



THE MINNETONKA MILLWHEEL

Spring 2021



Minnetonka Historical Society President's Message

Greetings Members and Friends,

In our Spring 2021 Millwheel, we bring to you news about what we have been doing over the winter to continue our mission to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge and information about the history of Minnetonka to its citizens.

In this issue we'll tell you more about our Facebook page, which has been filled with many entertaining and popular stories about history in and around our community. We are very pleased with the amount of interest and followers this page has generated.

We continue work on our Heritage Grant to convert our existing collection info to Collective Access.

We are continuing our collaboration with five other Lake Minnetonka historical societies to explore partnering options. If you have not already done so, we invite you to provide us with important input by completing a survey about your interests in Lake Minnetonka history. The link is provided below for your convenience. The survey is open until April 8.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LMHO>

In addition, our consultant, Arts Consulting Group is hosting two town hall meetings to discuss the future of the six historical organizations, and findings from the surveys.

Please see the article below for more information on how to register for these meetings.

We also have some mystery pictures for you to try to identify. Send your answer to minnetonkahistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Finally, our Treasurer, Jim Whisler, will share some of his family's story as well as his history-related hobby. We found his narrative to be fascinating, and we think you will too.

Happy Spring and Warmest Regards,

Jan Cook

President

MHS Receives Inventory Grant from MNHS!

By Inventory Chair Stephanie Herrick

The Minnetonka Historical Society was awarded a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant of \$9,325 through the Minnesota Historical Society for the purpose of converting to a new collections database. The new database, CollectiveAccess, is a user-friendly, cloud-based system that will enable us to catalog our collections with greater ease. Even better, this system will provide us with new ways to share our collections with our members and the general public. (cont.)

MHS Receives Inventory Grant from MNHS (cont.)

We began work on the project in January; the first step was transferring our collections data from our old system (PastPerfect) to our new system (CollectiveAccess). After that, MHS board members attended a virtual CollectiveAccess training presented by Ann Grandy of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums (MALHM). MALHM is our vendor for the project; it owns and runs the server that will store our data. MALHM has helped numerous other historical societies around the state transition to CollectiveAccess. The next step of this project is to double-check the data that was transferred to CollectiveAccess and to ensure that the system is ready for our use. For this part of the project, we have hired a contractor, Jaimie Timm, to help us. Jaimie is the Curator of the Mower County Historical Society in Austin, MN and has extensive experience with CollectiveAccess. In addition to that, we are also working to make our collections public via the MNCollections.org website, which will pull information directly from our CollectiveAccess database. This is perhaps the most exciting part of the grant project. We have long wanted to make our collections more accessible to our members and the public, and pretty soon, anyone who wants to see all of our wonderful objects and photos will be able to do so with just a few clicks of the mouse!

*This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society. (See logo below)

MN COLLECTIONS mncollections.org/



Golden Valley Historical Society



Minnetonka Historical Society



Plymouth Historical Society



Hopkins Historical Society



MHS Facebook Posts are a big hit!

MHS Board members Rick Krueger and Ian Baxter have been updating our MHS Facebook and have added a number of very popular posts. Here is a review from Rick:

Minnetonka Historical Society members; come 'like' us on Facebook! We are publishing 2 to 4 posts per week on interesting historical topics. We have grown our base from a little over 100 followers to a little over 1,100 since the beginning of December. That can't be done without interesting content. Here are some of the topics we have covered, Snuffy's Drive-in, History of Glen Lake, History of Minnetonka Mills, Biking in 1800s, History of Chowen / Ty Able corner, Indian burial mounds, and much more. This is one of the ways we spread the knowledge of the history of Minnetonka. Please come to the site and be part of it. Here is a link to our page, we look forward to seeing you there:

<https://www.facebook.com/minnetonkahistoricalsociety>



Snuffy's Drive In 1950s - 60s at NW corner of Highways 7 and 101. The only image we have of the 7 Hi Drive-In sign across the street.



The Burwell family on a bicycle tour to Lake Minnetonka in 1898. This photo is near the water pump where the Dairy Queen is now.

Heritage Partnership Grant Survey and Town Hall Meetings

By MHS Vice President Lisa Fowler

As we reported in November, the Minnetonka Historical Society (MHS) is participating in a Heritage Partnership Grant with five other historical societies around Lake Minnetonka including 1) Deephaven Historical Society; 2) Excelsior Lake Minnetonka Historical Society; 3) Museum of Lake Minnetonka; 4) Wayzata Historical Society; and, 5) Westoka Historical Society. The purpose of the grant is to explore options to work more closely together along a strategic continuum ranging from collaboration to consolidation.

At the end of 2020, the Heritage Grant partners hired Arts Consulting Group (ACG) to lead the collaboration discussion/process. A central part of ACG's work is to collect data and stakeholder opinions about increased collaboration. Next steps include a survey (see the link in the President's Message article by Jan Cook), and virtual Town Hall meetings to be held Saturday, April 17 from 10:00am to 12:00pm and Monday, April 19 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The purpose of the survey and Town Halls is to seek community opinions and input about the range of possibilities to work more closely together in the future.

If you are interested in participating in a Town Hall discussion, please email your interest to ACG at LMHO@ArtsConsulting.com or call (888) 234-4236 Ext. 202. After you RSVP, you will be sent a Zoom link so you can participate.

If you have any questions about the survey or the Town Halls Meetings please email me, Lisa Fowler, MHS vice president at lisaannfowler01@gmail.com.

*This program is made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Funds. (See logo below.)



1880s Trappers Log Cabin, in Shaver Park Wayzata now



1906 Chart of Lake Minnetonka

Minnetonka Historical Society Board

Jan Cook - President - jbcCook220@gmail.com
Lisa Fowler - Vice President - lisaannfowler01@gmail.com
Jim Whisler - Treasurer - jimwhisler63@gmail.com
Stephanie Herrick - Secretary - steph.herrick@gmail.com
Bill Jepson - Millwheel, Website - wsjepson@comcast.net
Rick Kruger - Social Media - rmkruger@msn.com
Ian Baxter - Technology - iankbaxter@live.com
Wendy Houldsworth - Museum, Antiques Appraisal

MHS CALENDAR Spring Summer 2021

Deadline to complete the Lake Minnetonka / Arts Consulting Group survey - April 8

Town Hall Meeting Saturday, April 17 - 10 am to noon

Town Hall Meeting Monday, April 19 - 6 pm to 8 pm

Historic Burwell House Tours: Still cancelled until further notice due to the pandemic.

Digging Deep into History

by MHS Treasurer Jim Whisler



My passion for history was initially driven by stories my Grandmother shared about our family's connection to Minnesota history. This passion led me to research early Twin Cities history to confirm and expand these stories, a metal detecting hobby to find historical relics, and volunteering as the MHS Treasurer. My wife and three grown children have been somewhat interested, but always supportive of these hobbies. I was a Principal at a large consulting firm for the last 25 years, leading their actuarial practice, and have retired this past year. That job reinforced perseverance, an attention to detail and a love for numbers, which I've applied as the Treasurer at the Minnetonka Historical Society (MHS) for the last 15 years, as well as to my hobbies.

My Grandmother had many interesting stories about early St. Paul history. I've confirmed the basic facts that my Great Great Great Grandpa, Abraham Perry (Perret) was one of the first 6 founding St. Paul families. They settled in Lord Selkirk's Red River Colony (now Winnipeg) in 1820. It wasn't the land of milk and honey this Swiss watchmaker was led to believe it was. After floods, locusts and starvation a number of these settlers walked to Fort Snelling in 1829. Some of the settlers, including Abraham and family, settled on the military reservation. Abraham's house was in what is now the far South end of Minnehaha Park. This was a tough bunch. Stories indicate that Abraham lost some use of his legs in an injury, but continued to chop down trees from a sitting position. Abraham's daughter Annie Jane Perry (my Great Great Great Grandma) was the first non-Native American born in what is now Hennepin County (1832).

The settlers prospered, which seems like a good thing, but it wasn't. The Federal government was troubled by settlers cutting wood, hunting game and interacting with the Native Americans outside of Federal control. In 1836 they burned down the settlers' cabins, thereby forcing them to move. The settlers moved to just outside the military reservation boundaries, which is now St. Paul. Pierre (Pig's Eye) Parrant was the only other settler at that time, operating a grog shop which he had moved about the same time to outside of the reservation due to problems with drunken soldiers.

My Great Great Great Grandfather, Charles Bazille, arrived in St. Paul in 1843. He married Annie Jane Perry, built the first frame house in St. Paul (for Louis Robert) and donated the land for the first State Capital. It's interesting that he was on the City Council, even though he signed his name with an X. I'm guessing the donation of land for the Minnesota Capital had something to do with that. As you might imagine it was a very interesting time that led to many interesting stories. These stories went right up to the 1960's battle over the original State Capital land reverting back to the heirs. There are St. Paul Pioneer Press stories from this time as the battle was over several acres of downtown St. Paul. Not surprisingly, the heirs did not win that one. The family oriented historical research led me to an interest in the history of locations. If you haven't checked out the MHS facebook page you should. Rick Kruger does an excellent job of researching locations in the Minnetonka area. I use my metal detector all over, but I'll mention a couple of Minnetonka examples here. I read that the workers on the railroad sometimes camped alongside the railroad tracks. Many of these workers were Canadian. There are a number of walking trails just NE of the Burwell House with railroad tracks running through the center of this walking area. I was able to locate one of these temporary camps near the tracks with my metal detector. I found some refuse, like old cans, but I also found a 1901 Canadian Penny about 6 inches down. This penny had a hole drilled in it. I can picture a railroad worker wearing this penny around their neck on a string as a reminder of home. That's the main thing I like about metal detecting, is that it triggers the imagination on how an item was lost and the person who lost it. Another example relates to the emergence of an automobile culture. In the 1930's a number of auto parks were built along roads for picnicking and such. One of these is on Highway 7 near Minnetonka High School. You may have driven by without even noticing it, but it is visible from the road. I was able to find dozens of coins, radio show premiums, etc. from this era of auto parks at the Highway 7 auto park. History is rewarding and important. Not only is it enjoyable to learn, but it has important lessons to teach us. It's been a lifelong passion of mine and if you are a member of the MHS, I suspect it's an interest of yours as well. Thank you for supporting us so that we can continue to open others' eyes to the joys of learning about and preserving history.

Mystery Photos!

Do you know that Minnetonka once had a ski slope with one rope tow? Do you know where it was and when it was active? Here are the only two photographs that we have of it, if you know of any other photos, please contact us.



Dear Members,

We would very much like to obtain your email address if you haven't already done so. We will be able to save hundreds of dollars by sending our society's communications electronically. You also gain the advantage of seeing the pictures in color and following the links to other interesting sites.

We use our member's personal information ONLY to communicate with you regarding society business, and we do not distribute it to any outside organization or person for marketing purposes.

If you are willing to share your email, please contact me directly at jbcook220@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jan Cook
President
Minnetonka Historical Society



MINNETONKA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
