

FALL 2015

Paul Maravelas, editor.

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 are free and open to the public, and hold a large collection of historical artifacts and documents.

The Society regularly presents lectures and programs on topics of local historical interest.

The Society's publications and memberships are available for purchase on our website:

www.elmhs.org

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The Harborage

Treasure from an Excelsior attic

Letters from Charles Gibson to Robert McGrath regarding Northome

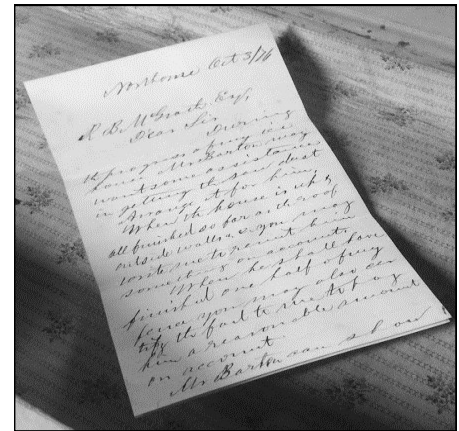
The Excelsior Reading Club is an organization about which almost nothing is known, so when Fred Ingersoll of Wisconsin offered us a membership list from the Club, we were eager to have it.

An old, beautiful valise arrived with an exterior of hand-tooled leather and an interior lined with lovely printed paper. When the Society received it, the sole contents appeared to be a manila envelope containing the membership list of the Reading Club.



The valise (above) and a letter (upper right).

But our archives staff soon discovered an upper compartment with a trove of dress patterns, newspaper clippings, receipts, and letters. Most of the letters were written in 1876-77



by Charles Gibson of St. Louis to Excelsior builder Robert McGrath regarding work on Northome, Gibson's large summer home in Deephaven.

Fred Ingersoll, the donor, owned McGrath's Excelsior house at 193 Second Street in the 1960s, and found the valise in the attic. He had been meaning to donate it for many years. Historian Scott McGinnis believes the valise dates from the Civil War, and he has spent many hours curating its contents, while archives volunteer Drue Gisvold documents the donation. With the help of volunteers, the Society plans to transcribe the letters.

If you find a treasure in *your* attic, please be sure to contact us.

Tapping History programs

Monday, October 12 | 7 pm
Excelsior Brewing Company

Tourism at Lake Minnetonka

with Scott McGinnis

INN S, boarding houses, and hotels have peppered the Lake Minnetonka area since the late 1800s. Tourism near Lake Minnetonka boomed after the Civil War, bringing with it large hotels, streetcars, steamboats, and eventually, an amusement park. Historian Scott McGinnis will explore the rise and fall of the hotel and tourism industry at Lake Minnetonka.



The Excelsior Bay Hotel, Lake & Water Streets, Excelsior.

Lost Homes / Saved Homes

a two part series on historic preservation

TEAR DOWNS now occur in the Lake Minnetonka area in record numbers. As prime lots are purchased for dream homes, homeowners wrestle with what is worth saving, and at what cost. Historic homes present obvious challenges, including antiquated systems and layouts that are sometimes incongruous with modern tastes. But they provide a narrative and local vernacular for the way people have lived and enjoyed a community over many years. And as historic homes are replaced, the scale and harmony of familiar neighborhoods changes.

Tapping History programs are free and open to the public.

Lost Homes / Saved Homes :

a two part series on historic preservation

Part One :

Monday, November 9 | 7 p.m.
Excelsior Brewing Company

Lost Homes

with Bette Hammel & Karen Melvin

Part Two :

Monday, December 14 | 7 p.m.
Excelsior Brewing Company

Saved Homes

with Jon Monson

WE'LL REVISIT the stories of some of the great "Lost Homes" around the Lake Minnetonka area that have been victims of demolition with architectural journalist Bette Hammel and photographer Karen Melvin, authors of *Legendary Homes of Lake Minnetonka* and other books on iconic Twin Cities houses. Hammel's newest book, *Wild About Architecture*, is being released in October.

ARCHITECT and builder Jon Monson of The Landschute Group will provide an inside view of recent Landschute projects where historic homes were saved. From the perspective of a builder, Monson will share stories on why he preserved his current and prior historic residences and how those decisions have inspired many of Landschute's clients to do the same with their homes.

Our Tapping History programs are informal monthly presentations on area history, held at the Excelsior Brewing Company, 421 Third Street in Excelsior.

Steamboat *Minnehaha* celebrated

This summer the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society hosted three sold-out events on the historic steamboat Minnehaha, which was raised from the bottom of Lake Minnetonka 35 years ago. The July event focused on the steamboat itself and the people who helped to restore it.

When the *Minnehaha* and its sister boats began service in 1906, they served as an extension of the Twin Cities' streetcar system. After two decades, the streetcar boat service was discontinued, and the *Minnehaha* was scuttled in 1926. Its hull was discovered in 1979, and a salvage crew brought it to the surface in 1980. Restoration began in 1990, and the boat cruised again in May, 1996.

For our Tapping History cruise on July 13, many members of the restoration team were on board the *Minnehaha*, but reconnecting them to the boat they helped restore was only the beginning of this memorable evening. For the first time in ten years the *Minnehaha* lowered its smoke stack and cruised under the Narrows bridge, something it would have done regularly in its life as a commuter vessel. It was certainly a sight to behold for those on board. "I felt so honored to be part of the evening" said Liz Vandam, one of the attendees. "Hearing the *Minnehaha*'s whistle is, for me, like listening to a voice from the past."

When the *Minnehaha* hits the waves of Lake



Notables connected with the *Minnehaha* restoration joined us for a cruise on the restored boat this summer. Left to right: Nan Woodburn, Bob Woodburn, Jim Ogland, Laverna Leipold (obscured), Darel Leipold, Bob Bolles, Martie McGlasson, Ross McGlasson, Bill Niccum, Judy Niccum, Aaron Isaacs, Jeff Jensen, and Stan Straley.

Minnetonka next spring, the duration of its second life will be as long as its first. Thanks to the Museum of Lake Minnetonka, and Captain Aaron Person and crew for welcoming the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society on board. We look forward to presenting more Tapping History programs on this beautiful steamboat next year.



The hull of the *Minnehaha* after its recovery from the bottom of Lake Minnetonka, c. 1980. Left to right: Arie Visser, Joe Smith, Gary Swiers, Jerry Provost, Greg Heggi, Joe Flaherty, Bill Niccum, Tom Shelquest, Steve Anderson, Bud Orn, and Jeff Jensen.

Annual Booseum October 23 & 24

The Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society will once again team up with the Minnesota Streetcar Museum to present the annual Booseum & Ghost Trolley on Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24 from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Society's museum, 305 Water Street in Excelsior.

This event is fun for all ages. It features live entertainment, tours of our haunted museum, and a thrilling trolley ride with Halloween characters along the route.

We would love to have new volunteers. Please



email info@elmhs.org to become a part of this popular event in downtown Excelsior.

This is the Society's main fundraiser. The 2015 event will be the 11th annual Booseum.

MEMBERSHIP

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

Annual member benefits include:

- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events
- Newsletter and Society mailings
- Voting privileges

Membership Levels

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

Name _____

Address _____

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Mail to ELMHS, Box 305, Excelsior Minn. 55331. Make checks payable to ELMHS.

This membership is a gift for:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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The recipient of your gift membership will receive a hand-written card acknowledging your gift. You will also receive an acknowledgement.

Financial report for 2014-15

The ELMHS treasurer has completed a revised financial report as requested by the membership at our annual meeting in June. Please contact the Society if you'd like to receive a copy.

Thanks to:

Cast and Cru Restaurant and the Old Log Theatre: which hosted our May Tapping History program. **Haskells:** which donated wine for our annual meeting in June. **Kowalski's Markets:** which donated appetizers for our annual meeting. **Tommy's Tonka Trolley:** which generously served ice cream to participants on our June 6 walking tour in Excelsior. The Trolley also graciously agreed to stock the walking tour distribution box at the Port of Excelsior.

Volunteer

The Membership Committee is seeking new volunteers to help recruit new Society members, lead fundraising efforts, plan member events, and represent the Society at events around town. The Archives Committee is seeking volunteers to help organize and preserve the Society's collection. Please contact the Society to discuss current opportunities.

Welcome

We welcome our new board members, elected at our membership meeting in June: Francesca Landon, Chanhassen; Beckie Lembrich, Excelsior; Jacob Westman, Excelsior; and our student representative, Gibson Kallstrom, Excelsior.

We thank our departing board members: Ben Duinick, Drue Gisvold, Patrick Hanson, Becca Sanders, and Amy Vasina.

Boy Scouts contribute three projects

This summer Boy Scouts Ben Gerton and Brady Bunkelman chose the Society as the beneficiary of two separate Eagle Scout projects.

Gerton organized a massive rehabilitation project on the museum grounds, including landscaping, building repair, and painting. Most noticeably, the ticket booth from the Excelsior Amusement Park on the museum grounds received a new coat of paint. A host of Boy Scouts and parents lent a hand.

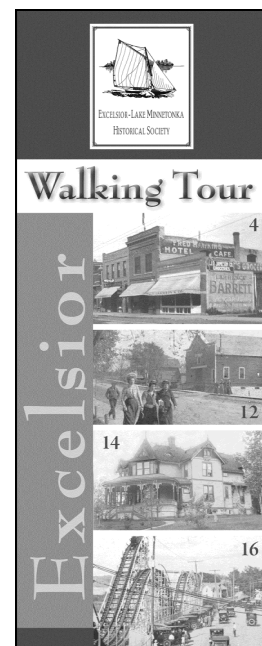
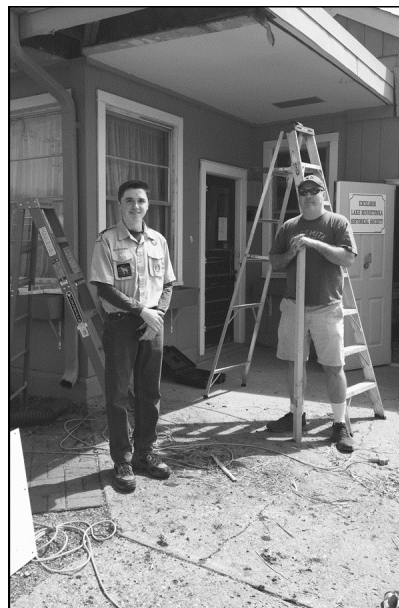
Bunkelman researched and wrote a new walking tour for Excelsior, and oversaw the design, which was contributed by his aunt, Deb Zaske. He also designed, built, and installed two outdoor distribution boxes, one at the museum and one at the Port of Excelsior. The brochure is distributed from these boxes during the summer months, and a digital version is posted on the Society's website.

When the brochure was finished in June, Bunkelman led an informal walk from the ELMHS museum down Water Street, speaking briefly about some of the buildings included on the tour. The walk ended at the Port, where Tommy's Tonka Trolley distributed free ice cream to participants.

A third Boy Scout, Henry Rynders, began a new Eagle Scout project this fall. His work will include painting the museum building, constructing new window covers to control unwanted light in the museum, and other repairs.



Brady Bunkelman led a tour over part of his new walking tour route on June 6 (above). Ben Gerton and Scoutmaster John O'Donnell making repairs to the museum grounds (lower left). More than 2,000 walking tour brochures were distributed this summer (lower right).



May 11 tornado program was a popular event

The Society devoted its May Tapping History program to the tornadoes of May 6, 1965, which devastated parts of the Lake Minnetonka area. Meteorologist Paul Huttner led the program, and audience members who lived through the 1965 event told stories of their experience. Huttner was a child living in Deephaven when the tornado struck, and his experience fifty years ago led him to study meteorology. The event drew the largest crowd in recent memory to a Society program. Thanks to Paul Huttner for an expert presentation, and thanks to the Cast and Cru Restaurant and the Old Log Theatre for hosting this event.



Board of Directors of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society
Kathy Endres, president; Bri DePauw, vice president; Lisa Stevens, secretary; Joe Schwartz, treasurer; directors: Kay Demer, Jerry Holl, Cate Honzl, Francesca Landon, Beckie Lembrich, Molly Loomis, Paul Maravelas, Betty Peck, Tad Shaw, Jacob Westman, Gibson Kallstrom, student representative.

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