



As an educational society we will provide a continuous history of the Westonka area for those who follow after us...

Island Park Celebration - June 23 -24, 2007

by Pamela Myers

The delight was apparent when folk registering for the Island Park Celebration realized who was next to them in line. There were hugs, and tears in the eyes. People who had not seen each other for decades poured over the photo displays, retelling the stories that the photos depicted. It was **amazing**.

About 300 people participated in this two-day event. Some only went on the luncheon cruise on one of two Al and Alma's boats, and heard the narrated history tour given by Jim Ogland and Jeff Magnuson. Some only went to the Gillespie Center to view the photos and display items and hear the program of history and memories, plus enjoying a buffet of hors d'oeuvres catered by Al & Alma's. Some only came on Sunday to watch the DVDs of past Island Park Fire Department events and parties at the Village Hall. Some came to everything!

The occasion brought together many members of families who were early settlers on Phelps Island—Iversons, Bolls, Bryces, Quists, Swensons, and Tharalsons. When the audience was asked to stand depending on their Island neighborhood, some saw people they knew across the room, people they had not realized were also enjoying the day.

Continued on page 2



Looking over the displays at The Gillespie Center

Island Park Celebration - Continued from page 1

Program speakers, contacted by Doug Easthouse, filled the afternoon with history and memories. Jeff Magnuson told the earliest history of Phelps Island, and continued the story of settlement up to the 1920s. Family memories brought the 1920s alive through stories by Betty Iverson Ellars and Marston Case. Jim Ogland continued the history background into the 1940s, followed by family memories by Tommy Cavanaugh and Sally Scherven. Judy Quist told about growing up in a family running the Chester Park restaurant, Al and Alma's, and Doug Easthouse shared family memories of the Bryces. Debi Tharalson Heitz shared her compilation of Island Park Fire Department history. Also sharing family memories were Vern Spangrud, Nancy Oveson Pieri, and Don Ulrick for the Kullbergs.



Finding friends and neighbors

The planning committee of about a dozen enthusiastic members, chaired by Doug and Donna Easthouse, Debi Tharalson Heitz, and Pam Myers, met monthly beginning in March 2007. Committee members: Wanda Gunion Bosma, Don and Donna Cox, Gayle Grady, Bill Hagg, Nancy Andresen Herbst, Skip Johnson, Lollie Johnson Mader, Jeff Magnuson, Sandi Drews Niccum, Jim Ogland, Helen Dressler Ohnesorge, Dick Olson, Mary Opheim, Tom Rockvam, Don Scherven, Jr., Sue Schmidt, Toni Schnebly, Patty Kullberg Skaret, Diane Bryce Stodola, and Mari-Lou Triebenbach.



So many displays at The Gillespie Center

Original paintings of Woolnough's Maple Heights Inn and Tipi Wakin were painted for the event by Mary Ostazewski Johnson. These were auctioned by Skip Johnson for the benefit of WHS.



Sharing memories of another time

Continued on page 3

Island Park Celebration - Continued from page 2



Several people attending are wearing T-Shirts with a map of Island Park on the back, including the names of the neighborhoods. These T-Shirts, plus IP directories (1925 with a map, 1935, 1940), a 1941 IP map & event buttons are still available at the Visitor Center.

A special thank you to all who contributed whether financially or devoting their time and talents to the success of this event: Al & Alma's, Stodoia Well Drilling, Mary Ostazewski Johnson, Jim Ogland, Jeanne Brustad, Tom Rockvam, Sue Schmidt, Inyce Holtmeyer, Toni Rennie Schnelby, Lollie Johnson Mader, Skip Johnson, Northland Graphics-Don Gilmore, Turtle Mac & Key Printing, Mound Fire Department, Lake Minnetonka Area Chamber of Commerce, Lake Minnetonka Cable Commission, Gillespie Center staff, Westonka Historical Society members, Volunteers.



The program, during the lunch cruise and at the Gillespie Center, was video-taped by Ken Bush of the Lake Minnetonka Cable Commission. The program will be shown on local cable television. WHS is considering making copies of a DVD available. Let us know whether you are interested in our pursuing this project. 952-472-9800.

A number of people signed up to receive a copy of the mailing list for this event. The cost is \$2 for copy costs and postage. If you're interested, send your check to WHS at 2325 Commerce Blvd., Mound, MN.



Visiting, catching up, viewing pictures of past events and enjoying a buffet served by Al & Alma's

THE HISTORY DETECTIVE

School Memories: Reflections and Connections
by Dr. Pam Myers



Pam Myers and Joe Sears

Do you believe that you might find a treasure from the past while you're walking along a path through the woods? Do you still search the lakeshore and the fields for Indian arrowheads? Joe Sears does, and recently he found a treasure on the shore of Lost Lake.

As a structural building inspector, Joe Sears travels throughout the state of Minnesota, and his cabin "up north" is in Chitna, Alaska, where he traps and hunts. His fascination with lost objects from the past led him to walk the lakeshore while he was in Mound, inspecting the Met Council's parking ramp project.



A trapper pistol found in Mound by Joe Sears - where Joe has drawn what the handle might have looked like. Can you tell the size of the pistol from the ruler?

The treasure that he found was a pistol. He'd call it a "trapper pistol," the kind that the trapper would carry to put down a live animal caught in one of the traps. With its small velocity, it would not destroy the pelt, or butcher the animal, thus saving it for sale. On this percussion pistol, the hammer is centered and there is no sight. This lead firearm was probably cast, and the barrel bored out. Maybe the tangs were malleable during the casting process, so that they could be bent to attach the dense hardwood handle, maybe walnut or maple. The wood deteriorated and disappeared long ago.



Joe is even able to explain possible reasons for small marks on the gun.

Joe's a student of the geography of an area. He sees the causeway, the passage from Lake Langdon to Lost Lake as a natural path, for everything from grasshoppers to deer, and thus for trappers. He's a student of early firearms. He'd say that the cap was invented about 1803 and the first percussion firearm was manufactured in 1805. He's also a student of history. He'd date this pistol to about 1835, some time after the "discovery" of Lake Minnetonka by those teenagers venturing out from Fort Snelling in 1822, and before the beginning of development of Mound City in the 1840s.



Back to the pistol. Oak leaf-shaped engravings are still faintly visible on the sides of the barrel. The tension screw on the leaf-spring is almost corroded away, but the very deterioration gives a cut-away view of the workings of the pistol, showing how the screw pushed down on the tang to give just the right amount of tension on the hammer. Even though the trigger is frozen in place by rust, it's easy to imagine the process, which occurred each time the trapper loaded the pistol.

After pouring powder into the barrel from his powder horn, he'd tap down the cotton patch and lead ball. Then he cocked the hammer and placed the cap with its sulfur mixture on the nipple, so that when he pulled the trigger, the mixture would explode, igniting the powder, sending the ball some 20-30 feet toward its target.

Joe Sears can imagine how upset this trapper would have been to have lost this precious pistol. Pistols were expensive, and would have been his pride and joy. He would have been "ballistic" to have lost this pistol! What happened to this trapper? As he was checking his line in the winter, did he drop his pistol through the ice, and couldn't find it? Did he lose his life while trying? Or did he return home, to settle for his older, more primitive flintlock, to continue to check his traps? We only have one detail of the story: the pistol survived.



This pistol would have been a treasure for a trapper.

WHS November Members Meeting Nov. 17, 2007

The Westonka Historical Society will host their Annual Meeting on November 17, 2007 with Tom Logelin, president of the St. Bonifacius Historical Society talking about Minnetrista and St. Bonifacius history.

This meeting will be held at **The Threshold in Mound at 2339 Commerce Blvd. at 10:45 AM.**

The membership will first have a short business meeting where we will vote on the new board members and this will be followed by our program.

The presentation by Tom Logelin will be a tag team presentation, joined by the author of their upcoming historical book of the origin of St. Bonifacius and the connections to the old country, Ken Heitz.

All Westonka Historical Society members are invited to attend and are encouraged to bring family and friends that may be interested in hearing a delightful discussion by Tom Logelin and Ken Heitz.

Genealogy Club



David Cross gave the Genealogy Club hints on what to search for and where to look!

A very warm June 25, 2007, found the Westonka Historical Society's Genealogy Club holding its second meeting at the Visitor Center. Our member David Cross gave us many hints and a wonderful handout about what to look for when searching for our family history and where to look for the best results. **Our next meeting is September 17th at 7:00 pm.**



Just some of the members at our July meeting

Why did they name that bridge "Arcola?"

Tom Rockvam shared his answer to someone who wondered about a local landmark.

By Tom Rockvam

Back on November 15, 16, and 17, 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte, a general and emperor in the French army led his troops across the Arcola (spelled Apcole in Italian text and Arcola in English text) Bridge which spanned the Alpone River into Italy.

After two days of being held off on the main bridge, Napoleon had some of his soldiers go south on the riverbank to just north of where the Adige River flows into the Alpone river and install a pontoon bridge.

On November 17, 1796, Napoleon's troops crossed the Alpone River using the pontoon bridge and were able to surprise and defeat the Austrians in Italy.

This was an exhausting battle leaving over 10,600 men either dead or wounded. From that time on the name "Arcola" has been used to name many river towns and bridges all over the world.

James J. Hill, being a worldly man, more than likely knew this and that is about the only explanation for naming the bridge between Crystal Bay and Smiths Bay on Lake Minnetonka the Arcola Bridge.

The bridge must have been built during the years of 1880 - 1881 because there is lots of documentation that James J. Hill had many people come by train to the grand opening of his new Lafayette Club on July 2, 1882, and to do that they would have had to cross the Arcola Bridge.

On one map that I have the whole area or neighborhood that houses Huntington Point is also called Arcola. Arcola landing is also on the steamboat maps of Lake Minnetonka where they picked up and discarded passengers.

Past Forward: Tuesday Nights At The Minnesota History Center

Discover Past Forward, the new Tuesday evening events for adults, held once a month at the beautiful Minnesota History Center.

Dine, shop, explore the exhibits, and enjoy scintillating performances and conversations about the history that makes life more interesting.

The first program, "Farewell to the Boys of Summer." is Sept. 25 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Join them for an evening about the humor, heroics and idealism of American baseball. Actors bring the game to life in this readers theatre performance of old favorites and new classics, including works by August Wilson, classic pieces by sportswriters Paul Gallico, Frank DeFord and Wendell Smith and poems such as the Minnesota masterpiece, "The Glove Song of Kirby Puckett" and the timeless "Casey at the Bat." Baseball "Quote Quizzes" and live renditions of baseball musical standards will round out the evening. Enjoy a glass of wine or a bite of dessert in the newly renovated Café Minnesota, shopping at the History Center Museum Stores or a visit to the museum galleries before the performance. Museum admission is paid separately.

Fee: \$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors and college students, \$4 for children ages 14 and up; \$6 for MHS members.

Reservations: required, call 651-259-3015

CALL FOR SATURDAY VOLUNTEERS

We're thrilled to have a home for our collection. We've publicized that we'll be open 10-2 on Saturdays. Visitors now come to the Visitor Center, thinking it's open 10-2 on Saturdays. It is unfortunate that several Saturdays of the month the doors are locked and the lights are out. There are not enough Board members to complete this task. If you are interested in helping, a board member will partner with you initially, before you're on your own. We'll need to close some Saturdays, unless additional volunteers step forward. Call any board member or 952-472-9800.

WHS Items for Sale

Tonka

by Lloyd Laumann and Dennis David - \$30.00

Barefoot on Crane Island

Eggs in the Coffee, Sheep in the Corn
by Marjorie Myers Douglas - \$16.00

Lake Minnetonka Puzzle

1934 map of Lake Minnetonka - \$20.00

When I Was A Boy

by James Ryder Collins - \$25.00

Insights

by Jim Oglund - \$6.00

Minnetrista Memories

by Mildred Krenke Banks - \$11.00

Historical Backgrounds of Mound Minnesota

by Melvin W. Gimmestad - \$6.50

Guide and Map of Lake Minnetonka

Advertising Booklet Reprint - \$7.00

Historical Tour of the Westonka Area - Year 2000

by Jeff Magnuson - \$8.00

Picturing Lake Minnetonka: A Postcard History

by Jim Oglund - \$35.00

Several Books by Leo Meloche

American Lotus Note Pad

Color photo by M. Magnuson - \$2.00

Sollie Note Card

1960 Watercolor by Audrey Holmquist Evans - \$3.00

These and other books available
for sale at Visitor Center

Books also available in Mound at:

• Larson Printing • The Threshold •

• True Value Hardware • Jubilee •

And in Navarre at: • Gallery Navarre •

The puzzle is available at Lakeshore Interiors.

For a complete description of books
with order form, write to

2325 Commerce Blvd. Mound, MN 55364

<http://www.westonkahistoricalscociety.org>

Membership Information

(New prices effective April 1, 2007)

Senior/Student.....\$ 15.

Individual.....\$ 20.

Family.....\$ 25

Annual Contributing.....\$ 50.

Business.....\$100.

Patron.....\$125.

Special Donation - Donor's Choice

Membership dues and special donations are tax deductible. Donations of photographs and artifacts related to the Westonka area are graciously accepted. Contact any board member for more information.

Westonka Historical Society

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**<http://www.westonkahistoricalsociety.org>
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952-472-9800**

Calendar of Events:

September 15, 2007 - WHS Board meeting - 10:00 pm - Visitor Center

September 17, 2007 - Genealogy Meeting at the Visitor Center - 7:00 pm - information on page 6

September 25, 2007 - Past Forward at The Minnesota History Center 7:00 pm - details on page 7

October 20, 2007 - WHS Board meeting - 10:00 pm - Visitor Center

November 17, 2007 - General Membership Meeting of the WHS with Tom Logelin and Ken Heitz plus voting for Board Membership in the WHS. 10:45 - details on page 5

Reminder: The date on your address label is the "expiration" date of your membership in the WHS.

Purposes and Goals of the Westonka Historical Society

1. Document, preserve, and classify early historical records.
2. Provide children and adults with history of the area accessible to them.
3. Make tapes and recordings to preserve and interpret material unique to our Westonka history.
4. Gather artifacts and reproductions for exhibiting the story of the area.
5. Involve our children with a living program of historical significance to make history "come alive" to them.