

WINTER/SPRING 2020

Our Mission

To preserve, document and classify the physical history of the Lake Minnetonka area. To provide a means by which everyone can share in the history of the lake area. To stimulate interest in the cultural heritage of the area.

Founded in 1972, the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society preserves the history of Lake Minnetonka and the communities of Deephaven, Excelsior, Greenwood, Shorewood, and Tonka Bay.

The Society's Museum and Archives hold a large collection of historical artifacts and documents and the Society regularly presents programs for youth and adults and publishes books on topics of local historical interest.

ELMHS

PO Box 305
Excelsior, MN 55331
952-221-4766
info@elmhs.org
www.elmhs.org

ELMHS

Executive Director:
Rachel Houck

ELMHS
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The Harborage

Public Events Have Helped Residents Survive Long Minnesota Winters

By Kathy Endres

Long, cold Minnesota winters can be excruciating, but having something to look forward to can help ease the pain. The south Lake Minnetonka area has hosted several cold weather events to distract residents from this sometimes brutal season.

In 1936, the Excelsior Civic and Commerce Association, along with help from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), American Legion, PTA, Fire Department, and Excelsior Village Council scheduled a **Kids' Klondike Carnival** for Saturday, February 15th.

As Saturday neared, the children became more and more excited knowing there would soon be sled dog races down Water Street, ice skating races, ski races, snow modeling contests, and the crowning of a carnival queen and princess atop an ice throne on Water Street. The day would end with a fancy skating exhibition and vaudeville acts furnished by the WPA on College Lake.



LaMoine Harrison, Excelsior, being crowned Klondike Day Queen by Col. W.S. McWade, Christmas Lake, 1930s.

But, February of 1936 turned out to be one of the coldest months on record in the United States. The carnival was postponed one week due to frigid temps. As February 22nd neared, the weather was still too cold and the festivities were postponed once again. The "Minnetonka Record" stated the "kids are bursting over with enthusiasm" and "may be seen on the streets daily with skis or dog teams practicing for the great day." Finally, on Leap Day, February 29, the first Kids' Klondike Carnival was held and for four years in a row: 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939, the carnival continued.

In 1937, Annette Colburn of Excelsior, a repeat winner of the "Star Tribune's" "Dog Derby" which ran for 18 years in Minneapolis, was the winner of the dog sled race at the Kids' Klondike Carnival.

On February 17, 1973, the 1st annual Sled Dog Race was held on Lake Minnetonka where 68 teams of "mushers" and their dogs started and ended at

(Continued on page 3)

Kay Derner Receives ELMHS Volunteer of the Year Award

The first ELMHS Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Kay Derner at the ELMHS Members' Holiday Potluck and Volunteer Recognition event on December 3. Kay was "pleasantly surprised" by the honor.

Kay began volunteering at ELMHS as a model in our early fashion shows in the 1970s. She returned to visit the archives about eight years ago and has since served on the board, volunteered in the archives and was the Museum Facilitator for several years. She also wrote, designed and installed a display in our museum about her ancestor, noted Excelsior fruit grower Alanson Latham.

Always cheerful and ever enthusiastic, Kay has put in many hours making ELMHS a better place and is well known to school children who have toured our museum. Not one to rest on her laurels, we are thrilled that Kay will continue to be an active volunteer.



Kay Derner models at the 1976 "One Hundred Years of Fashion" ELMHS Antique Style Show.



Kay Derner, 2019 ELMHS Volunteer of the Year

From the Executive Director

Big Plans for the ELMHS Museum!

A big thank you to volunteers Steve Kobs and Mary Upgren for all their hard work in the ELMHS museum this year! Steve and Mary have been busy organizing and cataloging our textile collection as well as planning for updates in the exhibits. Steve has recently been appointed the Museum Committee Facilitator following the retirement of the previous Facilitator, Kay Derner.

We are also pleased to announce that ELMHS is the proud recipient of another Legacy grant made possible



in part by the people of Minnesota through an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. This grant will help fund the research phase of a new exhibit about Lake Life in the ELMHS museum. One of the most important steps in this phase is an audience evaluation. This will allow ELMHS board, staff, and volunteers to understand our audience- who they are and what they are hoping to see or learn from our museum. If you would like to take part in this crucial step, please contact me at Director@elmhs.org or (952) 221-4766. The new exhibit is tentatively scheduled to open in the spring of 2021.

Rachel Houck

ELMHS Executive Director

ELMHS Presents Old Fashioned Winter Children's Program



"Marm" Annie Schilling worked with children attending the Winter Story and Craft program on December 7th.

On December 7th, ELMHS presented an "Old Fashioned Winter Story and Craft" program led by Annie Schilling at the Excelsior branch of the Hennepin County Library. This chilly, yet sunny afternoon brought in children from the community who participated in learning what winter was like before TV and the internet. The children also made Victorian themed greeting cards which they were able to take home and share with loved ones.



The Excelsior Library's meeting room was filled with children excited to make crafts and learn about winters long ago.

(Continued from page 1)

the Excelsior Commons. This was much different than the sled dog races held during the Klondike Kids' Carnival where children tied their mutts to a sled while they kneeled or sat, hoping the dog would run and the sled wouldn't tip over.



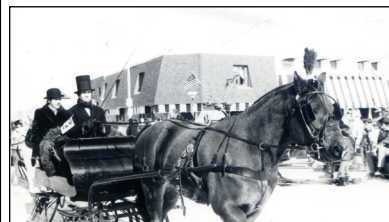
Sled Dog race, Excelsior Commons, 1973.

The Sled Dog Race was sponsored by the Greater Excelsior Area Chamber of Commerce and North Star Sled Dog Club. The purse was \$300 and entrants came from many northern Minnesota cities. A cross country ski race and a junior hockey game were also planned.

The following year, the same group gathered again and this time 70 teams raced for the top spot. In 1975, the race was cancelled due to ice conditions. But in 1980 and three times in the 1990's, the dogs were back racing for as much as \$7,500 in 1998.

This winter the Lake Minnetonka Klondike Derby will be held February 9th starting at 10 a.m. on Water Street in Excelsior. For more info, go to www.klondikedogderby.com.

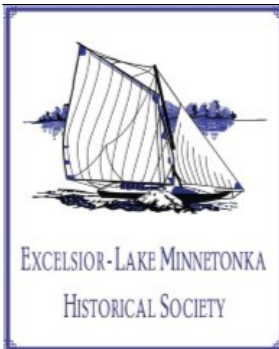
Another winter community event was held on March 5, 1977. Sno-Cup Day involved all the south shore cities and was sponsored by the Excelsior Boosters. The day began with a mutt and sleigh race and was followed by a snow fort building contest, cross country ski race, and food vendors.



Sno-Cup Day, 1977.

The Sno-Cup Challenge began later in the day with 6-person teams from Excelsior, Greenwood, Tonka Bay and Shorewood made up of city

council members and citizens racing in an obstacle course. Tonka Bay was the victor. The day ended with a sleigh and cutter parade down Water Street complete with prizes.



TAPPING HISTORY

PINTS AND REFLECTIONS ON LAKE MINNETONKA'S PAST

Second Monday of the Month at 7:00 pm

Excelsior Brewing Company, 421 Third Street, Excelsior

Free & Open to the Public

\$5.00 Suggested Contribution at the Door

Doors Open at 6:00pm. Capacity is limited to 125 people. Seating is first come, first served.

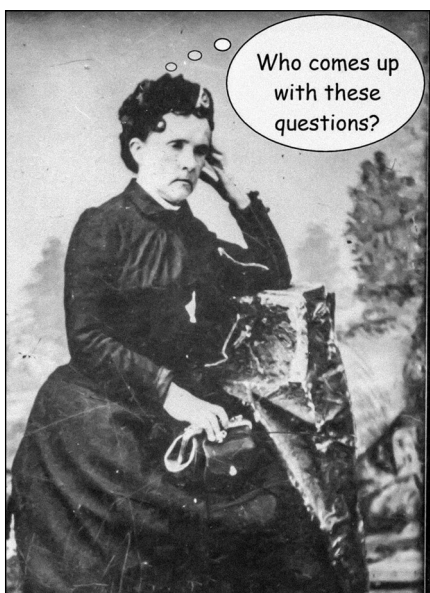
****SPECIAL ELMHS MEMBER PERK!****

A limited number of free, prime seats are available to ELMHS MEMBERS ONLY at select programs! Register at elmhs1.eventbrite.com

For more information: info@elmhs.org, 952-221-4766, www.elmhs.org.

Monday, January 13, 7:00pm

Lake Minnetonka Trivia Night



Grab your friends, test your knowledge and win a prize at this special Tapping History. Topics will cover the past and present of Excelsior and the Lake Minnetonka area. You don't need to be an expert to participate and you can compete individually or on an informal team. We will cover everything from famous people, places, boats, and many other topics.

Monday, February 10, 7:00pm

Olaf Searle, the Big Island Channel & Mahpiyata Island with Paul Maravelas



Much has been written about Big Island Amusement Park, Veterans Camp and "Cruiser's Cove." Learn about the lesser known history of Big Island as historian Paul Maravelas explores the rise and fall of a Norwegian-born immigration agent, his family's lavishly landscaped estate and his plans for a bridge to the mainland. Paul will also discuss the origin of Mahpiyata Island including architect Franz Gayl's unusual hand built home on it and his effort to develop a camp dedicated to world peace.

Monday, March 9, 7:00pm

Postcards of Lake Minnetonka
with Chuck Donley

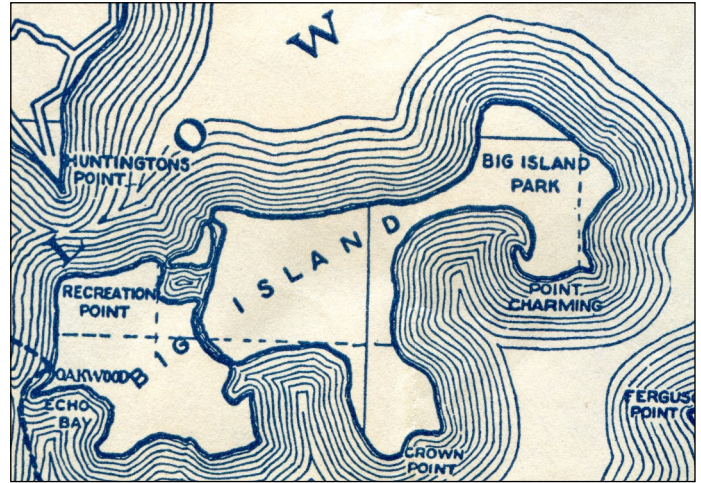


First appearing in the early years of the 20th century, these cards are sometimes the only evidence we have of the lake's great hotels, massive steamers and amusement parks, as well as humble bait shops, streetscapes and bits of everyday life. This simple ephemera is an invaluable resource for historians, preserving images of years gone by.

Chuck Donley will share some of his personal collection of over 1000 cards of Lake Minnetonka and its surrounding towns and will explore what the hobby of deltiology can tell us about Lake Minnetonka's history.

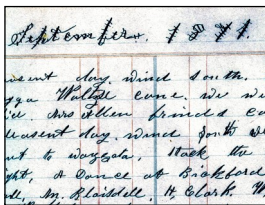
Monday, April 13, 7:00pm

Oakwood: A History of West Big Island
with Aaron Person



Big Island is often in the news, but the west side of the island gets little notice, even though we know there has been a human presence there for thousands of years. Aaron Person will explore this little known part of the island from its first inhabitants to the cottagers of the 1880s and the Scandinavian immigrants who moved in after them. "Oakwood" contains some of the oldest structures still in continuous use on either side of the island and has some fascinating stories to tell.

UPCOMING YOUTH PROGRAMS



The Lost Art of Cursive Writing

Discover a lost art! Learn to write in cursive the same way your ancestors did, as you

experiment with old fashioned slate boards and ink and dip pens. You'll also decipher the cursive writing of Lake Minnetonka pioneers' diaries and letters, learning about their lives from their own words. By the end of class, you'll be ready to put pen to paper and express yourself beautifully! Minnetonka non-school days, Grades 3-5: Monday, January 27 and Friday, March 6, 9:00 am-3:00 pm, Minnetonka Community Education Center, Deephaven. Enroll through Minnetonka Community Education: minnetonka.ce.eleyo.com.

Lake Minnetonka History Camp

Time to start thinking about summer activities! Our campers will be immersed in Lake Minnetonka life in the mid-1800s and will have hands-on experience with skills they would have used on a Lake Minnetonka homestead. Children will gain an understanding of state and local history, the importance of community and those who came before them through stories, play, visits to local landmarks as well as the necessary chores of pioneer life. Enroll soon at Minnetonka Community Education: minnetonka.ce.eleyo.com.



MEMBERSHIP

Members shape the Society's policies and programs, and support our work in preserving the area's history.

Annual member benefits include:

- ◆ Discounts and special member privileges on select opportunities
- ◆ The Society's newsletter and mailings
- ◆ Invitations to special events
- ◆ Voting privileges

Membership Levels

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | Platinum | <input type="checkbox"/> \$45 | Household |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | Gold | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 | Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | Silver | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 | Senior/Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | Bronze | | |

Or, make an individual contribution of any amount!

\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Mail form and check made out to ELMHS to PO Box 305, Excelsior, MN 55331. You can also join or contribute online at www.elmhs.org. The Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

VOLUNTEERING

- Please contact me about volunteering for the Society. (See panel to right for more information.)

DONATION OF ARTIFACTS

- Please contact me regarding the donation of historical items to the Society. (See panel to right for more information.)

Volunteer with Us!

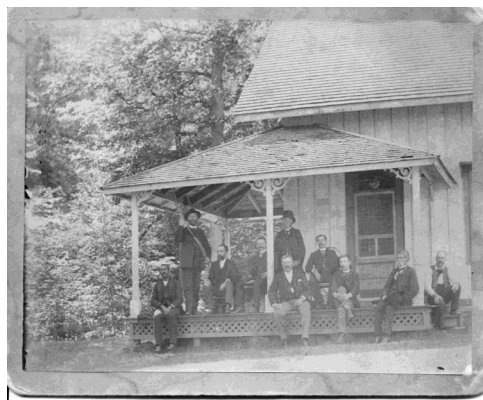
The Society is staffed almost entirely by volunteers and welcomes people of all ages and abilities to pursue their passions and assist in areas including:

- **Archives:** Assisting visitors, scanning, filing, researching, data entry.
- **Museum:** Serving as a host, cleaning and upkeep, data entry.
- **Publications:** Marketing merchandise to vendors, conducting inventories, selling merchandise at events, creating new books.
- **Programs and Events:** Set up and take down for Tapping History, welcoming people, creating new programs.
- **Membership and Fundraising:** Recruiting new members, contributors and volunteers, helping with direct mail appeals and special fundraising events, data entry.
- **Communications:** Writing press releases, creating marketing materials, contributing to social media, maintaining our website.
- **Technology:** Maintaining the Society's computer network and hardware, troubleshooting IT issues.

Training in all areas is provided. Contact us at info@elmhs.org or 952-221-4766 to learn more or visit our website at www.elmhs.org/volunteer.

Donate Artifacts

Donations of historic artifacts, photographs and documents pertinent to the history of the south Lake Minnetonka area are welcome for preservation in our Archives and display in our Museum. Help us share our community's history with future generations by sharing your history with us! (Due to space limitations, the Society is unable to accept all donations.)



Major George Halstead at his "Hermitage" in Minnetrista, discovered and donated by Excelsior's Lori Anderson while remodeling her historic home.

Thanks for your support!

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS, AND CONTRIBUTORS

For the period of August 1—November 30, 2019

MEMBERSHIPS

Platinum Level

Bill & Shirley Baxter
Jonathan & Becky Ray

Gold Level

American Legion Post #259
Anne & Keith Obermeyer

Silver Level

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Jennifer & Tim Caron
John & Meric Dougherty
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Dan & Allison Kelly
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Ron & Marcia McDaniel
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Kirsten Pardoe
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Pam & Tom Stovern
Kathé & Todd White

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Cathy & Cam Guthrie
Kelly Hanson

John Kieffer
Elizabeth Potter
Rex Rundquist
Bonnie Schindler
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schneider
Tim Soboleski
Gary & Kay Thompson
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Elaine C. Barber
Nancy Christianson
Tarah Cummings
Lindsay Hannah
Peter J. Hartwich
Steve Kobs
Pamela Koenig
Bruce Leach
Susan & Brian Mark
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Kelly Nehowig
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Mark Read
Lori Schlottman
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Drue Gisvold
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Georgetta Hickey
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Timothy Lawless
Mary Mann
Pamela Horton & Michael Mason
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Barb & Bill Tapper
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(No longer offered)
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Bob & Diane Bolles
Suellen Douglas
Don & Frannie Douglass
Kristin & Ken Dowell
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John Gorecki
John P. & Jan Gray
Phil & Eileen Hallin
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Michael Kramer
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Carol Schmidt
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Tad Shaw

Lisa Stevens & Jeffrey Hatcher
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TSP Architecture, Inc.
Ruth Witrak

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Don Beeler
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IN-KIND CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Kobs
Scott D. McGinnis

New Print of Big Island Amusement Park Available

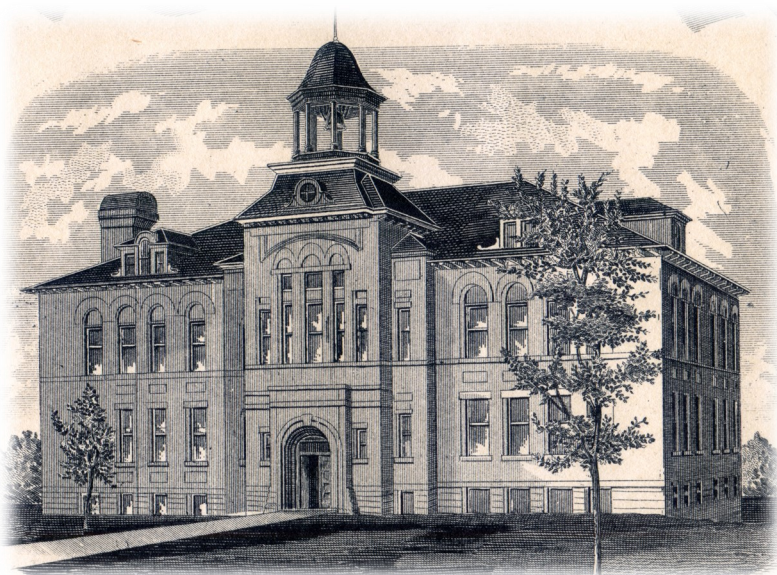


You can own this digitally restored print of a 1907 Twin City Rapid Transit Company brochure promoting their Lake Minnetonka attraction - Big Island Amusement Park (1906-1911). Printed on archival gloss exhibition canvas and stretched over a wood frame, 52"Wx15"H. Visit elmhs.org/store for more information.

Visit Our Archives!

Learn more about the people, places, businesses and buildings that were our past and inform our present. Newspaper microfilm, history library, biographical files, property files, maps, thousand of historic photographs, school, church and business histories, obituaries, cemetery records and much more. Our enthusiastic volunteers are ready to help you!

Historic Excelsior Public School
261 School Avenue, Lower Level, Excelsior
Wednesdays and the second Saturday of the month, 10am-1pm.



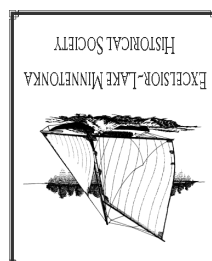
Call for Board Members

Do you love history? Are you looking for a way to serve your community? ELMHS is on the lookout for talented individuals who can take us to the next level! Our board is composed of 7-11 members with staggered three year terms who meet on the second Tuesday of the month at least ten months out of the year.

Want to learn more? Email us at info@elmhs.org.

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