



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

Volume 17, No. 1 - 2013

Be sure to save September 28th for our 2nd Annual Fund-raiser event to be held on the Bella Vista from the fleet of Al & Alma's. Ticket information at 952.472.9800.

Shirley and Vern Andersen from V&S Jewelry

Shirley's family moved to Three Points from Minneapolis when she was 16. It was a lake neighborhood without indoor plumbing. She worked in the café that was next to Longpre's. While in high school, she also worked in Longpre's before she and her husband Vern opened their own business.

Shirley grew up as a Lutheran. When her family moved to Mound, they attended the Methodist church where she sang in the choir and taught Sunday School. Her soon-to-be husband Vern was a Catholic, so she attended Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church. Shirley and Vern's wedding breakfast was held at Mrs. Utman's tearoom.

Vern grew up in Mound, and he was a football player for Mound Consolidated High School. He was All Conference in 1947. Vern can still remember those competitions. He can give blow-by-blow details.



"Wedding breakfast at Mrs. Utman's Tearoom" [from left]: Jim Furey, Jack Andreasen, Carol Andreasen, Grandma Hayes, Edgar Hayes (Shirley's father), Violet Hayes (Shirley's mother), Rosie Andreasen (Vern's sister), Rose Andreasen (Vern's mother), Peter Andreasen (Vern's father), Betty Andreasen, Father Zweber, Vern Andersen, Shirley Hayes Andersen, Jeanne May, Toody Swanson, Katherine Brockert, Butch Brockert, Marge Andreasen, Ray Andersen, George Hokanson.

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Dilemma to Fund a Museum Consider Adoption

By Pam Myers, President

The historical society board has struggled for years over this dilemma: do we attempt to raise \$\$ and then find a building? Or do we find a building and then raise the \$\$ to support it? Now we've found a building! We're ready to begin strategic financial planning, but we'll need some time to get that project organized.

The history museum is settling into its new digs at the Centennial Building (still Mound City Hall until October). While 200 people attended the open house, they purchased some items from our retail shop and made some donations, totaling \$400. We estimate our expenses at \$2000/month.

Westonka Historical Society's (WHS's) plan for meeting the operating cost from the City of Mound, plus telephone and our wireless, is five-fold: (1) donor contributions, (2) city financial support, (3) estate planning, (4) endowment interest.

WHS begins with donor contributions because we know you are supporters of our historical society and our museum. Would you consider "adopting a month or a week" for keeping the doors open at the museum? I'd choose my birthday month, which would be March. What month would you choose? Please consider this request. Let us know whether we can announce your contribution, since others may be inspired to follow your lead.

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Shirley and Vern Andersen from V&S Jewelry continued from Page 1

When Shirley's husband Vern first graduated from high school in Mound, he went to work in a dental lab. He was only there a couple of weeks. It was hard to get to work there on the bus, and he didn't have a car. Then he went to work for Beloved Rings, a jewelry manufacturer in Minneapolis. He worked his way from the bottom to diamond setter in his 25 years with the company. Beloved Rings manufactured jewelry and sold wholesale. Their original store was on Nicollet Avenue. Vern had several great bosses. One was David Carlson, a Swede. He was an artist, a painter, and was delightful. He taught Vern all he knew.

Vern opened his own shop in Mound 2342 Commerce Blvd. There was a beauty shop owned by Peggy Stockstead, where Linda Stalke and Sharon worked. Gunderson's body shop was in the back of this building.

At one point, the city was working on improving the street in front of the jewelry store. They dug a deep trench, right along the storefronts, and put down a board for customers to walk across. Lucky no one fell!

When Shirley and Vern were first married, they lived in apartments across from the current Grandview Apartments building. Later they rented for seven years from Pete Sollie, the Andrews Sisters' uncle, and lived next door to the Sollies, on the property that currently is the site of the VFW building. Before the VFW was built there, there was quite a high hill. One day, Shirley went out to burn the garbage behind the house, on the edge of Lost Lake. The fire spread and set fire to the swamp. Vern had just joined the Mound Fire Department. He could have killed her.

In 1960, Vern was appointed a Mound policeman. He was given a gun and a car, and told to be in charge. There was a pole on Commerce Blvd., just north of the current library site. If a resident needed the police, there was a button on the pole to push, and the red light at the top of the pole would turn on. That alerted the police that they had a crime to investigate.

Shirley and other Fire Department wives were active in the Fire Department Auxiliary. The women's uniform was a blue skirt and a white blouse, with a blue hat. They collected S & H Green Stamps house to house. They filled enough stamp books to purchase the first rescue truck for the fire department.

Later Andersens sold their property to the Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church. Andersens had thought about moving their house to a different site, near the skate park, but found it would be too expensive to move it.



Vern and Shirley Andersen, and Vern, Shirley and Jeff Andersen, Crazy Days in downtown Mound

After 19 years in the old store, in about 1969, Andersens moved their store, V & S Jewelry, from the Commerce Street property to the new strip mall built by Carl Pohlrad.

**Shirley and Vern Andersen
from V&S Jewelry
continued from Page 2**



V & S Jewelry: left to right: Vern and Shirley Andersen with daughter and son, Sharon and Jeff

This year, July 2013, is Andersens' 44th year in business in Mound. They have had good staff through the years. All of the Andersens' children worked at one time or another in the jewelry store: Sharon, Paul, Linda, Jeff and David. Jeff came to work in the summer of 1980, after finishing his degree at University of Wisconsin-Stout, where he was at school with Merritt and Daryl Geyen.

So, V & S Jewelry is a two-generation Mound business, providing special gifts for decades of birthdays, graduations, weddings, bridal jewelry and anniversaries.



V & S Jewelry has been a supporter of parades, school activities, and made many donations to a variety of community events.



Volunteers needed: Interviewers to record history

Would you be willing to meet with an individual, to capture the history of their life and/or business in our community? We've just heard the sad news of our loss of Bill Gillespie. It reminds us that there are many local residents who have much of our local history in their memories. We did not "get around to" interviewing Bill. We'll provide you with a mentor, and match you up with a resident willing to be interviewed. This is a volunteer opportunity you can do while you're at home or at the lake, in MN or in AZ or in FL, wherever there are Westonka folk.

We also need:

A volunteer to be a treasurer of the WHS organization.

A volunteer to market WHS events - contact media, publicize fundraisers

A volunteer to be the secretary for the Board meetings

A volunteer to be on the WHS board of directors

A volunteer to assist monitoring on a Saturday

For more information, call 952-472-9800 to leave a message, and we'll contact you.

MUSEUM NEEDS

*When you replace your computer, printer, or plasma television screen, consider donating your "old" equipment to the museum. Our plan includes a computer and monitor in each of our 4 rooms to display history, videos and DVDs.

Call 952-472-9800 to describe your donation, and we'll contact you.

Open House for our Permanent Museum was held on June 15th

June 15th found the Westonka Historical Society hosting an incredible **Open House**, where the attendance and interest surprised even the Board Members. Visitors told many stories related to community history and their memories of the Tonka Toy company.



Beginning a tour with many Mayors and Council members from Minnetrista, Mound, Spring Park, and Minnetonka Beach

A family of two generations looked at high school yearbooks and were delighted to find their Grandma, who was homecoming queen. There was a lot of pointing and screeching as grandchildren looked through the book. Carol Senn and Vern Brandenburg observed those giggles in the community room.



Tom Rockvam giving an abbreviated history of the Andrews Sisters and showing part of the Andrews Sisters collection

Cloud, plus 15 from out of state, including 3 from Wisconsin. Even though those out-of-staters could well have been visiting family and friends in our area, they spent part of their day at the museum.

The visitors enjoyed seeing the history museum's collection and appreciated the many hours that volunteers spent creating the displays. Having almost 200 visitors at the museum's open house also means good economic news for our area eating establishments, gas stations and shops.

One visitor was Sandra Flier, granddaughter of Lynn Everett Baker (1898–1964) who was one of the original founders of Mound Metalcraft which became Tonka Toys Inc. Sandra Flier brought, to donate, a letter from the Secretary to the President of the United States, thanking Lynn Baker for the Tonka truck, chosen for David's present. Must have been "President" Dwight David Eisenhower!

Mel Kirchenevitz, Mel's adult son, and Mel's brother talked with Vern Brandenburg, who was also a former Tonka employee. While he was working at Tonka, Mel was given samples of toys to take home to the children to test. The son talked about the fun they had playing with them, including dropping them off a 12-foot-high roof to see if they would fall apart. Mel gladly took the pieces back to work for study and revamping the design.

David Hempel recalled his memories of playing in and around an old abandoned cabin, the only building on the Eagle Bluffs in the 1950s. He remembered finding a pail and a line of some sort going down the bluffs to the lake. Vern recalled that he and his dad fished below the bluffs in the 1940s. Once they were surprised to see a pail coming down on a line, water being scooped from the lake and the bucket being hauled back up the bank. Someone did live in that old cabin in the 40s.

The History Museum's Open House brought tourists to Westonka from near and far. From an informal survey from our guest book, we had 100 visitors from our Westonka cities and immediate area, 30 more came from the Lake shore cities, 50 from the greater Twin Cities area, including a couple from Stillwater and a couple from St.

Success Continues on next page.

Success Continues

In addition, on Saturday, June 22nd, the first "regular" day for the museum, there were a dozen visitors. That's more individuals than visited the previous site in a month. And the great attendance continued with new visitors to the museum the first Saturday of July - some from Arizona and Colorado who were visiting family, but spent their Saturday with us.

We are off to a great start!!!! Join us by volunteering, visiting often and helping us fund our dream-come-true!!!



Checking out the Community Room showcasing Westonka cities and the local schools, including the country schools, of the area.



Welcome and Research Room with Brad Sohns and Carol Cheswick, using one of our new video displays to show the history of our community

FIND-A-GRAVE

By Gary White

Find-A-Grave - A Fun, Free Tool for Finding Ancestor Burials. When I first encountered "Findagrave" it appeared on my computer screen while I was using a very popular on-line genealogical service called ancestry.com. While I am not a serious genealogist, I have this nagging pull that draws me into watching too much television, or playing the lottery. None of my immediate family is much interested in family history. However, I manage to encounter like-minded people at the museum and the Stubbs Family Association who are similarly interested (addicted?). So I just continue to pay Ancestry too much money for their service. Anyway, back to where I started. When using the Ancestry service, you can search on an ancestor's name, date or place of birth or whatever information you have to start with, and it will list any resource that "it thinks" is relevant to that person. So you might see listings of the federal census for years that contain the name you are researching, or something as specific as Massachusetts Town Records for a certain period.

Recently, I started to find listings that referenced a resource called "Findagrave." For a while I just ignored it, but one day it a little voice said, "You better check this out." That's when I discovered a whole new webworld of family researchers and generous volunteers. Clicking on that suggested Findagrave listing took me to an on-line page called a Memorial. This was a page showing a lot of information about a person whose name matched my ancestor's name although it was not actually them. But I realized that this could be a valuable resource if there were actually a large number of memorials on line. It displayed the person's birth and death dates, the cemetery name and location, reference links to the spouse, children and parents, and a short biography. There was a photo of the gravestone and of the memorialized person. Later I would see more subtle details that showed who originated the memorial and the link to their "contributor page." Then I noticed a unique 8-digit memorial number at the bottom. What a minute, 8- digits!! That means there may be 10's of millions of these memorials out there in cyberspace. So how does all this come together? It works out that there is an organization, administered by a guy named Jim Tipton.

He started this whole ball rolling back in 1995. It seems his hobby was searching cemeteries for famous people: celebrities. He couldn't seem to find anything on the web that would relate to his hobby so he created a website that drew in other like-minded hobbyists. As the idea caught on, he found that he needed to generate some rules and procedures. While not perfect, in my own experience, things seem to be working rather well. So let's look at how this unfolds. I can see that there are at least three types of people connected with this vast global network. The first group is comprised of people that just use Findagrave for researching their own families.

Then there are those that are like the first group that also contribute some time to adding extra-family work to the database (I fall into this category). And the third group is comprised of what I call "super-contributors." These last folks are what make this network actually work. I have run across many individual contributors that have added over 100,000 memorials. There is a record of one individual having added over 1,000,000 memorials. All of this, mind you, is voluntary.

(Reprinted from WHCPA Spring Newsletter with permission from author Gary White.)

Monthly Activities at the Westonka History Museum

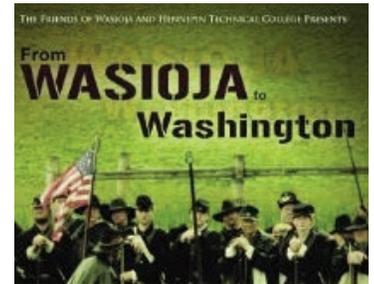
Check out your Calendar for these future events

July 20 - Spirit of the Lakes Start the day with the parade and check out the "life size" Tonka Wrecker Toy Truck, which will also be on display at the depot after the parade. Our Museum will be open from 10:00 to 2:00 and we welcome you to visit. We will have someone at the Depot selling buttons for the Spirit celebration and tickets for our Historical Boat Tour on one of the Al & Alma's great boats. There will also be a Babe the Blue Ox model on display by the depot.



August 17 - Civil War Movie - 11:00

As we celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War we will show the movie "From Wasioja to Washington." (Note change of time from the May newsletter.). This locally-produced film about the men and boys from Wasioja and Dodge County in Southeastern Minnesota during the Civil War will offer Civil War buffs and history buffs an opportunity to see the Minnesota historical relevance and contributions to the Civil War effort. This documentary was recently broadcast on the Pentagon Channel and received high marks. Following the showing of this film, there will be time to ask the producers questions. This documentary is 53 minutes. There will also be a display on the Civil War in our display cabinet at the Gillespie Center.



September 28 - Save the date for our Fall Festival Fundraising Cruise.



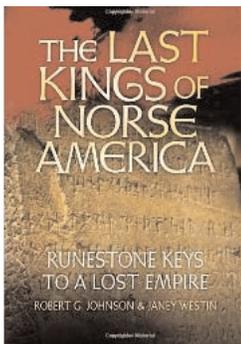
Take a 3-hour cruise with us on one of Al & Alma's boats, learn about the history of the steamboats that came to Lake Minnetonka and see locations where the "Hotels of the Golden Era." 12:30 to 1:30. Visit the museum in the morning before you join us on the boat. The museum will be open from 10:00 - 2:00. We will be sending ticket information in August for this exciting fund-raising opportunity for us.

October 12 - Tonka Toy Reunion 10:00 - 2:00



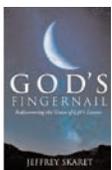
We invite all past employees and their families to come to our museum for a Reunion celebration. We will be sending registration information later this summer. If you know someone that worked for Tonka Toys and you are not sure they are on our list, send their name and address to us at PO Box 84, Mound, MN 55364.

November 9 - The Last Kings of Norse America - 11:00



These are the first words in a rigorous translation of the 1362 memorial poem inscribed on the Spirit Pond runestone, found on the coast of Maine in 1971. This translation climaxed a decade of historical investigations by authors Robert Johnson and Mary Westin in which they address a 450-year-gap in North American history between the 1492 voyage of Columbus and the Vinland voyages of Leif Eriksson and Thorfinn Karlsefni shortly after 1000 AD. After the Vinland voyages, the Greenlanders developed a lucrative trade in North American furs, marketed in Norway and taxed by the king. But after 1300 a cooling climate caused the Greenland merchants to migrate to North America and the trade died. To regain the trade and expand his empire, in 1356 King Magnus of Norway and Sweden sent his son, young King Haakon VI, on an expedition to North America with Commander Paul Knutson. The inscriptions on the Spirit Pond and Kensington runestones enable the authors to reconstruct the fascinating story of Magnus and his expedition, more than a century before Columbus left the shores of Spain. **Membership meeting at beginning of program.**

December 14 - "God's Fingernail" by Jeff Skaret, a local author with some local history. 11:00



"God's Fingernail" tells the story of the author's life, family, and his spiritual journey. Jolted from his everyday reality when his mother suffers a massive heart attack, he uses her story to unveil his own voyage from child to man. Jeffrey Skaret cleverly lets both stories unfold simultaneously, pulling the reader in from the very beginning. Poignant, funny, and compelling, Skaret's true life accounts, discoveries, and reflections prompt examination of personal and spiritual growth. God's Fingernail is sure to spark memories, emotions, and encouragement in your own life, bringing God's grace into focus through recognizing the intertwining and intersection of others in your life's sphere.

Future Dates and Activities

January 11 - History of Ski Tonka - 11:00

If you have pictures or stories to tell of your time at Ski Tonka, let us know. We are beginning our collection of this place and stories.

February 8 - Toys for Boys - 11:00

March 8 - Geology of the Lake - 11:00

April 12 - Lester Soil - 11:00

**Dilemma to Fund a Museum -Consider Adoption
Continued from Page 1**

WHS has made appeals to all of our Westonka cities: Minnetrista, Minnetonka Beach, Mound, Orono and Spring Park. They are considering our requests for their 2014 budget planning. If you are a resident in those cities, please contact your city council members and mayor to make your voice heard in support of community financial support for the history museum.

WHS encourages you to include the WHS in your estate planning. Have you had this conversation with your family and your estate planner? Please do so, and let us know. Are you willing for WHS to share your plans? Others may follow your lead.

WHS will begin endowment planning soon. Stay tuned for ways you can support and contribute to these efforts.

Again, which month/week will you adopt? Call us at 952.472.9800 or contact a board member with questions.

Donation Thank-you's

Fund-raiser - **Denise Young at Bayside - Just Because**
On Wednesday, June 12th, Denise Young from Bayside - Just Because donated 20%+ of all of her sales that entire day to the WHS. We Thank You! **Continue to Support our Local Shops!**

We have a large memorial gift received by **Sue Ann Pirsch** in memory of the Behmler family

Dorothy Ritz and Marlin Besler - four-drawer fire-resistant locking file cabinet, donated and delivered.

Gary Hughes, Shepherd of the Grove Lutheran Church, Maple Plain - 7 sets of 30" shelving

Hopkins Historical Society - 1949 plat book of Minnetrista

Gen Olson - western Hennepin County school district map (no date - was in her office when she moved in, 30 years ago)

Joan Wolfe (Gallery Navarre) -Tonka exhibit displays

Marty Gilbertson - "Hercules The Legendary Journeys, The Official Companion" and "When 'CCO was Cookin' Book" and a Surfside ash tray

Loren and Gay Hofteig - Playing cards from Mound Lanes

Shirley Anderson - Tonka Toy company history by Verona Kasten

Sandra Flier - original letter to her grandfather, Lynn Baker, from Secretary to President Dwight Eisenhower

Moving help:

Dan Hutchson, loan of appliance dolly & trailer

Set-up help:

Staff, City of Mound, working with us patiently through much noise and disruption, and many building decisions, large & small.

Westonka Historical Society

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Mari-Lou Triebenbach, Vice Pres.	763.559.4961
David Cross, Treasurer	952.474.4898
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This newsletter is published 4 times a year and mailed to all members in good standing. To receive a newsletter, contact Jeanne Brustad, Editor - 952.471.7019 jlbrus@mchsi.com

**Interested in membership in the
Westonka Historical Society?**

**Provide your name, address,
phone number and
email address to:**

**WHS - PO Box 84,
Mound, MN 55364**

and choose a type of membership.

We are a

501(c)(3) organization.

Membership is a great gift to give.

**And be sure to visit our museum
at 5341 Maywood Rd., Mound, MN**

Open every Saturday

10:00 - 2:00

- **Senior/Student.. \$15.**
- **Individual..... \$20.**
- **Family..... \$25.**
- **Contributing..... \$50.**
- **Business..... \$100.**
- **Patron.....\$125.**

**We always accept donations to
help with the expenses of our
museum!**



**PO Box 84
Mound, MN 55364**

Reminder: The date on your address label is the “expiration” date of your membership in the WHS. If you believe this date is incorrect, please contact Jeanne Brustad - 952-471-7019

**Mailing Address: PO Box 84,
Mound, MN 55364**

<http://www.WestonkaHistoricalSociety.org>

Like us on FACEBOOK

Westonka History Museum 952-472-9800

5341 Maywood Road, Mound, MN 55364

Open Saturday 10:00 - 2:00 and by Appointment



Ways to help the Westonka Historical Society

- Donate a gift in memory of a friend, family member or loved one.
- Request that memorials be given to the Westonka Historical Society.
- Celebrate a birthday, anniversary or special achievement by making a donation to the WHS to honor someone.
- Give a gift of membership to a resident of the area or former resident of the area.
- Include the WHS in your estate planning.
- Help to fund our permanent home for our museum with your time, talents or financial support.
- Become a member of the Westonka Historical Society.

GiveMN.org accepts credit card donations 365 days a year,
find Westonka Historical Society on the list.

Beginning the first Saturday in September, and every first Saturday each month following, the Westonka Historical Society will help you put together a “scrapbook page” of the history of your family. We invite girl scout troops, boy scout troops, families, and other small groups to learn how to make a page for a scrapbook of their family history.