

WINTER/SPRING 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 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

Board of Directors

Acting President: Scott Dake
Vice President: Mark Read
Treasurer: Andrew Punch
Secretary: Kirsten Pardoe

Directors: Deanna Bunkelman, Bill Heyman, Tom Kolar, Tad Shaw, Lisa Stevens.

Emeritus Board Member:
Betty Peck

The Harborage

Celebrating 50 Years of History

First in a series exploring ELMHS' first fifty years.

Fifty years is a long time in "non-profit years." But the evolution of organizations collecting history in the Lake Minnetonka area goes back much farther than that.

For instance, there was a mention of a "Lake Minnetonka Historical Society" in an 1891 issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune* just 38 years after the settlers first arrived in our area. Our history was also collected by



Fern Michael, Fran Windmuller, Mary Willis, Kari Rice and Mary Haering, founders of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, 1972.

the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (founded 1849), the Western Hennepin County Pioneer Association, Long Lake (founded 1907), Hennepin County Historical Society, Minneapolis, (founded 1938, now Hennepin History Museum), the Minnetonka Historical Museum Association, Mound (founded 1966, now Westonka Historical Society) and the Minnetonka Historical Society, Minnetonka (founded 1970). And in 1972, the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society (ELMHS) sprang into being.

The early 1970s brought preparations for the celebration of the US Bicentennial in 1976 and inspired a patriotic fervor and a renewed interest in history across the county. This gave birth to hundreds of local historical societies. Even "young" Lake Minnetonka, known mostly by Native people until settlers arrived in 1853, caught the history bug. The community felt that if they were going to celebrate their history, they'd better find out what it was and have something to show for it. Today, fifty years after the 1972 founding of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society, we will explore the Society's history - remembering those who brought it into being and those who kept us going for half a century.

(Continued on page 3)

∞ The Society Column ∞

From the Executive Director

We have so many exciting things planned for 2022, I can hardly wait! I know I always start off my column with that statement, but this year promises to be especially exciting because we are 50!

This is a remarkable accomplishment considering that for 47+ of those years, ELMHS was run exclusively by volunteers! Even today, we have only one paid employee - a part-time Executive Director who loves her job. With that in mind, I want to take a moment to say *thank you to the hard working volunteers who have dedicated so much of their time to make this organization what it is today! You are truly amazing!*

We are always looking for new volunteers who want to use their skills to make an impact in the community. If you or someone you know would like to help shape the next 50 years of ELMHS, please contact me.

Rachel Houck, Executive Director
Director@elmhs.org

Lake Minnetonka Historical Organizations Strategic Alliance Update

The ELMHS continues to partner with Deephaven Historical Society, the Museum of Lake Minnetonka, Wayzata Historical Society, and Westonka Historical Society to explore ways that our organizations can collaborate to better serve the history of the Lake Minnetonka area, now and in the future. Having completed a benchmarking study, stakeholder interviews, town hall meetings and a community/member survey, our consultant, Arts Consulting Group, is now conducting a financial analysis of the groups. The Joint Committee is currently exploring incremental consolidation models while our boards conduct site visits and learn more about each organization. The partners are excited to share the results of this study later in the year and welcome any questions about the process.

Lisa Stevens, Joint Committee Member
Info@elmhs.org

ELMHS Technology Update

Thanks to our members' and contributors' financial support, ELMHS has begun a long-delayed technology planning process to determine our direction and needs over the next five years. We are looking to use new and upgraded technology to:

- Improve our collection digitization, cataloging, indexing and storage;
- Build more efficient workflows for the management of memberships, volunteers, and donations; and,
- Open up new venues of education and outreach to the community and historical researchers.

Some early initiatives include:

- Determining a plan for new hardware and software purchases required in the next one, three and five-year time horizons;
- Upgrading our CRM and online exhibit software;
- Designing and developing a mobile app for visitors to the Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka area to find and learn about its historical locations and stories.

If you have skills and experience in technology and would like to help us in our efforts or assist us in funding these vital improvements, please contact ELMHS Board Member, Bill Heyman at bill.heyman@gmail.com. Thank you!



Oscar Evans in 1921 demonstrating his eraser cleaning machine. ELMHS could use a technological wizard like him today!

Passionate Beginnings

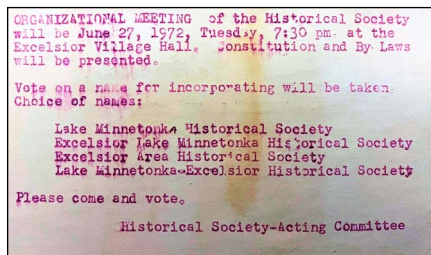
Inspired by the upcoming Bicentennial, a group of five passionate and enterprising women - Kari Rice, Mary Hearing, Fern Michael, Mary Willis and Fran Windmuller - set out to fill a void in their historic community by looking for a way to preserve the history of the south lake area. They first sought the legal advice of O'Neill Grathwol and then held a charter meeting with Lincoln and Harriet Aldritt (Tonka Bay), Mark and Grace Knowlton (Excelsior), Ruth Mann (Shorewood), Warren Morse (Excelsior), and Dave Nixon (Shorewood). Staking out their primary area of interest (Excelsior, Deephaven, Greenwood, Shorewood, and Tonka Bay) they began a non-profit organization and met for the first time on May 25, 1972. The Society's mission remains the same today:

- 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.

Preserving History Made by Others

After discussing a number of name possibilities at their June meeting, the new organization settled on "Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society" -

embracing the village of Excelsior and what was once Excelsior township – where many of them lived. The first board included Mark Knowlton President; Mary Willis, Vice President; Jean Hughes, Recording Secretary; Kari Rice, Correspondence Secretary; Fern Michael, Treasurer; and Grace Knowlton, Historian and at-large members Lincoln Aldritt, O'Neill Grathwol, Dorothea Hillis, Jane Nielsen, Dave Nixon, Gladys Peck, Robert Reutiman, Betty Wiley, and Mary Willis. Members and the public were enthusiastic about the new group and began to



Early mimeographed form of communication.

donate volumes of historic material from all over the Lake Minnetonka area that needed to be organized, catalogued, and properly preserved.

Making History

The new organization hit the ground running - participating in parades, providing historical displays and programs in schools, the library, and storefronts, holding bus and boat tours, an auction fundraiser, luncheons, and historical fashion shows. In 1978 the Excelsior City Council and the Society conducted a Historical Survey of all the properties in Excelsior, which was made into a book, *The Lake, The Land and The People*, by members Linn Ann Cowles and Peter Johnson. In 1980 a committee including Jerry Holl, Rachel Leonard and Leon Bonander led the restoration of the famous 1892 Lake Minnetonka sailboat the Onawa. And in 1981 a show of early pioneer Lydia Ferguson's artwork was presented to launch the publication of the *Lydia Ferguson Diary, 1854-1886*, compiled by member Joyce Quinn.



ELMHS program, 1972.

Leaping forward to 2003 the Society produced Excelsior's two-day, community-wide Sesquicentennial Celebration co-chaired by Don Douglass and Lisa Stevens. It featured parades, tours, a pageant, and dozens of other activities. In 2013 board members Brianna DePauw Bolin and Dan Johnson created "Tapping History" bringing hundreds of people into local establishments and aboard Lake Minnetonka boats with monthly presentations about area history. While our founding members would have been thrilled with the popularity of these standing room only events, the thought of patronizing a brewery or sipping a cocktail on the water might have elicited gasps from some of these Women's Christian Temperance Union members. To bring history home during the COVID pandemic, the Society added virtual presentations and tours in 2020 which can now be viewed around the world on demand. (We're *sure* this would *also* make our founders gasp.)

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Tapping History

Join us for monthly fun, casual Lake Minnetonka history presentations at Excelsior Brewing Company, 421 Third Street, Excelsior. \$5.00 suggested contribution at the door. Doors open at 6:00pm. **Registration required at elmhs1.eventbrite.com** or call 952-221-4766. *Limited seating - first come, first served.*

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

Monday, January 10, 7:00 pm ***Dog Sledding In Excelsior*** with the Organizers of the Lake Minnetonka Klondike Dog Derby

Learn about the history of sled dog racing in Excelsior and plans for the February 4-5, 2022 Lake Minnetonka Klondike Dog Derby.



Excelsior Dog Derby during Klondike Day, ca. 1937, Lampert Lumber (today the Excelsior Mill), Water Street.

Monday, February 21, 7:00 pm ***Lake Minnetonka Ice Boats***

with Alan Lizee

Registration begins January 3rd



Ice Yachts on Lake Minnetonka

Sailing fast boats in the winter has a long history on Lake Minnetonka. In the early 1900s, this popular sport reached speeds of over 80 mph. Learn about the history of the lakes' smooth, fast ice and the daring sailors who raced on it for over a century.

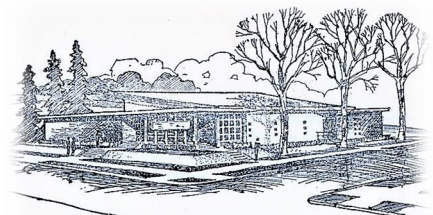
Monday, March 14, 7:00 pm ***Midcentury Modernism in the South Lake Minnetonka Area***

with Bobak Ha'Eri of

[Docomomo US MN](http://DocomomoUSMN.org)

Registration begins February 1st

Bobak Ha'Eri will walk you through a fun, illustrated journey of mid-century architecture in the South Lake area.



*First Church of Christ, Scientist
First and Center Streets
Excelsior, Minn.*

Monday, April 11, 7:00 pm ***A History of Clear Springs School***

with Kirsten Pardoe

Registration begins February 1st



*Commemorative lapel button
showing Clear Springs
School.*

Minnetonka's Clear Springs

School's history may not differ much from that of other early rural schools, but it is an interesting and inspirational story of how education is a foundational block that communities take pride in building and supporting.

↓ SAVE THE DATE!!!! ↓

2022 50th Anniversary Event *First ELMHS Virtual 5K*

Registration begins May 1, 2022 5K!

ELMHS has partnered with *Gone For a Run* to bring you our first virtual 5K in celebration of our 50th Anniversary. Registration includes a commemorative medal, t-shirt, and downloadable bib.

You can participate anywhere, on your own time, and at your own pace. This will allow our followers around the world to celebrate with us! Check our website for details and registration coming soon!



Memorial Day 2022 *Oak Hill Cemetery Tour* With Scott D. McGinnis

Join us for a walking tour of historic Oak Hill Cemetery—Excelsior's burial ground since the 1850's. The tour begins at the top of Oak Hill, just east of 810 Excelsior Blvd., Excelsior, immediately following the American Legion's Memorial Day ceremony. \$5.00 suggested contribution. *For more information:* elmhs1.eventbrite.com.

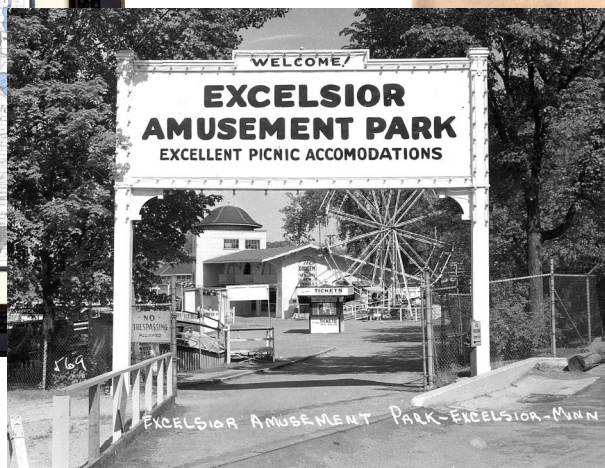


Shopping for History

ELMHS has books, framed maps, prints of images from our collection, gift memberships and more!



Framed maps of almost every community on the lake.



Prints of images from our collection.



Hard to find history books.

Visit our online store at Elmhs.org/store or contact us at info@elmhs.org , (952) 221-4766.

Thanks for your support!

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

For the period of August 1 through November 30, 2021.

Platinum Level

Dan Brattland
Jonathan Ray

Gold Level

American Legion Post #259
Bitta & Kerry Barnard
Derek Sampson

Silver Level

Deanna Bunkelman
Matt & Kathy Dolliff
Ann Sampson Heimerl
Bill Heyman
Bruce & Jodi Noll
Mary Pat Peterson
Nell Ray
Kyle Uittenbogaard
F. Todd Warner

Bronze Level

Sheila Augustine
Jeff Bailey
Maureen Burns
John DuPont
Maud Duggan
Justin Holl
Susan & Brian Mark
Beverly A. Meakins
Zack Mohlis
Jodi Naylor
Gretchen Nygaard
Airell Nygaard
Alan & Martha Tollefson

Household Level

Joan Angelis
Debby Bluem
Tom Burton
Kay Derner
John Flynn
Peggy L Naas
Katrinka Sharpe
Mark Stanga
Julie Thompson
Andrew Trick

Individual Level

Susan Berdahl
Sara Elstad
Theresa Kiihn
Julie Rodriguez
Ron Wagner
Cindy Busch & John Knox
John & Carole Cranbrook
Edward Fortier
Maybeth & Ed Sheridan

Senior/Student Level

Donna Adams
Steven Adams
Paula Atkins
Tim Brandow
Roger W. Cuthbertson
Nancy Geng
Arlene Johnson
Jim LaHaye
Alan Langstaff
Sherri McCallison

Judy Mueller
Nancy Olmsted
Betty Peck
Linda Putnam
Craig Rackley
Mary Rosati
Vernon Schaaf
Joseph Seifert
Kathy Suddendorf
Mary Trippler
Rosemary Dupont Whowell
Joan Wolfe
Theresa & Scott Zerby

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

Bitta & Kerry Barnard
Dan & Brittney Johnson
Cindy Busch & John Knox
Vernon Schaaf
Kathleen Spraitz
Rosemary Dupont Whowell

Cabin Fever???



*Oil painting of cabin on St. Alban's Bay, ca. 1906,
from ELMHS collection.*

If you're cozy and you want to stay put:

Visit History at Home with ELMHS at
elmhs.org/elmhsathome for:

- * Tapping History recordings
- * Virtual Programs
- * Virtual Lake Minnetonka History Tours
- * Our CollectiveAccess Image Collection

If you've gotta' get out of the house:

- * Make an appointment to visit our Archives to research historical Lake Minnetonka people, places and things at elmhs.org/archives--research-resources.
- * Visit elmhs1.eventbrite.com to register for Tapping History and other in-person events.

Join a Committee!

The Society relies on volunteers of all ages and abilities to fulfill various critical roles. Right now we are in need of dedicated volunteers to help in the following areas:

- **50th Anniversary:** Help ELMHS commemorate this 2022 milestone.
- **Museum Hosting:** (May-September) Greet visitors and provide tours of the ELMHS museum, sell merchandise from the museum gift shop (\$).
- **Volunteer Coordinating:** Recruiting, training, and scheduling volunteers for shifts at the ELMHS Museum, Archives, special events and programs.
- **Communications:** Writing press releases, creating marketing materials, contributing to social media, maintaining our website, etc. Must have experience using Microsoft Publisher or similar software.
- **Public Programs and Events:** Plan, publicize, and execute events for ELMHS including Tapping History, History Cruises, fundraisers, member-only events, and virtual programs.
- **Membership/Fundraising:** Recruiting new members, contributors, and volunteers, helping with direct mail and special events.

Training is provided. To learn more visit our website at www.elmhs.org/volunteer or contact us at info@elmhs.org or 952-221-4766.

Donate Artifacts

Help us share our community's history with future generations by sharing your history with us! 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. Learn more here: www.elmhs.org/donate-artifacts. (Due to space limitations, the Society is unable to accept all donations.)

Not a Member Yet?

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

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. (See panel to left for more information.)

Donation of Artifacts

- ☐ Please contact me regarding the donation of historical items. (See panel to left for more information about donating.)

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

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Publications

Publishing books was a natural for the Society as there was no shortage of talented and enthusiastic historians and writers, plenty of unexplored history to mine and a hungry public to be served. These books also served the Society's mission and provided a major source of income. The Society's first book, published in 1974, was a reprint of S.E. Ellis' *Picturesque Minnetonka 1906*. In 1978 member Ellen Wilson Meyer came forward with her talent and generosity, writing seven books about Lake Minnetonka area history and lent financial assistance in their early production costs. The Society also benefited from the literary talents of other members including Isabel Thibault and Grace Knowlton, and was lucky to have Ron Hughes of Tonka Printing in Excelsior, always ready with his pre-digital era publishing support and expertise.

The Society has gone on to publish over twenty books in the last 50 years - most recently, *Images of America: Lake Minnetonka*, co-authored with the Wayzata and Westonka historical societies. Many of our original publications, and one of a kind framed maps and apparel, may be purchased via the Society's website today.



Learn more about ELMHS' fifty years in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Excelsior MN 55331
PO Box 305

