

FALL/WINTER 2022

**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. 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  
Board of Directors**

**President:**

Mark Read

**Vice President:**

Scott Zerby

**Treasurer:**

Lisa Stevens

**Secretary:**

Kirsten Pardoe

**Directors:** Cheryl Ahlcrona, Deanna Bunkelman, Bill Heyman, Tom Kolar.

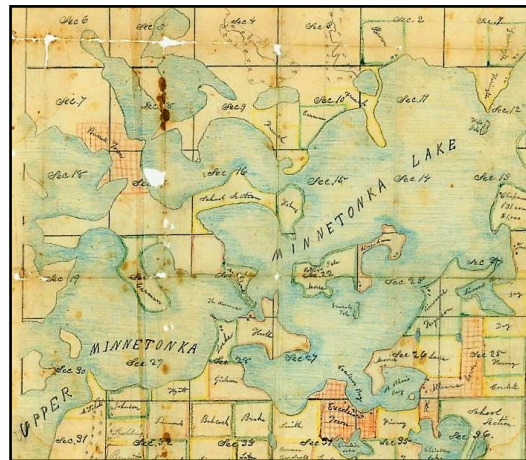
# The Harborage

## A Rare Piece of History Returns to Excelsior

In March 2022 a letter sent by Excelsior pioneer William Ferguson to Andover, Massachusetts resident Joseph S. Holt one hundred and sixty-six years ago arrived back in Excelsior. And all it took was a little modern technology and a very thoughtful and generous donor.



On February 25, 1856, William Ferguson wrote to Joseph Holt seeking a loan of \$1,000-\$5,000 to distribute in the form of small, low interest loans to Lake Minnetonka settlers who were struggling with high interest rates and prohibitively expensive goods and supplies. Ferguson explained that many were giving up and returning to the east or moving farther west where they were encountering the same difficult conditions. The [letter](#) was accompanied by a [map](#) carefully traced and colored by William's wife Lydia, showing settler's names and properties as well as the names of towns around the lake.



Portion of 1856 map of Lake Minnetonka drawn by Lydia Ferguson.

It was not unusual for settlers to write to family and acquaintances "back east" for assistance in circumstances such as these and we don't know if Joseph S. Holt accommodated Ferguson's request. But his great, great grandson and namesake, Joseph (Joe) Blunt certainly came through for the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society (ELMHS).

Lydia and William Ferguson had lived in Andover and likely knew the Holt family during that time. They arrived at "Ferguson Point" in Deephaven with their two children in 1854 and recorded their journey and daily struggles in diaries kept until

1886, providing a detailed history of Lake Minnetonka. Sadly, William drowned in 1857 and Lydia persevered on their claim with her two children until her death in 1895. Her descendants remained on the point until 1962.

This letter and map are thrilling finds for local historians, having been created just three years after Excelsior was founded and three years before Minnesota became a state. We see familiar settler's names such as Galpin, Hull, Carman, Gideon, Robinson and Harrington, as well as the villages of Excelsior and Wayzata. We also see Big Island identified as "Cottage Isle" (thought to be named for the cottages erected there by the Dakota) and the short-lived, "paper towns" of "St. Albans" on the present-day bay of the same name and William F. Russell's claim "Russell Town" (aka "Tazaska") between West

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# The Society Column

## Thank You Outgoing Board Members

**Scott Dake** served on the Board of Directors for two terms from 2016 to 2022, serving as Secretary, Vice President and President. Scott also chaired the search committee that brought Rachel Houck to ELMHS as Executive Director. Scott volunteered unflinchingly, along with his wife Joey, performing duties large and small, from financial consulting to processing mailings.

**Andrew Punch** served one term on the Board beginning in 2019 and served as Treasurer for several months, resigning in 2022 to spend more time with his family.



*Tad Shaw enjoying his recent birthday celebration.*

**Tad Shaw** served from 2000 to 2022, serving as President, Vice President and Secretary, our longtime parliamentarian, provided insurance advice and connected ELMHS to the local business community. He and wife Mary also hosted the ELMHS Holiday Party for many years at their lovely home on Christmas Lake.

## And . . . Welcome New Board Members!

**Cheryl Ahlcrona** is a long-time Lake Minnetonka area resident and ELMHS volunteer. She previously served on the board from 2016 –2021 with one term as Treasurer.



**Scott Zerby** brings technological knowledge and a love of history to the board, with experience as a business owner and past mayor of Shorewood.



## Lake Minnetonka Historical Organizations Strategic Partnership Update

For the past two and a half years the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, Museum of Lake Minnetonka, Wayzata Historical Society, and Westonka Historical Society have partnered together to explore ways that our organizations can sustain our common missions and collaborate to better serve the history of the Lake Minnetonka area, now and in the future. A study of this issue has been completed by Arts Consulting Group and a final report recommending consolidation on an incremental basis has been distributed to our partner boards.

In order to give our Boards and Memberships greater insight and appreciation into how a new consolidated entity could be structured and operated, the four boards have passed a resolution directing a Joint Committee of the partners to develop a nonbinding governance and operational framework for a possible consolidation of the organizations. The Joint Committee will also develop a vision for maintaining the history of the lake's local communities while unlocking the story of the Lake Minnetonka community as a whole. This framework will be shared with the partner boards by January 2023 and consolidation of the organizations will require approval of their memberships.

ELMHS' Joint Committee members Lisa Stevens and Scott McGinnis welcome any thoughts or questions about this process at [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org).

## Looking for a Unique Holiday Gift?

*Delight friends and family while you support ELMHS!*

Shop at [www.elmhs.org/store](http://www.elmhs.org/store) for books and prints and visit [www.bonfire.com/store/elmhs/](http://www.bonfire.com/store/elmhs/) for clothing, mugs, and tote bags with the ELMHS logo or vintage Excelsior Amusement Park artwork.



## Little Free HISTORY Libraries are Going Up

You've probably seen and heard of Little Free Libraries (LFL). Two of the newest LFL are in Excelsior and are unique because unlike most, these have a theme – HISTORY. These libraries were made for an Eagle Scout project by Bryce Alexander, in collaboration with ELMHS. Bryce is a Minnetonka High School Senior from Shorewood.

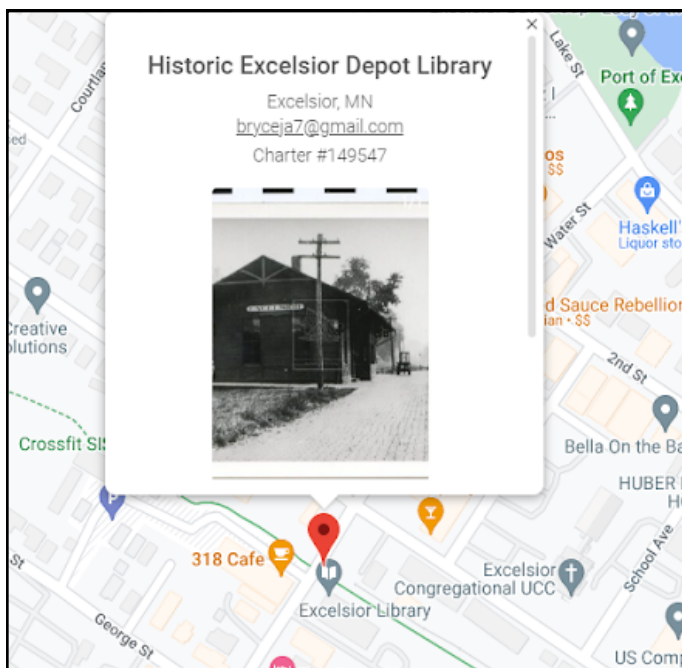


New Little Free Library near the site of the old Excelsior Depot

The first LFL Bryce installed is a replica of the old Excelsior depot. This depot was constructed in 1883 near where you will find this new LFL, next to the Excelsior Amusement Park Ticket Booth, on Water Street between Third and George Streets. The original depot was demolished and a new one built in 1952 next to the old

site. ELMHS' museum is now in that new depot, just up the tracks from the LFL.

Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization based in St. Paul, MN with more than 100,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes worldwide. Their mission is to be a catalyst for building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries.



Red pin on the map indicates historic depot LFL's location. From [www.littlefreelibrary.org/map/](http://www.littlefreelibrary.org/map/). Photo is of the Excelsior Depot, early 1900's.

Another ELMHS Little Free Library will soon be installed by Bryce at the Port of Excelsior. This LFL will be a replica of the historic Blue Line Café, also called the Blue Line Pavilion. This building was originally located where the Bayshore Manor Condominiums are today and burned in 1958.



Blue Line Café, ca 1912.

Besides being unique because they are replicas of historic buildings, these LFLs are also distinctive since they will be stocked with books about local history provided by ELMHS.

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Arm and Crystal Bay which he promoted as a site for the state capitol.

How did this rich resource come to ELMHS? Having moved from his namesake's historic house in Andover, MA to Florida, Joe Blunt could have continued to keep these materials in a drawer and "in the family" for another one hundred sixty-six years. But being a history buff and knowing his genealogy, he felt they should be where they could be preserved for future generations and would serve the public. Joe Googled "Excelsior," found us, messaged us and excitedly sent the letter and map from his home in Florida back from whence they came. The pieces have now been studied, digitized and carefully preserved in our archives, along with the Ferguson letters, photographs, artwork and diaries donated in 1976 by Frances Callaghan, Lydia Ferguson's great, great, granddaughter.

When ELMHS was founded in 1972, we had a couple of file drawers in village hall and a small collection of three-dimensional objects stored by our members. Today our [archives](#) occupy over 400 square feet in the historic Excelsior Public School building on School Avenue in Excelsior. It's filled to its one hundred- and twenty-three-year-old rafters with file cabinets, acid free boxes, our textile collection, hundreds of files of historic information and documents and over 10,000 carefully sleeved and digitized photos. Much of our collection can be searched on our [CollectiveAccess](#) page along with many three-

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# Upcoming Events

## Tapping History

[Excelsior Brewing Company](#),

421 Third St., Excelsior

\$5.00 suggested contribution at the door.



President Nixon Meets Chairman Mao, 1972 (NARA)

**Monday, September 12 | 7:00 pm**

**FREE Trivia Night**

**1972 from Water Street to Watergate**

Presented by ELMHS Board Member Tom Kolar. Do you remember '72? Prove it at this FREE Tapping History trivia contest! Amaze your friends with your knowledge of 1972 local, national and international history. Grand prize: Framed, color, reproduction of a 1898 Excelsior map!

**Registration and More Information:**

<https://elmhs1972trivia.eventbrite.com>

**Monday, November 7 | 7:00 pm**

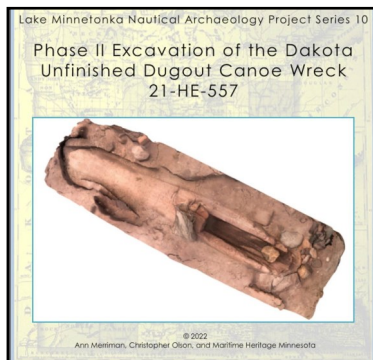
**Underwater Archaeology Around  
Excelsior Update**

With Ann Merriman, PhD, and Christopher Olson, MA, of  
[Maritime Heritage Minnesota](#)

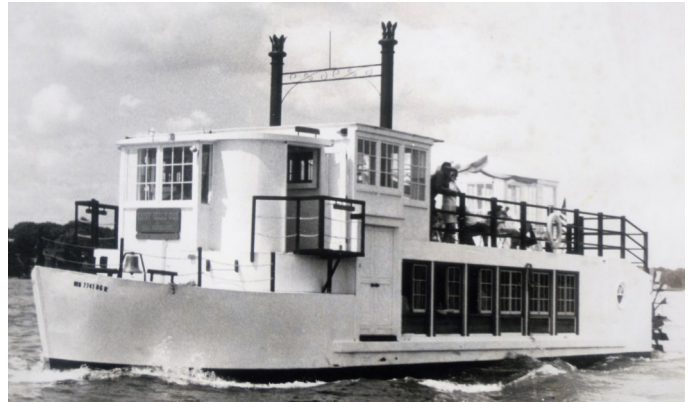
Ann and Christopher will give an update on their most recent discoveries, underwater sonar surveys and archeological investigations into lakes around Excelsior.

**Registration and More Information:**

[Elmhs1.eventbrite.com](https://Elmhs1.eventbrite.com)



## History Cruise



"Kathy-Belle-Dan" (now "Lady of the Lake") ca. 1972, courtesy "Lady of the Lake."

**Sunday, September 18 | 3:00 pm**  
**An Afternoon Cruise Through 1972**

Our final cruise of the season aboard "Lady of the Lake," this cruise offers a fun afternoon of trivia, nostalgia, tunes and history from 1972, the year of ELMHS' founding.

Joanie Holst of Wayzata Historical Society will share the history of south lake sites as they were fifty years ago while tapping and teasing memories of the Excelsior Amusement Park, Lyman Lodge, Big Island Veteran's Camp and more. [This cruise will NOT re-enact 1972's [The Poseidon Adventure](#).]

**Tickets and More Information:**

\$22.50 members | \$37.50 non-members

<https://1972.eventbrite.com>

**Give to the Max Day  
November 17, 2022**

ELMHS will again be participating with GiveMN.org. Plan to join others raising funds together to keep our Society pursuing it's mission into the next 50 years! Visit GiveMN.org to support ELMHS today.

**giveMN.org**  
Ignite Generosity ■ Grow Giving

## Walking Tour

Saturday, September 17 | 12:00 pm  
**Apple Day Water Street Walking Tour**

Do you know how Water Street got its name? Historian Scott D. McGinnis will lead a walking tour down Excelsior's historic Water Street. The tour will begin at the [Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society Museum](#), 305 Water Street and end at the Port of Excelsior on the shore of Lake Minnetonka. This portion of Water Street is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Learn more about the history of Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka at the Society's free Museum before or after the tour from 10:00 am-2:00 pm.

**Parking:** Excelsior parking information may be found at [tinyurl.com/5bbasfv5](http://tinyurl.com/5bbasfv5).

\$5.00 suggested contribution

**Registration and More Information:**  
[elmhswatersttour2022.eventbrite.com](http://elmhswatersttour2022.eventbrite.com)

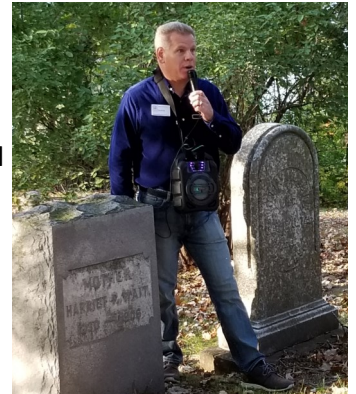


Parade on Water Street, 1930

## Cemetery Tour

Saturday, October 29 | 12:00 noon  
**Oak Hill Cemetery Tour**

Join historian Scott D. McGinnis at the top of Oak Hill as he leads a walking tour of historic Oak Hill Cemetery—Excelsior's burial ground since the 1850's. Scott will highlight the lives and deaths of the area's settlers and citizens and will answer questions about those buried here.



Scott McGinnis leading a cemetery tour.

*This tour includes standing and walking over steep uneven terrain.*

**Parking is very limited.** Oak Hill is steep so the tour may be cancelled due to wet conditions. Those registered will be notified via email if it is necessary to cancel. Weather related updates will also be posted at [elmhs.org](http://elmhs.org) and [facebook.com/ELMHS](https://facebook.com/ELMHS) if warranted.

\$5 suggested contribution

**Registration and More Information:**  
[elmhsoakhilltour2022.eventbrite.com](http://elmhsoakhilltour2022.eventbrite.com)

## Run for History 5K

You can complete a 5K run or walk **anywhere, anytime**, while supporting ELMHS's mission.



1. Register at [elmhs.org/50th](http://elmhs.org/50th) and pay \$45 registration fee via our online host, GoneforaRun.com. *A significant portion is donated to ELMHS!*
2. Download your Run for History 5K bib.
3. When ready and have the time, put on your bib and complete the 5K. *Want a route? Excelsior Walking Tour is 5K long See the ELMHS website for tours at [elmhs.org/self-guidedtours.html](http://elmhs.org/self-guidedtours.html)*
4. Report your time to the host of our virtual 5K, GoneforaRun.com. *A t-shirt and medal will be sent to your address.*

*Thanks for your support!*

## NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

*April 1 through July 31, 2022*

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### Platinum Members

Michael Bussey  
Scott Dake  
Richard McGinnis  
Melinda Pfohl

### Gold Members

Dean Akins  
Joseph Schwartz

### Silver Members

John Dougherty  
Duffy Larsen-Abramson  
Tom Skramstad  
Tom Umhoefer

### Bronze Members

Patrick Dupont  
Hank Graef  
Kirsten Pardoe  
John Purdy  
Lori Schlottman  
Craig Shavers  
Jenny Skinner  
Jane Stein  
LaWayne Yaeger

### Household Members

Tony Condon  
Mary Davy  
Sean Gerrety  
Mark Gleason  
Gail Griffin  
Marianne Hamrick  
Theresa Kiihn  
Carol McMullin

Tim Soboleski  
Gary Thompson  
Liz Vandam  
Larry Zieske

### Individual Members

Lynette Andersen  
Elaine Barber  
Susan Boris  
Karen Germaine  
Amy Hapka  
Kathleen Jewett  
Kathy Johnson  
Jeanne Kleve  
Robert Sevey

### Dual Senior Members

Mark Christensen  
Ken Kotzer  
Bonnie Lane  
Leone McGlone  
Ernest Mutterer  
Patricia Priesmeyer  
Dale Rostad  
Martha Snyder  
Richard Spiegel

### Senior/Student Members

Mary Ellen Bennett  
Patricia Carter  
Jo Dahl  
Drue Gisvold  
Kathleen Harriman  
Carol Kranz  
Kathryn Kucera

Krista Labie  
Beverly Lane  
James Larsen  
Lenore Miller  
Jean Mueller  
Bob Nygaard  
Jean Rainbow  
David Rients  
Jim & Leanna Rogers  
Paul Sadek  
Leanne Shepherd  
Joan Wolfe  
Tom Wolfe

### Life Members

*(No longer offered)*

Bart Baker  
Alec & Marianne Beck  
Bob & Diane Bolles  
Suellen Douglas  
Don & Frannie Douglass  
Kristin & Ken Dowell  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert W.  
Fayfield  
John Gorecki  
John P. & Jan Gray  
Phil & Eileen Hallin  
Paul Huber  
Ron Hughes  
Dr. & Mrs. Randy Julian  
Mr. & Mrs. Nick Johnson  
Terrance Kellogg  
Mark Knowlton  
Tom & Carol Knowlton  
Michael Kramer  
Ann Lundsten

Scott D. McGinnis  
Minnesota Streetcar  
Museum  
Robert L. Naas  
Bill & Steph Naegele  
Aaron Person  
Sharon Provost  
Kellie & Gary Ringate  
Kathy Knowlton Schmid  
Carol Schmidt  
Dr. Milton H. Seifert  
Tad Shaw  
Lisa Stevens &  
Jeffrey Hatcher  
Rodney Thompson  
TSP Architecture, Inc.  
Ruth Witrak

### Contributors

Matt Dolliff  
Stephen Doyle  
Kathleen Jewett  
Dan Johnson  
Bob Nygaard  
Charles Scimeca  
Robert Sevey

### Memorials

Joanie Holst,  
in memory of Betty Peck  
Jack Post and Family,  
in memory of Geneva and  
Edmund Post

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dimensional artifacts housed in our small, seasonal [museum](#) at 305 Water Street in the old Excelsior depot.

While our display and storage space are limited, we remain ready to accept [donations](#) of historic significance to the Lake Minnetonka area (and we'd welcome the donation of a large, climate-controlled space too!) We don't know what prompted Joe's ancestors to keep the letter and map for generations, but we're glad they did. We know it can sometimes be a painful decision to part

with family treasures. But our donors are secure in the knowledge that we follow best practices and that their donation will serve the greater good.

We thank Joe Blunt and all the others like him over the past 50 years for their generosity in allowing us to preserve their family's piece of history and share it with the public. And we know those who enjoy and learn from those donations thank them too! Want to learn more about donating historic material? Contact us at [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org) or 952-221-4766 or visit [www.elmhs.org](http://www.elmhs.org). We're ready for fifty more years of historic surprises!



## Call for Volunteers

ELMHS is refreshing our Committees and rebuilding our volunteer teams! Volunteers attend monthly meetings and accomplish the following tasks.

**Public Programs:** planning programs, scheduling, coordinating presenters and venues, facilitating at events

**Display:** exhibit planning and creation, museum hosting, facility maintenance

**Collections:** care, cataloguing, research, filing, scanning

**Communications:** designing, editing, distributing newsletter, e-newsletters, press releases, social media

**Development:** membership and fundraising

**Merchandise:** managing and promoting ELMHS books, maps, t-shirts, and other items

Visit <https://www.elmhs.org/volunteer> to sign up and for more information.



Volunteers at the 50th Anniversary Museum Open House, May 2022.

## 50th Celebration and Fundraiser Auction Support Needed

ELMHS is currently gathering items for our upcoming silent and live auctions at our October 10th fundraiser. Donations may be tax deductible.

If you prefer to donate your time, volunteers are also needed at this celebration. If you have any items, services or time you would like to donate, please email us at [secretary@elmhs.org](mailto:secretary@elmhs.org).

## Are You a Member?

Members shape the Society's policies and programs, continuing 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

Become a Member or renew your membership online at [www.elmhs.org/store/p65/Membership](http://www.elmhs.org/store/p65/Membership).

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

### Volunteering

- Please contact me about volunteering.

### Donation of Artifacts

- Please contact me regarding the donation of historical items.

Mail form and check made out to ELMHS to PO Box 305, Excelsior, MN 55331. Or, join or contribute online at [www.elmhs.org](http://www.elmhs.org). The Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



**Monday, October 10 | 7:00 pm**

Pique Travel, 306 Water St, Excelsior

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Celebration and Fundraiser**

**Where Were You in '72?**

Join the Excelsior Lake-Minnetonka Historical Society in an entertaining evening to honor our founders and devoted volunteers over the last 50 years. Take a light-hearted look at our past from the future, with playwright and screenwriter, Jeffrey Hatcher. Share a laugh over what was happening in Excelsior, around Lake Minnetonka, the Twin Cities - and with you in '72!

*Support ELMHS' next 50 years! Place a bid in our groovy silent & live auctions.*

*Dig up some bell bottoms! Wear '72 era threads to win a prize.*

*Far out appetizers, desserts and cash bar.*

**Tickets:** \$25 per person

**Purchase tickets by October 1st online at**  
[ELMHS50th.eventbrite.com](http://ELMHS50th.eventbrite.com) or contact us  
at [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org), 952-221-4766.

**ELMHS Thanks Our Sponsors**



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Excelsior MN 55331  
PO Box 305

