

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

**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**

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# The Harborage

## Building Bridges and Making Enemies

*The second of a two-part series about the bridges over St. Alban's Bay, Excelsior*

By Scott D. McGinnis

Both the Village of Excelsior and Excelsior Township residents were long desirous of a safe way across Saint Alban's Bay after the area was settled. As early as 1892, they approached the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway about the possibility of placing a pedestrian walkway on the Railway's bridge, but the proposal was rejected by the Railway.



The Solberg Point draw bridge was reconstructed during the winter of 1893-1894. Men posed for a photograph on the newly completed bridge, April 1894.

Finally, a wagon and foot bridge were built just east of the Railway's swivel drawbridge

during the winter of 1896-1897. The new bridge and approaches were 399 feet long with a drawbridge 54 feet in width. As with earlier parties interested in St. Alban's Bay, financial bickering among Hennepin County, the Village of Excelsior, and Excelsior Township quickly followed. The County Engineer refused to release the \$2,500 pledged by the County Commissioners because of a law prohibiting the County from expending more than \$300 to any single municipality. Eventually, the Minnesota Legislature passed a special law in 1899 to allow this payment and Captain John R. Johnson was paid.

The bridge quickly began to deteriorate, resulting in another dispute, now between the Village and Township regarding expenses for repairs. A Hennepin County District Court judgment dated August 17, 1903, declared that the boundary between the two was the middle of the draw bridge and that the Village was responsible for repairs on the south side and the Township, for the north side. The original bridge was in such poor condition that it actually collapsed as reported in the Minneapolis Journal, October 19, 1904.

*The wagon bridge across the neck of St. Albans bay, Minnetonka, is a wreck. Last evening, a heavy car, hauled by four harses [sic], was crossing the bridge, when the driver felt the drawbridge section begin to sink. He whipped up his horses and succeeded in crossing safely. C. H. Smith, of light rig, also*

*(Continued on page 3)*

# *W The Society Column B*

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## Lake Minnetonka Historical Organizations

### Consolidation Update

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After three years of careful study, discussion and consideration, the Boards of Directors of the **Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society**, **Museum of Lake Minnetonka** (Steamboat *Minnehaha*), **Wayzata Historical Society** and **Westonka Historical Society** have voted unanimously to approve a **Plan of Consolidation** between our four organizations.

Current members of each organization have been sent a **Special Membership Meeting Notice** and will vote on a Plan of Consolidation pursuant to MN Statute 317A.613, Subd. 2, by the end of May.

The Board of Directors feel that this path will address the sustainability challenges our volunteer organization has faced over the years and will allow us to remain diligent stewards of our history as we continue to collect, preserve and share the history of **Deephaven**, **Excelsior**, **Greenwood**, **Shorewood** and **Tonka Bay** together with Lake Minnetonka's history as a whole.

We encourage members to attend one of the members' **Consolidation Information Sessions** listed below to learn more about the proposed consolidation and have their questions answered. At these presentations, the Joint Committee of the four organizations will share the background of the proposed consolidation and explain how the consolidated organization will operate and be governed. ELMHS members will then vote on the Plan of Consolidation on May 23 (see below).

This is a very exciting time for Lake Minnetonka History and we're looking forward to sharing what the future holds for all of us.

*Mark Read*  
President, ELMHS Board of Directors  
[president@elmhs.org](mailto:president@elmhs.org)

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### *Members: Learn More at a Consolidation Information Session*

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**Thursday, May 4, 2023, 7:00 pm**  
**Wayzata Community Room,**  
Wayzata City Hall  
[600 Rice Street E, Wayzata](#)

**Saturday, May 6, 2023, 11:00 am**  
**Lake Minnetonka Shores**  
[4515 Shoreline Drive, Spring Park](#)

**Tuesday, May 9, 2023, 7:00 pm**  
**Mount Calvary Lutheran Church**  
**Sanctuary**  
[301 County Road 19, Excelsior](#)

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### *Special Membership Meeting of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society*

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**7:00 PM, Tuesday, May 23, 2023**  
**Mount Calvary Lutheran Church Sanctuary**  
[301 County Road 19, Excelsior, MN](#)

- **To approve the proposed [Plan of Consolidation](#)** between Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society (ELMHS), Museum of Lake Minnetonka (Steamboat *Minnehaha*), Wayzata Historical Society and Westonka Historical Society.
- **To allow the postponement of the 2023 ELMHS Annual Meeting** from June 2023 as mandated by our bylaws to a later date to occur before September 30, 2023.

*Complete information about the proposed consolidation may be found on the ELMHS website at [www.elmhs.org/lmhs](http://www.elmhs.org/lmhs).*

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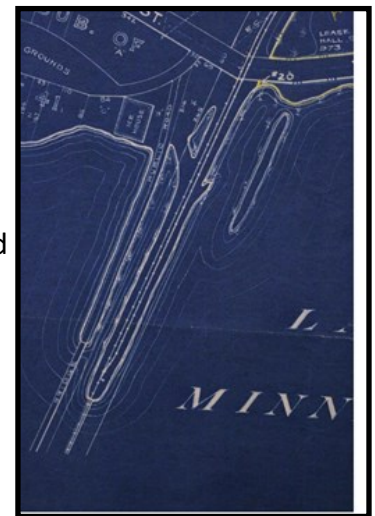
*succeeded in getting over. The draw a few moments later sank into the stream. The bridge is very old and has been considered unsafe for some time in spite of the fact that the village of Excelsior last spring spent money in repairs.*

In January 1903, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway had conducted surveys in preparation to replace the wooden railway bridge at Solberg Point. *The Minnetonka Record*, October 26, 1904, reported, *The material has arrived for the new railway bridge across the neck of St. Albans bay, and the work of driving piles has already begun. The new bridge will be an up-to-date steel drawbridge, with a draw wide enough to allow the passage of the largest steamers on the lake. It will be shorter than the old bridge, as a portion of the lake will be filled.*

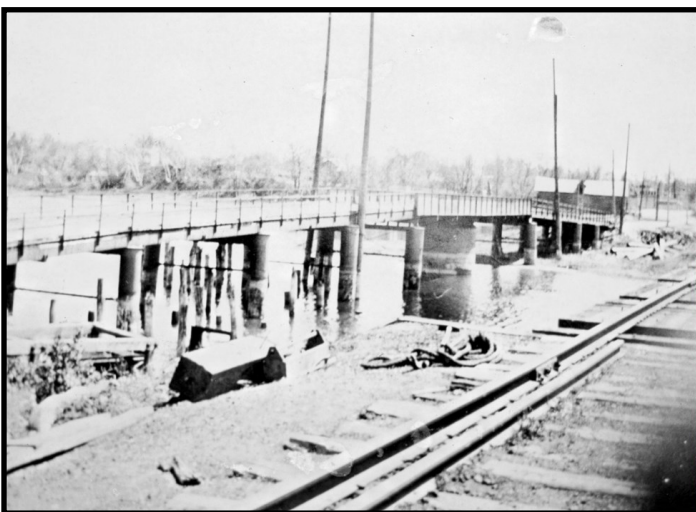
As the ice thawed in the spring of 1905 though, a safe wagon and foot bridge was needed while the new bridge was constructed. In March, Hennepin County paid Captain Johnson \$200 to place the current bridge in a safe condition and five dollars a month for its upkeep. He must not have though because by December 11, 1905, the Hennepin County Commissioners ordered that Village of Excelsior citizens be notified that the bridge was unsafe for travel. By March of the next year, the contract for building a new drawbridge was let to

Minneapolis Steel & Machinery Company for \$9,985. The Village and Township had an agreement with Hennepin County that they would secure a sixty-six foot wide roadway to the bridge approaches and give title to that land to the County. In return, the County agreed to build and maintain the new bridge. By July 1906, the bridge was likely nearing completion since the Excelsior Village Council started drafting an ordinance against fishing from the bridge.

Maps suggest that a great amount of fill was deposited into the lake when this new bridge at St. Albans Bay was constructed. A 1918 Minneapolis & St. Paul Suburban Railroad right-of-way map shows how the fill was deposited from the southern shore of Saint Alban's Bay towards the new wagon bridge. This drawing shows water between the County Road and the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway. The Village of Excelsior was responsible for filling this area. Minutes from their June 3, 1930 meeting read, "Motion made + carried that we allow dumping of ashes and allowable material between the M + St L R.R tracks and the county road leading to the draw bridge." After 3 years of residents dumping their garbage though, city Council minutes referred to a rat infestation "in the village dump near drawbridge." Soon after, the Council requested that the Civil Works Administration properly, "fill along the county road from 2nd St to the drawbridge."



1918 Mpls. & St. Paul Suburban Railway Map



View of the Saint Albans Bay County Road Bridge (left) and the Minneapolis & Saint Louis Railway bridge (right) looking south from Solberg's Point with the Morse Ice House in the background. Circa 1910.

A February 1939, the State of Minnesota Department of Highways planned for another new bridge—the one used today. Plans show the placement of new bridge abutments up to which even more fill was to be placed. This bridge was completed in 1941 in a landscape significantly changed by the fill added to the shoreline. It has kept a peaceful bridge between all the area's "progress builders" since then.

# Tapping History



*Excelsior Academy, c. 1885*

**Monday, May 8 | 7:00 pm**

***Excelsior Schools***

**Learn Something New Every Day**

***with Historian Scott D. McGinnis***

Over the years Excelsior has had its own grade school, high school and college. Learn how they came to be, how some continued on despite setbacks, and what they are today.

Excelsior Brewing Company, 421 Third Street, Excelsior.  
*Doors open at 6:00 pm. Seating is first come, first seated.*

\$5 suggested contribution.

Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/5bteuheb>.

Information: [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org), 952-221-4766.

# Cemetery Tour



*Oak Hill Cemetery, Memorial Day, c. 1938.*

**Memorial Day, May 29**

***Oak Hill Cemetery Tour***

*Following the Excelsior Memorial Day Parade  
and Ceremony, about 12:00 noon*

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.

**Parking is very limited.** The cemetery is just east of 810 Excelsior Blvd., Excelsior. The tour begins at the top of the hill and includes standing and walking over steep, uneven terrain. 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).

\$5 suggested contribution

Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/5bteuheb>.

Information: [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org), 952-221-4766.

# Summer History Cruises

*Get your tickets now to cruise historic Lake Minnetonka aboard the “Lady of the Lake!”*

**Tickets:** \$22.50 members | \$37.50 non-members (non-refundable) at [elmhs1.eventbrite.com](http://elmhs1.eventbrite.com).

To purchase or renew a membership visit [elmhs.org/membership](http://elmhs.org/membership).

Boarding at Port of Excelsior Docks at corner of Water and Lake Streets, Excelsior.



*“Lady of the Lake.”*

**Monday, June 12 | 6:00 - 8:00 pm**

## ***A Beginner’s Tour of Lake Minnetonka***

***with Historian Paul Maravelas***

Back by popular demand, this beginner’s overview will touch on the highlights of lake area history as we cruise around Big Island, including the historic landscape, Native American residents, the pioneer period, and the Golden Age.



## **LAND-O-LAKES**

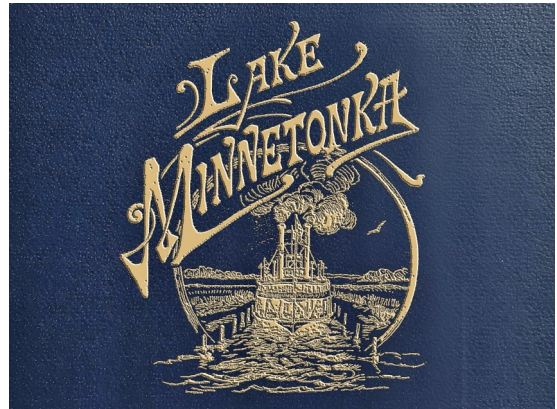
**Monday, July 10 | 6:00 - 8:00 pm**

## ***Classic Boat Parade***

***with Dave Bortner,***

***International Antique & Classic Boat Society***

Classic boats will travel alongside the *Lady of the Lake* during the cruise, as Dave, past President of the Bob Speltz Land-O-Lakes Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, shares the boats’ stories and significance as classic and vintage boats.



*“Hull’s Narrows” Tonka Bay.*

**Monday, August 14 | 6:00 - 8:00 pm**

## ***The Narrows:***

## ***Gateway to the Gilded Age***

***Presented by historians from around Lake Minnetonka***

Hear the fascinating history of “The Narrows” as we cruise by these man-made channels that allowed boats to travel between Upper and Lower Lake. Gilded Age attractions like James J. Hill’s astonishing Hotel Lafayette.



**Sunday, Sept. 17 | 3:00 - 5:00 pm**

## ***The Historic Shores of Deephaven***

Historian **Scott McGinnis** will take us on a lake tour past the boathouses, cottages and castles of historic Deephaven. From Cottagewood to Chimo—some gone, some still standing - but all with a place in history.

# NEW & RENEWED MEMBERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

*December 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023*

## Platinum Members

Dan & Brittney Johnson  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard McGinnis  
John & Bobbi Strandell

## Gold Members

Travis Demers &  
American Legion  
Post 259  
Members  
Matt & Kathy Dolliff  
David Craig Duffy  
Jodi & Bruce Noll

## Silver Members

Lydia & Brian Botham  
John Dougherty  
Ralph Hatch  
Bill Heyman &  
Michelle Gendlin  
Jeff Kamrath  
Lisa & Jon Lane  
Woody Love  
Ron & Marcia McDaniel  
Mary Pat Peterson  
Patrick & Elizabeth Schiltz

## Bronze Members

Maureen Burns  
John DuPont  
Tom & Sarah Kolar  
Paul Maravelas  
Bev Meakins &  
George Greenfield  
Jane Nibbe  
Court & Susan Queen  
Alice & John Reimann  
Robert & Tara Tyler  
Katy & Dewayne Ullsperger

## Household Members

Joan Angelis & Hal Roberts  
Debby Bluem  
Joseph Finley  
Karen & Jim Kertzman  
Ben Kieffer  
Rebecca Koehler  
Jesse Nelson  
Nancy & Dave Nordmeyer  
Charlotte Oliver  
Rex Rundquist &  
Sharon Gibbons  
Kathey & Tim Soboleski  
Mark & Sue Stanga

Gary & Kay Thompson

## Individual Members

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Conley Brooks  
Jane Cox  
Katherine Flom  
Michael Goertel  
Peter J. Hartwich  
Theresa Kiihn  
Jim Ladwig  
Mark Read  
Sarah Rossing  
Susan Smith

## Dual Senior Members

Donna & Steven Adams  
Dan & Terry Austin  
Susan & Bruce Benson  
Edward Fortier  
Cammy & Jim Johnson  
Kathy Johnson  
Jerry & Kathy Martin  
Barb & Bryan Sykora  
Barb & Bill Tapper  
Gregory Thomas &  
Carol Downie

## Senior/Student Members

Paula Atkins  
Mary Ellen Bennett  
Betty Bright  
Sharon Dana  
Drue Gisvold  
Max Green  
Rod Haanen  
James Jasin  
William Keegan  
Susan Kimitch  
Beverly Lane  
Rosalind Loomis  
Mary Mann  
Rita Martinez  
Michael Mason  
Thomas H. McCarthy  
Jean Mueller  
Vernon Schaaf  
Paul Seifert  
Will Skadsberg  
Jane Stark  
Nina Stark  
Mark Swedlund  
Mary Trippler

## 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  
Scott D. McGinnis  
Minnesota Streetcar Museum  
Robert L. Naas  
Bill Naegele  
Aaron Person  
Sharon Provost  
Kellie & Gary Ringate  
Kathy Knowlton Schmid  
Carol Schmidt  
Tad Shaw  
Lisa Stevens & Jeffrey Hatcher  
Rodney Thompson

## CONTRIBUTORS

Doug Affinito  
Mary & Steve Aldritt  
Rolf Anderson  
Joan Angelis &  
Hal Roberts  
Dave Barry  
Bob Bolles\*  
Nancy Christianson  
Sharon Dana\*  
Matt & Kathy Dolliff  
Brian Duggan\*  
Rolf & Jean Erickson  
Sarah French\*  
Karen Germaine\*  
Michael Goertel  
John Gorecki  
Ralph Hatch  
Cammy & Jim Johnson  
Dr. Douglas & Marcia Jolstad

Jeff Kamrath  
Dr. William &  
Mrs. Diane Kimber  
Tom & Carol Knowlton  
Phillip Little\*  
Jerry & Kathy Martin  
Thomas H. McCarthy  
Ron & Marcia McDaniel  
Scott McGinnis  
Ruth & Allan McLeod  
Gregory & Lori McMillan  
Katherine W Miller  
Chrystal O'Hanlon  
Cara Ostrom  
Kari Richards Park  
Cynthia Paul\*  
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Post & Family  
Frank Precopio  
Sandy Quaintance\*  
Gary Ringate\*  
Hal Roberts\*  
Nick Ruehl\*  
Robert Savage  
Rob & Susan Schultz  
Mary Shaw\*  
Tad Shaw  
Leanne Shepherd  
Fred Simon  
K.C. Stabeck  
Mark & Sue Stanga  
Lisa Stevens & Jeffrey Hatcher  
Jake Sturgis  
Barb & Bryan Sykora\*  
Barb & Bill Tapper  
Gregory Thomas & Carol  
Downie  
Kay Thompson\*  
Barbara Warner  
Kathe & Todd White  
Fern A. Zdrasil

*\*In commemoration of  
ELMHS's 50th Anniversary  
in 2022.*

# WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

ELMHS is thrilled to welcome these volunteers:

<i>Erin Fischer</i>	<i>Dan &amp; Taylor Siering</i>
<i>Nancy Koch</i>	<i>Dave Sorensen</i>
<i>Bev Meakins</i>	<i>Sarah Stanton</i>
<i>Emma Nevala</i>	<i>Nancy Steege</i>
<i>Cynthia Paul</i>	<i>Alex Stein</i>

If you see them at our events or museum, please thank them for offering their time, talents and smiles to support ELMHS' mission.

If you enjoy making connections with others who appreciate our local history, and want to share it, please sign up to volunteer at [Elmhs.org/volunteer.html](http://Elmhs.org/volunteer.html), email [info@elmhs.org](mailto:info@elmhs.org) or call 952-221-4766.

Be sure to stop at the ELMHS booth at [Art on the Lake](#) in Excelsior, June 10 - 11th. We'll have books, historic maps and more available for purchase as well as friendly volunteers ready to talk history! All proceeds support ELMHS' mission.



**ELMHS is GRATEFUL**  
to  
**Kathe White**  
for filling our museum flower boxes with lovely blooms to greet our guests year after year.  
**Thank You**

## Membership/Donation Form

Members shape the Society's policies and programs, continuing our mission to preserve and share 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 using at [Elmhs.org/store/c7/Membership.html](http://Elmhs.org/store/c7/Membership.html)

### 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 this form and a check written to **ELMHS** to PO Box 305, Excelsior, MN 55331. Or, join, donate or volunteer online at [www.elmhs.org](http://www.elmhs.org). The Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

# The ELMHS Museum is Open for the Season!



The ELMHS Museum opens its doors welcoming all again on Saturday, May 6th, 11:00 am-3:00 pm.

Come by to laugh at yourself and the kids in the Excelsior Amusement Park Fun House mirrors and be awestruck at the site of the 131 year-old sailing yacht *Onawa*. Learn more here: [www.elmhs.org/museum](http://www.elmhs.org/museum) and sign up to keep our doors open by volunteering as a Museum Host here: [www.elmhs.org/volunteer](http://www.elmhs.org/volunteer).

**Hours:** Saturdays, May 6th through September 30, 11:00 to 3:00

**Location:** 305 Water Street, Excelsior, in the old Excelsior Depot next to the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail and Excelsior Library.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PO Box 305  
Excelsior MN 55331

