

Our Times: Lake City in History

“Preserving Yesterday’s Memories for Tomorrow”

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PRESIDENT’S CORNER

BY ELOISE BLATTNER

Upon reminiscing with friends recently I realized: “I guess I’m a historian because I am sharing experiences of the past!”

I have fond memories (somewhere in the 1940s) of excitedly walking on the ramp to board the Donna Mae ferry boat with my twin sister, Mary Ellen, and my mother, Ellen Sanborn. Mom would usually stay on the main deck while “us two” would climb to the second deck and look down from over the railing.

Captain Elmer Holstrom, owner of the boat, would be busy down below the main deck making sure the boat was ready. How exciting it was to slowly move across the lake, seeing the shore getting farther and farther away, and then going to the other side of the boat and seeing Wisconsin getting closer.

I was dreaming about those wonderful times as Constance Anderson, Don Schwartz and I were updating the historical showcase depicting the Donna Mae and other ferry- and steam-boats that traveled the Mississippi before the railroad came to town. (See article on page 2 about the five “themed” showcases the Society maintains in the City Hall ballroom.)

I am pleased to report that collaboration with neighboring history organizations—the Goodhue and Wabasha county societies—continues at an unprecedented level. One indicator of the close working relationship will be highly visible during Water Ski Days, June 26-28, when our three societies will publicize their work and “talk history” with visitors in separate, but side-by-side tents. Make sure to visit all three.

1965: Record Flood, Theatre Closes, Water Skiing’s Local Origin Upheld

Fifty years ago, 1965, several events that stirred community interest are worth revisiting:

- ◆ The record flood that mobilized the citizenry.
- ◆ The closing of our movie theatre, an early alert that small town self-sufficiency was in jeopardy.
- ◆ The proud announcement of direct long-distance dialing, with precise instructions on using an area code (included here so incredulous young people can LOL).
- ◆ The firing of the first salvo in the eventual successful effort to refute France’s claim to the invention of water skiing.

The 1965 Flood

While the flooding of 1952 was record-setting, Lake City was to experience its highest flood stage—22.18 feet—on April 19, 1965, three feet above the 1952 level.

The Rochester Post-Bulletin’s John Weiss wrote recently on “What you need to know about the flood of 1965.” He notes that in mid-April, “the skies opened and rain fell across the region. With frozen ground, the water had no place to go except into the streams and rivers.”

“City Point, with its picturesque stand of trees, the marina and a number of permanent trailers and cottages on Central Point are menaced by the water and by the huge block of ice which still lies atop the lake,” the *Graphic* reported. “Considerable damage has already been done in the Central Point area.”

In its post-flood coverage, the *Graphic* reported that while “media detailed the flood destruction in nearby cities and towns, Lake Citians were counting their blessings. With the exception of a continued threat of sewage

backup, there appeared to be little left to do here but wait for the water level to fall so mop-up operations may begin.”

Summing up the situation, the *Graphic* covered the trouble points: “City Point, as well as the waterfront parks, McCahill and Roschen on the south side of the business district and Ohuta on the north, were still awash, and pumps were in operation in a few basements where water seepage has occurred. Probably the most serious problem is that of keeping sewage lift stations functioning. An around-the-clock watch is being kept at two points—at the Sprague trailer court and at Roschen Park near the small boat launching site, where sewage lift stations, heavily sand-bagged, rise like islands from the inundated shores. [Note: Sprague trailer court, or tourist court as it was sometimes referred to, was at the south end of Washington Street.]...

“The hardest hit section in our immediate area was Central Point, popularly known as ‘Little Austin’ because of the many trailers located there which are owned by residents of Austin. An east wind Wednesday and Thursday drove large chunks of ice against the point, ruining many of the trailer homes and cottages. Other cottages were partly submerged in water. Least damaged were the summer homes of local residents at the extreme end of the point.

“City Point and the Lake City marina were evacuated promptly after flood warnings, so none of the trailer homes normally located there were damaged. There was some damage to trees on the point, but in general the entire harbor area has come through its dunking with flying colors. The bathhouse is entirely surrounded by water, but lockers and equipment were moved to higher

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Events of 1965

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ground.” For nearly a week, no trains or commercial busses came through Lake City, marking the first time in 64 years that the local flour mill was unable to make rail shipments. For a time, Highway 61 was closed north of town when water crept over sandbagged dikes along the riprap, and south of town when flooding made driving hazardous near Maple Springs.

Wabasha was cut in two by flooded areas and 30 to 40 homes were evacuated. Seven men from Camp Ripley worked in the Wabasha vicinity with two Army “Ducks,” amphibious vehicles, which were used to take hay and feed to farmers isolated by the water. On return trips, the Ducks brought out milk in standard 10-gallon cans.

Theatre Closes

Bob and Florence Fick, owners since 1952 of the Hollywood Theatre, announced that lack of sufficient patronage was forcing them to close the doors on May 1. “This will be the first time in over 50 years that the city will be without motion picture entertainment,” the *Graphic* reported. When the Ficks purchased the theatre from the “Crane interests,” it was remodeled to accommodate a wider screen. Cinemascope equipment was installed in 1953 and a new sound system in 1961.

Direct Distance Dialing (DDD)

It was with great fanfare, and large headline type, that the *Graphic* announced that for the first time, starting July 18, local telephone users could dial a friend in Los Angeles almost as easily as calling the next door neighbor. The “area code” had arrived for local use.

For readers born in the 1950s or later, a primer on the telephone’s evolution is in order. In early telephone systems, connections were made by switchboard operators in central offices. They used patch cords to manually connect one party to another. To begin a call, a person would wind a crank to generate a ring signal to the central office. The operator there, alerted by a gong or electric light, inserted a patch cord into a socket to establish voice contact, then used another patch cord to connect the caller with the designated party. If the two parties were part of the same exchange, that was that. If the designated party was on another exchange, a patch would connect with the second exchange, and the operator there would complete the call. Later advances employed electro-mechanical switches and phones with rotary dials. Touch-tone key pads were introduced in the 1960s.



Glenn J. Dwelle, manager of the local phone company, explained to the *Graphic* that the “principal advantage of DDD is its speed. The new service reduces the time required to handle a call to about 30 seconds, as compared with 90 seconds for an operator-handled call.” The operator still had

a role, however, in recording to perforated paper tape the details necessary for billing. DDD was introduced on a trial basis in Englewood, NJ, in 1951, was adopted first in large cities, then became standard throughout the country.

Lake City vs. France

It was freelance writer Margaret Crimmins and her article in the St. Paul Pioneer Press that led, in time, to crediting Ralph Samuelson as the originator of water skiing and Lake City as its birthplace. Lake City was taking on an entire country, France, in the beginning of the tussle. Ms. Crimmins had a clever way with words and quoted here are introductory paragraphs of her report as rendered in the *Graphic* of Sept. 23, 1965:

Lake City, Minn.—The plush and wealthy French Riviera has a paternity suit on its hands, unofficially filed by this scenic little southeastern Minnesota town. The contested offspring, whom the French claim to have fathered, is water skiing. Encyclopedias back up the French, stating that water skiing was spanked into life by waves on the Riviera in the late 1920s.

Not so, say Lake Citians. And they can produce the man—Ralph W. Samuelson—whom they contend was the world’s first water skier, on Lake Pepin in 1922, some six years before the French tried it; the skis he made and used from 1922-1937; dated newspaper clippings and photographs chronicling his U.S. appearances; and witnesses to Samuelson’s one-man water skiing shows.

French explorers, Lake Citians concede, gave Lake Pepin its original name, meaning “Lake of Tears.” But they can weep all they want about fathering water skiing. The popular sport was born, Lake Citians insist, right off their shores where the Mississippi widens into Lake Pepin.

In the late 1920s and early 30s, Samuelson would throw his skis into his yellow roadster and head to Palm Beach, Florida, to stage one-man shows. Crimmins quotes Samuelson’s thinking on the French claim: “There were many wealthy people from the French Riviera who watched me water ski in Palm Beach. They were fascinated and certainly hadn’t seen anything like it before. But I think they took the idea home and that’s how the Riviera got credit as the birthplace of water skiing.”

Display Cases Recently Renovated

New themes and additional artifacts were part of the renovation recently completed by the Lake City Historical Society on its five display cases in the second floor ballroom of City Hall. The displays address Native Americans, beachfront, water skiing, fishing, Camp Lakeview, the Sea Wing disaster, Civil War, schools, and boating at the time of ferries and steam ships. Labels will soon be supplemented by binders that offer additional historical information on the contents of each display case.

Over time cases will be re-themed to allow other artifacts to be moved from storage to display status. A case featuring fall and winter events will replace the Civil War case in October.

The exhibits are available for viewing Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 4:30. An elevator serves the second floor.

A Fun Read from History

Ice Ends Daring River Journey, But 1933 Account Survives

Many adventuresome boaters have anchored briefly at the Lake City Marina as an early stop on daring attempts to make the 1500-mile journey to New Orleans at the far end of the Mississippi. Harbormaster Mark Lutjen, in his 25-year association with the Marina, has seen them come and go many times, but he believes that only one crew—and that surprised him—actually crossed the finish line.

None failed more spectacularly than Clarence Jonk and his companions. A college student in Depression-era 1933, and living on the edge of a lake and economic survival, he was only hoping to create rent-free housing by locating his jerry-built houseboat on Jordan lake, which afforded access to classes at the U. It was only when disapproving neighbors found that local law prohibited living “off-shore” that Jonk repurposed his houseboat, the Betsy-Nell, and set it on course for New Orleans.

There is something for everyone in “River Journey.” Boaters will shake their heads at Jonk’s setting out with no rudder, confident that he could steer with two engines. Do-it-yourselfers will appreciate the ingenuity of how he rectified that omission, fashioning a rudder from a discarded, heavy-gauge Coca Cola sign he found when foraging on shore at

New Note Cards on Sale

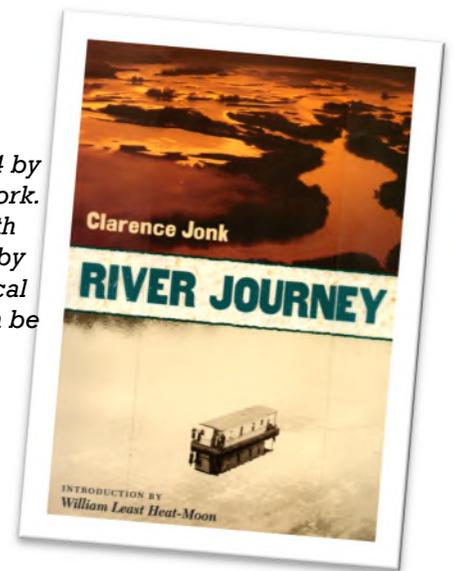
Note cards featuring the bandstand in Patton Park have been printed under the auspices of the Lake City Historical Society and are available for purchase (10 cards, with envelopes, \$10). The message space is left blank, and the caption on the back reads:

LAKE CITY, MINNESOTA: The Bandstand and Patton Park in their holiday colors.

Ben Threinen of Lake City provided the photograph at no charge to the LCHS. Ideal Printers of St. Paul, owned by 1954 Lincoln High graduate Howard Siewert, printed and packaged the cards. They are available through the Society and at the Lake Pepin Pearl Button Company, 226 South Washington.



“River Journey” was published first in 1964 by Stein and Day, New York. It was republished with new material in 2003 by the Minnesota Historical Society. The book can be obtained through the Lake City library.



Red Wing. Living off the land, Jonk and his companions shot squirrels and ducks, and when his buddies muffed an opportunity to milk a cow they’d come across, Jonk prepared them for future success by delivering an oral instruction manual that a dairy farmer will find both practical and hilarious. It runs some four pages in the book.

Hoping that poems he’d sent on speculation to publishers would produce checks they could use for gas and other provisions, Jonk checked for mail at post offices en route. He was disappointed in Red Wing and again in Lake City when no checks appeared. In desperation, Jonk set out to trade a used battery for gas, but three Lake City dealers, probably suspicious that the battery was stolen, turned him away before he found a taker.

It was already November when they docked in Lake City. Moving on they found themselves poling through ice floes near Winona and they came to their winter rest near La Crosse, the journey at a permanent end. The epilogue reports that Jonk married his “River Journey” sweetheart, Virginia Dunn. They had twelve children, the first two born on the Betsy-Nell while it was still afloat on the Mississippi.—Bob Norberg.

Our Policy for Artifacts

The LCHS is dedicated to locating, collecting and preserving any artifact which may help to illustrate the history of Lake City and the immediate area. We adhere to professionally accepted standards for the storage, protection and conservation of artifacts.

A five-member Collection Committee oversees the process and formal, signed agreements govern acceptances and the temporary loan of artifacts to the Society. Rarely, if ever, will the Society purchase an artifact, and such action must be specifically approved by the Board of Directors.

The Society wishes to express its appreciation to people who have joined in the historical preservation effort by donating artifacts. Anyone who is considering such a donation is invited to contact Eloise Blattner, 651-345-3063.

The Hanisch Family: Triumphs and Travail

Compiled and written by Barbara Wagner Dueholm, June 2015

The Hanisch legacy and its stamp on Lake City history are hinted at by a massive stone monument at Lakewood Cemetery, even as the family's intriguing story has faded from living memory.

Raymond and Frances Hanisch chose an advantageous time to relocate from La Crosse, Wisconsin to Lake City in 1869. Lake City was growing and Raymond and Frances would grow with it.

Both Raymond and Frances were immigrants from what the census records at that time called German Bohemia, most likely now part of present day Austria/Czech Republic. Frances Ritschel, 11 at the time, had come to America with her parents in 1855; Raymond Hanisch followed in 1861, a young man of 21. They married in La Crosse in 1866 and had their first son, Joseph in 1867.

Raymond's initial business in Lake City was as a liquor dealer; it's unclear from the record if he simply distributed in bulk or had a by-the-glass tavern operation. The 1870 U.S. census lists them as living in Ward 2 of Lake City; the value of their real estate is shown as \$1500 and the value of their personal property as \$500. As a rough frame of reference, \$1500 would be worth about \$27,000 in 2014 dollars.

Second son Vincent was born in 1872. During the early 1880's Raymond purchased the "opera house block" (103 West Center Street). He was quite successful and, consequently, throughout her lifetime Frances could avail herself of hired help, generally local teenagers or young adult immigrant women.

After completing public education in Lake City, Joseph convinced his father to underwrite his education to become a veterinary surgeon. He attended Ontario Veterinary College, where he graduated with honors. After working briefly in Zumbrota, he returned to Lake City and established a successful veterinary practice in a building owned by T.J. Foley. Joseph was described as a "genial fellow...and enjoyed the happy faculty of holding his friends." By the time Joseph had completed his advanced education, his younger brother, Vincent, had joined his father as a clerk in the "R. Hanisch & Son" general store.

More than a century ago, entertainments were often enjoyed communally. Almost every hamlet had its opera house and the Hanisch Opera House, directly above the general store, became the cultural center of Lake City and the surrounding area. Raymond, and later Vincent, scheduled the vaudeville shows, lyric opera companies, singers, dancers, contortionists, comedians and a host of others who trooped their way across the stage. General admission was 15 to 25 cents and reserved seats went for 35¢, the equivalent of about \$7 in 2014. Up to 500 people would crowd into the available space for a full evening of entertainment.

The Hanisch family members were well known and well regarded. Raymond served several terms on the City Council.

Vincent was active in the local Merchants Association and he developed popular summer steam boat excursions up and down the lake. Joseph, too, was widely respected. He was active in the Sons of Herman Lodge, a fraternal organization originally formed by German-speaking immigrants, and a member of the Workmen Lodge, at that time the largest fraternal benefit organization in the U.S.¹

Tragedy is no respecter of reputation, rank or riches and so it was for Raymond and Frances Hanisch. Their son Joseph was stricken with acute muscular rheumatism² in the spring of 1901 and he died only two weeks later at age 33. Joseph's many friends and fellow lodge-members, some coming from Red Wing and Wabasha, turned out "en masse to pay the last tribute to his departure to that supreme lodge above," according to the *Lake City Graphic-Republican*. Mourners proceeded on foot from the Hanisch home at 220 South Oak Street to St. Mark's Episcopal Church for funeral services and from there to Lakewood Cemetery, where, after an "impressive ceremony" by lodge members at the gravesite, Joseph was laid to rest.



By 1900 son Vincent was managing the Opera House while Raymond ran the general store, an arrangement that continued for some 20 years. Ill health had plagued Vincent for many years and in late July 1919, at age 47, he walked one last time up the stairs to the Opera House and took his own life with a bullet to his brain.³ Surviving letters to friends described his struggle with health problems aggravated by undisclosed personal matters. The entire community was shocked by Vincent's "rash deed" and in his honor the business community closed their doors during the funeral. The Rev. Dr. C. H. Plummer, who had conducted Joseph's funeral nearly two decades earlier, now had the sad duty to preside for Vincent,

who was laid to rest beside his brother at Lakewood Cemetery. Neither brother had married.

With both sons gone Raymond sold the store and the opera house to the Peterson family and he and Frances withdrew from active society. Frances found solace in the Christian Science religion and its belief that the spiritual world is life's only reality. She attended services at the Christian Science Society located at 205 North Garden Street. In October, 1927, at the age of 83, she died from injuries caused by a fall. Raymond followed her in death in May, 1930, just short of age 90.

The graves of Raymond, Frances, Joseph and Vincent Hanisch rest side-by-side at Lakewood Cemetery, unadorned and unvisited.

END NOTES

¹ From 1865 into the early 1900s, long before medical insurance or widely reliable life insurance, fraternal benefit organizations were the way working people insured against injury and death; for a low membership fee, periodically re-assessed, a member's family would receive a death benefit. (See Wikipedia on "Order of United Workmen" and "Sons of Herman.")

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Women in Our History

Anna Bingham Underwood

1847-1929

In the early 1900s, Anna Bingham Underwood was to observe that, "Although nature has done much for [Lake City] in the way of a most beautiful lake, surrounded by picturesque bluffs and valleys ... there was much to offend the sight." She mobilized women of the community to remedy the problems of neglected yards and unattractive streets, and the group came to be known as the Improvement Club.

Beginning in the summer of 1905, the women organized a flower-planting campaign, working through the school to distribute free seeds. Two hundred and forty-four children joined the "Flower Band," planting seeds in their families' yards. In August, a Flower Carnival featuring plant displays and booths selling Russian tea, cake, and ice cream, brought in \$80, a goodly sum for the time that indicated the community was solidly behind the club's work.

Gathering momentum, although money wasn't coming easily, the women sodded and beautified the school grounds and gussied up an unsightly area near the train depot with ornamental trees, herbaceous plants and a fountain. Their influence played a role in the city's investment in grading and otherwise improving streets. In 1908, they persuaded the city to formalize citizen input on such aesthetics, a precursor to the present Streets and Parks Commission.

Club members were to observe that a spruced up park or a neatly kept lawn inspired nearby residents to "brace up and take notice" to make their own yards presentable.

"I admire Anna Underwood," Katie Himanga wrote in a column published by the *Graphic* in 2006 when she was mayor. "She said what needed to be said and put her head and hands to work improving this city." Himanga believes today's Patton Park is the best example of a nearly intact remnant of the beautification movement of the Underwood era.

Anna Underwood's accomplishments are noted in a 1995 book, "Minnesota Gardens: An Illustrated History," by Susan Davis, a primary source for this article. A student of botany and horticulture, "she brought to her garden new and rare plants and trees, many of which are now common in Minnesota dooryards." She agreed with the philosophy that "trees, shrubs and grasses are of as real and practical value as pure water, good drainage, fresh air, hospitals, schools and churches."

Her husband Joseph M. Underwood was prominent as the owner of Jewell Nursery, president of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society, and mayor in 1881. "Cold hardy" apples, grapes and other fruits were engineered at Jewell by Underwood, adding variety and profit to agricultural output in cooler regions of the U.S. Local apple orchards can trace their origins not only to varieties viable for local planting but to knowledge imparted by Jewell to workers of that era.

When the newest Lake City park was named in 2006, the resolution passed by the City Council honored both Anna and J. M. Established on land formerly part of the Jewell Nursery, the 11-acre Underwood Park along 10th Street is used year-round, for skating and hockey during the winter and for soccer and other activities in milder months.

Underwood Street on the Minnesota state fairgrounds is a much earlier recognition of the name that came to signify—in Minnesota and beyond—the rewarding potential of botany and horticulture in terms of business and beautification.

Other "People-Named" Parks

In addition to Underwood Park, five other parks in Lake City are named for local citizens:

Patton Park, prominently placed near City Hall, was so-named in 1948 for George W. Patton, a pioneer who built a home on the property soon after arriving in 1856. The park itself came into being in 1907 as part of Anna Underwood's "City Beautiful" campaign, and the original name, selected by contest, was "Oaklyn," referring to its oak trees. The city renamed the park at the request of Patton's grandson, also named George W. The latter George Patton and his wife Mary lavished their considerable wealth on Lake City. They endowed scholarships that continue to this day for outstanding Lincoln High School graduates. When Mr. Patton died in 1955 at the age of 78, his will provided \$60,000 to the Lake City Hospital and \$30,000 to the library, a total of about \$750,000 in today's dollars.

Louis McCahill Memorial Park, familiarly known today as the "Play Park," is located near the harbor on South Lakeshore Drive. Mary McCahill (1864-1922) bought the property to end its use as a dumping ground, then returned it to the city after paying for landscaping and other improvements. She had it designated as a memorial to soldiers who had made

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Hanisch

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² Now known as scarlet fever/rheumatic fever with the "acute" form accompanied by pericarditis, or fluid around the heart, frequently fatal in 1901.

³ *Lake City Graphic-Republican*, Aug. 1, 1919. Because this was a front page news story and not an obituary as such, the reporting was straight-forward in identifying the death as suicide, stating that he "fired a shot through his brain" and noting that no inquest was ordered as "the deed showed very plainly the purpose."

The Opera House

A 7-foot wide staircase led to a large auditorium with 30-foot ceilings, a stage and balcony. The late Warren Peterson (1909-1981), whose family continues to hold title to the building, said that over the years the auditorium also had been used for basketball games, graduation ceremonies, boxing matches and even factory space. The dance floor would vibrate and dancers would think the whole building was shaking, Peterson said, but the floor was laid on leather and the motion was contained there. In its days as an opera house, the stage was 23 by 15 feet with a full 60 feet between the two side walls; there were two stage trap doors with a depth of 4 feet below. The electrified flood lights at the front of the stage used 110v and there was a 4-foot depth between the flood lights and the curtain. A rigging loft used for scenery backdrops was 17 feet above the stage.

“People-Named” Parks (from page 5)

the “supreme sacrifice,” whose ranks included her son, Louis, who perished in World War I. She went every year to visit his burial site in France, and she died in a motor vehicle accident in Germany on her annual pilgrimage in August, 1922. At her death, she was described in major newspapers as “the richest woman in Minnesota.” A ball park bounded by Woodburn, Sixth, Jewell and Prairie, also bears the McCahill name, a gift of Mary’s son, Eugene. Once the site of a large building used as a girls’ home and school under the Ursuline Sisters, then as the Nazareth boarding home for boys, the block was purchased by McCahill in the 1930s. After making the site suitable for an athletic field, McCahill deeded it to Lake City in 1946 in exchange for \$1.

Roschen Park, about a mile south from downtown on Highway 61, bears the name of Rollie Roschen (1906-1958), a local mortuary owner and long-time member of the city park commission. When the state sought land south of downtown for Highway 61, Roschen negotiated an arrangement whereby the state would establish a park and the city would maintain it. The agreement, finalized in 1956, resulted in a park with 1,000 feet of beach front and four acres of land. Today, it includes a public boat launching area, restrooms, and a small building for cleaning fish.

Peters Park honors developer Hans Peters (1927-2004), who built a number of homes in the area around its location in the 1100 block of Lilac Lane. It is commonly referred to as Peters Play Park and it is popular with young families. Peters was away from Lake City for 14 years after graduating from Lincoln High in 1945, returning after U.S. Army service, a job logging in Oregon, attendance at the University of Minnesota, and a stint working in the Minneapolis Police Department. Incorporated into the park is a memorial to Spc. Tony Hebert, who was killed in action on June 21, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq. He was a member of the Lincoln high school class of 2005. His parents, Bob and Laurie Hebert, live near the park.

Hoyt Park. The Hoyt name became associated early in Lake City’s evolution with making and marketing flour, an industry that began life as Tennant & Hoyt and continues today under Cargill-associated Ardent Mills. Before it was purchased by T&H, the property in the 900 block of West Center was the site of the Walt Nibbe home. The park is named for Charles Hoyt, Sr. (1910-1979), whose father, Richard (b. 1879) was president and sole owner at his death in 1947. Charles, a graduate of Culver Military Academy and the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, held both titles at his death. The park features swings, bars, slides, and a small basketball court.

Our “Pearl Button” Presence

Thanks to space made available by the Lake Pepin Pearl Button Co. (226 S. Washington), visitors are introduced to local history through artifacts and videos provided by the Lake City Historical Society. “Postcards from Our Past” is a permanent feature, a looping, 30-minute video of 400 postcards, most of them from the collection of Lake City’s Dean Schumacher.

In the near future, the screen will also offer a 10-minute documentary of local clamming, a thriving industry from 1914 to 1929. LCHS advanced seed money to filmmaker Ben Threinen to get the project going. It’s expected that paid sponsorships, to be acknowledged in credits, will pay for the work.

The LCHS at the GCHS



Nine Lake Citians read from the book “Lake City Remembers” on May 19 at the Goodhue County Historical Center in Red Wing. Time and space were provided by the Goodhue County Historical Society as part of its outreach to smaller societies in the area. In addition to (top to bottom) Ginger Morton, David Sontag and Donna Halverson, other readers were Eloise Blattner, Joel Grettenberg, Paul Meyer, Andru Peters, Katie Schmidt and Lucy Sontag.



Call for A Guided Tour

Sometimes good ideas just come calling. That’s what came out of a call from Janet Reed to LCHS President Eloise Blattner. Janet called on behalf of the “Women to Women Support Group,” and said the group would like to know more about the Lake City Historical Society.

On the morning of May 14, about 20 people from the group came to the City Hall Ballroom, home to the LCHS display cabinets, and Eloise and Constance Anderson went over LCHS’s evolution—it originated as the Old Settlers Association of Lake Pepin in 1872—and passed around examples of the Society’s past work—its 2007 book “Lake City, Minnesota: Our Historical Journey,” for example, and calendars with historic photographs.

A guided tour was provided to the display cabinets complete with commentary on the contents and a close look at some of the artifacts.

Other groups interested in a similar experience are invited to call Eloise Blattner at 345-3063 or Constance Anderson at 345-5492.

Life’s Simple Formula

A figure from Lake City’s history was left a widower for many years. When asked one time why he had not remarried, he replied (paraphrasing here): “In life, a man needs one good woman, one good dog, and one good horse.”

Have any idea who this man might have been?

The next time you come across Donna Halverson, Lake City’s best known poet, you can check your guess with her.

Taking Our Medicine: Those “Good Old Days”

In 1911, at the annual meeting of the Wabasha County Medical Society, Dr. E. H. Bayley of Lake City gave a slide presentation based on the death records for Lake City during the 10-year period of 1875-1884.

Lake City's population at the time was in the range of 2,500, about half its present size. Of the 288 deaths recorded, 20 per cent (57) were children under the age of 1. [While not a direct comparison, it is worth noting that in all of Wabasha county in 2013, there was only one person under 24 who died.] The average age at death in the 1875-1884 period was 28.

Over half of all deaths were from or related to contagious diseases, such as tuberculosis, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles and whooping cough. “I found one instance,” Dr. Bayley noted, where a whole family of four children and the mother were wiped out by scarlet fever in little over a year's time. Nearly all of these deaths were in the first and second decades of life.”

Today, the three leading killers responsible for a little more than half of all deaths in Wabasha County (2013 numbers) are cancer, heart disease and respiratory ailments such as emphysema and asthma. The obvious reasons they have displaced contagious diseases are the advent of vaccinations and antibiotics, but better hygiene has to be factored in as well, the result of sewage treatment, clean water, and education. Also, as we live longer and our immune system ages along with everything else, cancer is more likely to strike.

Of the nine reported deaths from accidents, “three were killed in cisterns,” Dr. Bayley reported, “and were listed by occupation as well diggers. At that time all the wells were dug wells and Lake City's gravel base easily caved in.” Three other deaths were by drowning, “a considerably better record than we have had here in the past decade.”

Among the stranger causes of death noted in Dr. Bayley's account were one due to teething and two to “fits.”

This was, of course, before automobiles, and there were no accidental deaths that were transportation-related. This fact is testimony to the efficacy of horses in avoiding head-on collisions, a technology car manufacturers are currently attempting to emulate.

Dr. Bayley devoted a third of his presentation to the scourge of tuberculosis, which had accounted for 13 per cent of the deaths (43 cases) in the 10 years he was addressing. At the time of his presentation, 119 out of every 100,000 residents of Minnesota died from TB. It was referred to as the “white plague” because of the pale complexion of its victims.

Dr. Bayley reported to the Wabasha County Medical Society on his attendance at a conference in Washington, DC, sponsored in 1908 by the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis. He undoubtedly saw an urgent need for action since TB was killing 50 percent of its victims and Minnesota's death rate was one of the nation's highest. The Society subsequently urged the county to adopt a small levy for a TB sanatorium. Wabasha became the site of the Buena Vista Sanatorium, which also served Winona county, and it operated from 1917 until its closing in 1955. Dr. Bayley and another Lake City physician, Dr. William J. Cochrane, served on the Buena Vista Sanatorium Commission.

Writing in *Minnesota History*, the journal of the Minnesota Historical Society (Winter 2012-13), Steven R. Kinsella explained how the 14 sanatoriums across Minnesota went about treatment:

The cornerstone ... was the therapeutic triad of “rest, good food, fresh air. Patients experienced the fresh air, in part, on Buena Vista's large, screened sleeping porches, which maximized their exposure to the elements—a nearly universal feature of sanatoriums. As time and medical technology advanced, Buena Vista's role changed from simply isolating persons from the general public to aggressively treating the disease.... The introduction of effective antibiotic treatments, beginning in the 1940s, caused incidence of the disease to nearly disappear. In 1954 ... 97 per cent of the patients were on drug therapy, relegating its large, screened porches to a bygone era.

After its closure, the building was used for a time as a nursing home. Now little remains to be seen of the structure, which is located on the James Roemer property in Wabasha.

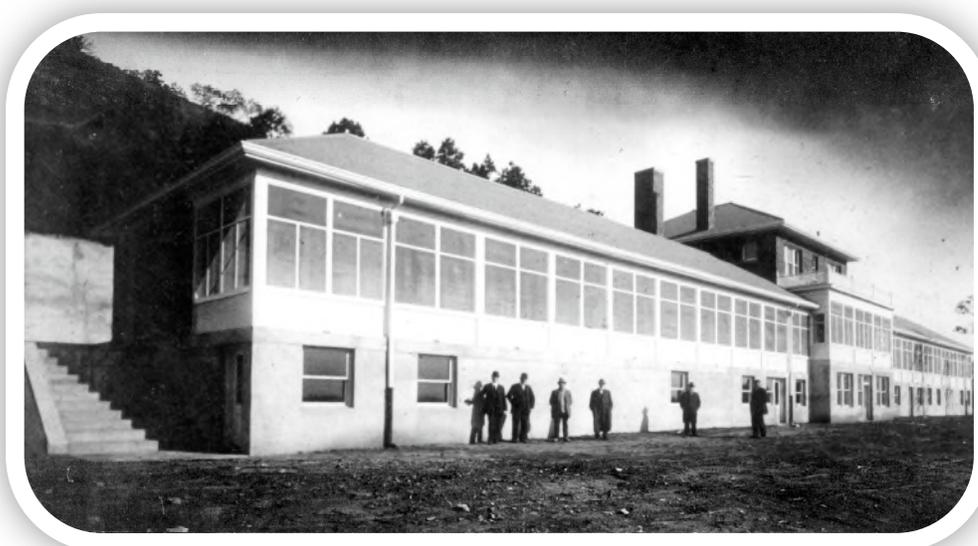


Photo from the Minnesota Historical Society collection shows the Buena Vista Sanatorium in the year of its opening, 1917. Located in Wabasha, the facility also served Winona county. Thirteen other TB sanatoriums were established across the state, Mineral Springs Sanatorium in Cannon Falls being one of the others. Oversight, including funds for construction and aid to free patients, was provided by the state Board of Control. The grounds around the facility benefitted in 1940 from landscaping performed by the WPA (Works Project Administration). The facility closed in 1955.

LCHS Membership (June, 2015)

* Designates Life Member / (H) Designates Honorary LM

The Lake City Historical Society appreciates the support and encouragement of the members listed below. Annual dues (\$10 individual, \$25 for a family) support projects and programs that preserve local history for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Alice Atkinson	Shirley Luettinger
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Susan Leuer	Kathy & Gary Yotter
Chad Lewis	Terri Zessman
Susan Links	

What's Up and What's Been Done

■ Sept 17, 7 p.m., City Hall. Dean Urdahl will speak about Abraham Lincoln's interactions with Minnesota. Urdahl, of Grove City, is an author, retired history teacher, and seven-term member of the Minnesota House. In an earlier local appearance under LCHS auspices, he spoke about the Dakota conflict.



■ June 26-28: Water Ski Days, LCHS staffs a booth in Patton Park. On Saturday, June 27 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, author Fred Johnson recounts the Sea Wing disaster, and "Ralph Samuelson" will tell how he invented water skiing. Programs will repeat with history videos in between, 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

■ May 30: Goodhue County Historical Society features Lake City's Marcia Savela as Nell Mabey (1874-1959). Mabey was a journalist, author, poet and conservationist. Her activism was critical to the establishment of Frontenac State Park.

■ May 16-June 28: The exhibit *Our Historical Journey: A History of Lake City* is featured at the Goodhue County History Center in Red Wing. Exhibit includes historic photos, artifacts and videos, one featuring "Famous Names of Lake City" and another showing some 400 picture postcards relating to Lake City.

■ May 25, Memorial Day, Annual Cemetery Tour: Portraying persons from Lake City history were Ed Borner (John M. Chalmers), David Dueholm (Raymond Hanisch), Barbara Dueholm (wife Frances Hanisch), Don Schwartz (Dr. William Cochrane), Alice Schwartz (wife Nellie Phelps Cochrane), Mandy Baldwin (Maude Abraham), Margaret Baldwin (daughter Mercedes Abraham), Grace McNeill (daughter Miriam Abraham), and Georgene Arndt (Laura Johns McRostie).



■ April 12: Showing of the 1927 movie *The General* starring Buster Keaton, a joint program of LCHS and Wabasha County Historical Society.

The Lake City Historical Society

Eloise Blattner, President
 Bob Norberg, Vice President
 Don Schwartz, Secretary
 Georgene Arndt, Treasurer
 Constance Anderson, Board Member
 Marianne Kaufmann, Board Member
 Lucy Sontag, Board Member

Please Join Us ...

... in our mission to preserve yesterday's memories for today. We meet the fourth Tuesday of each month, 2 p.m., second floor conference room of City Hall. Your input is always welcome.