owned by gangster Tommy Banks.

And the **Cooper Theater** – people remember this all over the place. The address was 5755 Wayzata Blvd. This theater was round and was equipped for Cinerama movies. Preservationists tried to save it from the wrecking ball, but it was razed in 1992. The building on that property now was built in 1995 and is owned and occupied by Stahl Construction.

Oh, and don't forget **Shelard** – that's the funny box in the northwest corner of the City. It was annexed from Minnetonka in 1955, with the result that St. Louis Park has a row of buildings on the north side of I-394. Santorini's Restaurant is there (which used to be the Amalgamated Eating and Drinking Co.).

Intrigued about any of these places? Visit our web site at www.slphistory.org. There is also a Wayzata Blvd., etc. photo album at Lenox that includes pictures of the buildings in the southwest quadrant of Highways 100 and 394.

ABOUT THOSE PHOTO ALBUMS

Over the years we have created several photo albums of streets – mostly those with commercial and industrial buildings. Next to current pictures of the buildings we have copies of older pictures, many taken in the 1950s. And in many cases, there are ads for businesses, taken out of old St. Louis Park phone books. A set of index cards correspond to each book,

recording past and present occupants. Some of the streets are: Excelsior Blvd., Minnetonka Blvd., Lake Street, Walker Street, and Highways 7 and 100. There are also books for various streets in the Brookside neighborhood. These books are kept at Lenox and are available during office hours or by appointment.

BEEHIVE UPDATE

According to Rick Birno, head of City Parks and Recreation, the current status of the beehive project is as follows:

A grant application has been made to the state for \$ 25,000 to be matched with \$25,000 from the City.

The Dept of Transportation has given approval for the City to operate the park - final terms of the agreement are being worked on.

A final proposal for moving the beehive and restoring the St. Louis Park Roadside Park are being finished for submission to the "Beehive Advisory Committee" for approval in July.

Approval by the Committee then will be submitted to the City Council. Plans will include access ramp to the adjoining bikeway and the bike/pedestrian bridge now under construction over Highway 7.

Bob Jorvig

DONATIONS RECEIVED

The growth of the Historical Society's collection is dependent on donations, and we thank everyone who has made gifts of Park artifacts or shared information with us. Some of our most recent donors are:

Mr. and Mrs. Roland Larson have donated materials related to the St. Louis Park Caring Youth Program. For 17 years the program has recognized young people for their spirit of caring and concern for others.

Mr. Al Pooler has provided us with a copy of "The Esther Munson Chronicle." Mr. Pooler's aunt, 17-year-old Esther, was the sole casualty of the June 23, 1914 storm that was so fierce it was referred to as a cyclone.

Mrs. Elizabeth Fuller sent us her memoir of growing up in St. Louis Park. She also provided us with a portrait of her father, architect Edward Roy Ludwig.

We apologize if we left anyone out. Thank you for your generous donations!

SMILE! YOU'RE ON SLPHS CAMERA!

Our long-awaited personal history program is finally underway! We have begun a program of taping people with interesting stories to tell about St. Louis Park. Our guinea pig was Ms. Barbara Reiss, who talked about her family and the various houses she has lived in during her long tenure in the Park. We will punctuate her comments with pictures, and John McHugh (the

honcho of this project) will show the final results on one of the City's Cable Channels. We have had several tapings since then, and many scheduled. If you are interested in sharing your story, please contact one of the SLPHS Board Members to get the ball rolling. Our thanks to the folks who have shared their stories so far.

DOUBLETREE'S 25TH ANIVERSARY

June 6, 1982. The day the doors open on the new Sheraton Park Place Hotel in St Louis Park. There are dignitaries with speeches, balloons, a "Race to the Place" led by Boston Marathoner Dick Beardsley, prizes, music, refreshments and over 400 area residents in attendance. There is even a hot air balloon. A time capsule is buried on the site, to be opened in 2082. The hotel is to be a \$22 million place of luxury, a boon to the city. It has two restaurants, two large ballrooms and a number of smaller meeting spaces, and lots of open atrium space with 1400 live plants.

1982 was a time of other local and national events: The ERA was defeated. Ethel Baston and Fern Hill schools were sold. Golden Auto Parts on Highway 7 closed, and a \$1.9 million superfund award was made for the city to clean up the old creosote plant site. County Road 18 was under construction to later become an extension of Highway 169.

Flash forward to the present. June 6, 2007, the 25th anniversary of that Grand Opening. The lobby is decorated with silver decorations, balloons, and posters of that first opening day 25 years ago. The current employees of the now Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis Park Place are celebrating a quarter century of working in this still-luxury facility, which has recently gone through an \$8 million makeover from top to bottom. These employees are treated to a full luncheon banquet in one of the now three ballrooms. Guests of the hotel are treated to free coffee and cupcakes all day, with some additional snack choices in the afternoon. The day culminates with a grand Manager's Reception in the still vibrant and newly replanted Atrium, for guests and clients of the hotel. It's a celebration, all right – a celebration of a still prosperous, shining business right here in St. Louis Park.

Judy (Andersen) Hogan

HONEYWELL

To look at it, it seems hard to believe that the area that is now the home of Costco, Home Depot, Office Max, and others on Cedar Lake Road was once a massive building used by Honeywell.

The plant, located at 1625 Zarthan, was built by Minneapolis Warehouse Inc. in 1965 as a warehouse. It was leased to Honeywell in 1966. (At some point it was owned by Space

Center.) From 1973 to about 1980, Honeywell used the site for "light manufacturing, assembling and processing in conjunction with its federal defense contracts." The tract was known for its 3,000 car parking lot.

The property was divided by the City in 1982, but didn't get redeveloped until the late 1990's. Any additional information about this building would be appreciated!

SLP SCHOLAR EMILY MULLIN

St. Louis Park was recently the topic of study for Breck School student Emily Mullin. She was one of six seniors who have researched the histories of six Twin Cities suburbs. Led by Macalester Professor David Lanegran, the students worked through their preconceptions about nondescript places to find a rich history and many stories to tell. Emily spent time at the

SLP Historical Society's Lenox location, reading files – she was especially interested in the Creosote Plant, which admittedly provides one of Park's more colorful sagas. She also learned about the City's false start under the TB Walker era. Emily presented her findings on April 17 at Macalester College. Congratulations, Emily!

EXCELSIOR BOULEVARD'S BEER HALLS

It is a glad coincidence that the St. Louis Park directory started at about the same time that prohibition was repealed, in December 1934. Ads tell us about some of the bars and restaurants around town. Beer was the first to be legalized, and Excelsior Blvd. was dotted with beer halls and "chicken shacks" in the 1930s and 40s. Beer was even being served on tap at gas stations. Here's a look at some of the hot spots on Excelsior.

Al's Café/Place/Bar was one of several places that operated as a "confectionary" before repeal, but one could get a drink in the basement. It's now the only actual "bar" in town.

Jennings Tavern was established in 1934. The first post-prohibition liquor license issued by the Park was to Mike Jennings' wife Harriet. Ads boasted two cocktail lounges. The décor of the original building was "old log cabin."

Henry Aretz opened **Bunny's** in 1933. The story goes that the place was intended to be named Aretz's Place, but Henry got a good deal on the Bunnys sign. (No apostrophe, just Bunnys!)

Now K-9 Hydrotherapy, in 1933 there was the **Bright Spot Restaurant**, featuring Gluek's and Schell's beer on draught. From about 1935 to '39, it was the **Chick-Inn**, a dance hall and 3.2 beer joint. Draft beer cost 5 cents and a pitcher was 25 cents - "what a deal." This was your last chance for beer until you reached Hopkins. Fried Chicken sandwiches were 25 cents,

Evidence of the **El Patio Cafe and Dance Club**, pronounced "el PAY sho," goes back to at least 1930. This was a bar, restaurant, and dance hall. One of the classiest establishments on the Boulevard, in the early days it catered to the Country Club and University crowds. But some

say that it served "cold coffee" just a tad before the act was repealed.

In 1933, there was a beer tavern called **Roach's**, run by J.W. Roach, who, inevitably, was known as "Cocky Roach."

From about 1939 to about 1942, the **Swan Café** was operated by Charles Swahn. This building was once occupied by Park Baptist Church.

As early as 1926, during prohibition, the building widely known as Brookside Drug was the **Hollywood Inn**. In 1928, it allowed dancing. 1933 ads invited the populace to the **Cozy Corner**. In 1934, the **Brookside Inn** restaurant/cafe and confectionery featured music and dancing. Also in 1934, the **Venetian Pool** Beer Garden had tables with umbrellas in back when the weather was nice, and colorful lights strung from the ceiling.

In 1933-35, **Walt's Canteen/Poirer's Tavern** was "Where the Homefolks go for a Pleasant Evening." In his memoir, Morton Arneson complained that the music from the honky tonk across the street kept him awake all night; Walt's was probably the culprit.

Minikahda Gardens was one of the first places you came to from Minneapolis. Like Al's, it was popular on Mpls. election days when drinking was suspended there.

In later years, many more bars and restaurants materialized, including Gipper's, Infinity, Classic, Foo Chu, Timothy O'Tooles, Jennings Red Coach Inn, Park Terrace, Underwood's, Lynch's, George's in the Park, Duff's, Culbertson's, Duggan's, George Faust's, and the King's Inn.

We welcome your stories!

WHO WE ARE

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to record and preserve the history of St. Louis Park. The archives of the Society are located in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37th and Brunswick) and at the Lenox Community Center (6715 Minnetonka Blvd.). Office hours at the Lenox site are Mondays and Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment. Our mailing address is:
3700 Monterey Drive
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To contact us by phone, you can call 952-924-2550. Leave a message, and someone will return the call. Our email address is history@slphistory.org. You may also contact a member of our board of directors:

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Join us on our web site at
www.slphistory.org.

ABOUT THE RE-ECHO

The Re-Echo is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The Re-Echo was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of SLP High School since 1917.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The last Re-Echo was our first experience with bulk mail. To our surprise, we saved almost \$200 over first class. This publication would not be possible without the assistance of the ladies and gentlemen at Lenox who fold, seal, label, and count the newsletter. This is a big job, given our large mailing list, and we thank all of you who have given of your time – and your thumbs for folding!

JOIN US!

Thank you to all of you who have become 2007 members. The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the Re-Echo. You don't have to be a member to receive the Re-Echo, but we really need new members, and are looking for people to become active in the Society. Meetings are on the first Tuesday of every month, and are open to everyone. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.