

# ANOKA COUNTY Historical Society

2010 Annual Report

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# Anoka County Historical Society

## 2010 Annual Report

### Executive Director's Summary



ACHS Board Member Catherine Vesley, ACHS Executive Director Todd Mahon, and ACHS Vice President Tom Sherohman accepting a Minnesota History Award on behalf of ACHS for the 75 Years of Collection project.

2010 was a year of successes, difficulties, and transitions for the Anoka County Historical Society (ACHS). We were recognized for our high standards in public input and collections management with a Minnesota History Award for our *75 Years of Collecting* project. We were also the recipients of a major grant from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund for a project to document the suburban development of Anoka and Hennepin Counties. This project is a partnership with the Hennepin History Museum.

We also saw a second year of continued stagnation and slight decline in our revenues, most of this in private donations. We continue to receive strong support from Anoka County and our programs, specifically the Ghosts of Anoka walking tours, bring in a significant amount of revenue.

There were also some transitions. We launched a new fundraising event to replace the Harvest Time Barn Dance. The Sock Hop breathed some new life into our fundraising events, and we look forward to continuing it in 2011.

2011 looks to be another promising year for ACHS. It marks the first year of the Civil War sesquicentennial. Plans are under way to produce a traveling exhibit that tells the story of Anoka County's Civil War veterans. We also plan to be at more community events with a parade vehicle donated by Duke Grosslein, a restored 1919 Model-T truck. We also will complete the work on the project to document the suburban development of Anoka and Hennepin Counties. The story of Anoka County's post-WWII development can tell the story of the nation's suburban experience. From Columbia Heights' experience as one of Thomas Lowery's early twentieth century streetcar suburbs, to Blaine and Coon Rapids's development in the 1960s, to the issues faced by St. Francis and Oak Grove as they transition from exurban to suburban, Anoka County tells it all and the Anoka County Historical Society will share it.

But before we get too far ahead of ourselves in talking about the future, let's look back at 2010...

# Anoka County Historical Society

## 2010 Annual Report

### Fundraising and Organizational Development

#### Donations

The state of the economy has continued to create a difficult fundraising environment, and ACHS has not been immune to it. We have been able to succeed by trimming back some of our expenses without sacrificing the quality of our programming. This said, we are grateful for any support we receive from private donations. In 2010, we received just over \$16,000 in private funds.

From people rounding up a few bucks on photocopy orders, to donations in memory of friends and family, to larger gifts,

donations to ACHS come in many forms.

The Sock Hop was held at the Anoka Armory and received rave reviews from those in attendance. It was a difficult year getting sponsorships, but ticket sales rebounded from previous years with the Harvest Time Barn Dance. The event raised nearly \$7,000 for the Historical Society's operations. Plans are already underway to bring the Sock Hop to Murzyn Hall in Columbia Heights this October. Watch for more information!

#### Membership

370 memberships were taken out or renewed in 2010, representing 490 individuals (taking into account couples and household memberships). In late 2009, ACHS created e-memberships, which allowed members to receive their newsletters and other communications electronically, saving ACHS postage and printing costs. At the end of 2010, we had 74 individual memberships, 61 household memberships, 142 senior individual mem-

berships, 92 senior couple memberships, and 1 student membership. 149 of those memberships are e-memberships.

Our membership revenues, totaling over \$5,800 in 2010, are among our most reliable sources of income. Over the course of the year, many of our members also choose to contribute funds above and beyond their annual dues.

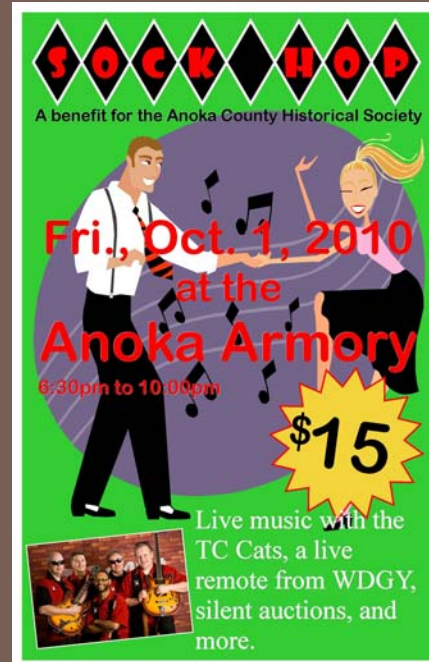
#### Volunteers

If our actual dollar contributions were down in 2010, we can point to one area where we continue to shine, and that's with the gift of time. Last year, over 115 individuals volunteered 4,252 hours with ACHS.

To give you an idea of how important this is, the number of hours recorded in 2010 equals more than two additional full-time staff members. Projects that couldn't have happened without volunteer efforts include maintaining records in our electronic

databases, conducting and transcribing valuable oral histories, producing research for newsletter and newspaper articles, handling and organizing our objects collections, providing guided tours, and helping staff large events and programs.

Some of us have a greater capacity to give financially, but we each have the same number of hours in the day. We extend a special thanks to those who gave the gift of time.



On October 1, ACHS held its new annual fundraising event, the Sock Hop, at the Anoka Armory.



Ghosts of Anoka Walking Tours continue to gain in popularity. Docent Gary Greb, pictured here, is one of many volunteers who conduct the tours for ACHS.

# Anoka County Historical Society 2010 Annual Report

## Building and Facilities

### Facilities

Since 2002, ACHS has called the Anoka County History Center and Library in Anoka our home. The building is owned by the City of Anoka and is leased to the Historical Society for \$1 per year. ACHS takes its role as tenant and caretaker very seriously and has made hundreds of thousands of dollars in improvements to the building, most of those through a capital campaign that raised \$700,001.

2010 was the first full season that we enjoyed the benefits of a new boiler that was installed in late 2009. The energy savings from this have gone a long way to easing the strain on expenses and revenues.

But the best news in 2010 on the facility front is the resolution to the exterior brick issue. In 2005 and 2006, ACHS addressed

some brick issues affecting the History Center. The baked surface of the bricks were flaking off in some sections, exposing the absorbent core to moisture, which in turn caused more flaking. Over the summer of 2010, ACHS came to an agreement with the City of Anoka to share in the costs of project. In those same discussions ACHS and the City extended the current lease for an additional 15 years.

The work began in the early fall of 2010 and concluded after a few weeks. When the brickwork was wrapping up, ACHS had a water-resistant insulating foam sprayed between the interior and exterior brick walls to produce a vapor barrier. This, teamed with some other improvements that have been made to the building over the years, should prevent any future brick spalling and ensure the continued use of the building for many more years.

### Library

2010 marked the first full-year of a new arrangement with the Anoka County Library (ACL). For several years, the Anoka County History Center hosted a circulating and rotating deposit collection from ACL. This collection of about 750 books was made up of popular adult and children's fiction. In the final weeks of 2009 ACL and ACHS agreed to replace this collection with a non-circulating reference collection that was more in keeping with ACHS's own library collection.

We continue to serve as a pick-up and drop-off location for ACL materials, meaning books, DVDs, and other library materials may be sent to the History Center to be checked out and any checked

out ACL materials can be dropped off at the History Center to be returned. The History Center also provides two public internet terminals and a selection of current periodicals.

The result has been user statistics similar to the previous year with significantly less staff time required by the Library. In 2010, 2,581 books, tapes, DVDs, and other library materials were returned at the History Center. There were 3,768 users of public internet terminals. 8,756 people utilized our library services. In additions to that, we also served 200 researchers working on local history, genealogy, and more.

# Anoka County Historical Society

## 2010 Annual Report

### Preserving Your History

#### ACHS Artifact Collection

One of the cornerstones of our mission is to collect physical objects that help construct the story that is Anoka County's history. No single object can tell the story in its entirety, so in over 75 years of existence, the Society has collected tens of thousands of objects, photographs, documents, and ephemera. Throughout 2008 and 2009, ACHS staff and volunteers engaged in a project to provide better identification for thousands of objects in the collection. Nearly 2,000 object records were incomplete, meaning their origins were unknown or we could not identify which object they were associated with.

After months of combing through records and physical objects, 1,070 items, from 369 donor records were deaccessioned from the collection. These included empty frames, unidentified tools, furniture, and other items that were never intended for the collections but were instead donated to for use by ACHS staff (think chairs and tables). In 2010, ACHS was recognized for this project with a Minnesota History Award from the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums.

The award was in part for the professionalism and diligence in which the records maintenance and deaccessioning were handled, but it was specifically recognized for the way that ACHS

engaged and informed the public on the project. We understand the trust that individuals and the public place in ACHS to preserve Anoka County's history. We also understand how deaccessioning any item from the collection can be misinterpreted as contrary to that mission. Instead, for months leading up to the project, ACHS wrote articles in its newsletter, talked with community groups, and shared with the local media about the project. The response was overwhelmingly positive the entire way and gave us the confidence to proceed. The project was the only one of four Minnesota History Award winners to receive a perfect score from one of the judges.

Even with the success of the Minnesota History Award, collections continued to be accessioned and processed throughout 2010. 1,379 items were received or updated in our archival collection. 593 objects from 103 donation were accessioned. 535 photographs were added or updated in the database. 387 books were updated or added to the collection.

The items in ACHS's collection are a direct connection to Anoka County's past. They tell the story of how the county was founded, how it has been lived in, and help us understand how Anoka County's past became its present.



Lucille Elrite's 1962 membership card to the Thompson Heights Country Club. Orrin Thompson and Vern Donnay built thousands of homes in Coon Rapids and Blaine after World War II. ACHS is currently documenting the growth of Anoka County's suburbs.

# Anoka County Historical Society

## 2010 Annual Report

### Preserving Your History (cont.)

#### Events/Programming/Outreach



In conjunction with the exhibition *Law and Ladders*, ACHS invited Anoka County law enforcement agencies to participate in a public safety fair at the History Center during Anoka's Riverfest. Here children get a closer look at one of the Anoka County Sheriff's SWOT vehicles.

#### **Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour**

For the seventh consecutive year, the ACHS partnered with the Anoka Heritage Preservation Commission to put on the Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour. The 2010 tour featured the Oakwood neighborhood along the Rum and Mississippi Rivers. The homes on the tour represented a time of rapid growth in the city and evolution away from Anoka's early industries. These homes were owned by the city's new class of businessmen and merchants: auto dealers, land developers, and construction supply companies. Eleven private homes and gardens were featured on the tour and nearly 300 people went on the tour.

#### **Ghosts of Anoka Walking Tours**

2010 saw the sixth consecutive year of growth for the Ghosts of Anoka walking tours. These tours have become an incredibly reliable and important source of income and outreach for the Historical Society. They could not happen without an incredible commitment from a dedicated crew of volunteer docents. These walking tours of downtown Anoka and its surrounding neighborhoods share spooky and unexplained tales alongside of local history. We offer them throughout the summer, but it is in the fall and during Anoka's Halloween celebration that they do their best. In 2010 over 1,500 people purchased tickets for Ghost Tours generating over \$10,000 in ticket sales.

#### **It's Your History Television Program**

For six years, ACHS has partnered with Quad Cities Television (QCTV) to produce the monthly program television *It's Your History*. These 30 minute programs are broadcast on QCTV

stations in Andover, Anoka, Ramsey, and Champlin and are offered for broadcast to other Anoka County stations. The program can also be streamed on QCTV's web site at [www.qctv.org](http://www.qctv.org). 2010 programs looked at the 150 year history of the Anoka Masonic Lodge, Anoka County Sheriff history, tips on caring for family heirlooms, genealogy, and more.

#### **Exhibitions**

One of America's most misunderstood wars, World War I, was featured in the exhibit *Safe For Democracy*. The exhibit looked at the impact the global conflict had in Anoka County and how the residents of the county responded to the fighting overseas. From volunteering to fight (some even got into the fighting before the United States declared war), to supporting the war effort on the home front, to protesting the U.S. involvement in the conflict, Anoka County was active and involved in the "Great War." The time was also known for extraordinary pressures on the civil liberties of U.S. citizens who opposed the war and Anoka County was no different. At the end of the year we opened, *In Memoriam*, an exhibit that examines how Anoka County's people have reacted to death and how they mourned the passing of loved ones. Over time these traditions have changed and have often included rigidly prescribed standards and practices.

#### **Anoka County Fair**

The Anoka County Fair gives ACHS the opportunity to share its mission with thousands of fairgoers each year. We staff the old farmstead in the heart of the fairgrounds and portray what domestic life was like for a typical Anoka County farm in the early twentieth century.

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## 2010 Annual Report

### Closing Remarks

In 2010, ACHS said goodbye to two staff members. Maria King, our volunteer coordinator since 2002, and Pat Snodgrass, our office administrator since 2008, both retired at the end of the year. Maria is spending her winters in Texas and Pat is spending hers in Florida. But we hope to snare them to cover the occasional shift at the front desk and to volunteer at events in the future.

We also said goodbye to our Dick Lang, our liaison to the Anoka County board of commissioners. After many years on the county board, Dick chose not to run for re-election to the board. He served as our liaison since 2005. Commissioner Dennis Berg, who served as our liaison for the fourteen years prior to Dick's service, also retired from the county board. In December of

2010, ACHS presented both commissioners with plaques to commemorate their service to ACHS and our mission.

We welcomed a new board member in 2010. Al Pearson of Ramsey was elected to the board by the membership. He is a farmer that has lived his entire life in the county. He has served on the Ramsey city council and has been active with ACHS for several years, particularly in loaning hay bales for our Harvest Time Barn Dances.

Look for more activity and programming from one of the most recognized and successful county historical societies in the state in 2011. We hope you will join us in making 2011 another great year for preserving and sharing Anoka County's history.



Maria King (top) and Pat Snodgrass (bottom) both retired from ACHS at the end of 2010.



ACHS Executive Director (center) presented plaques of appreciation from ACHS to retiring Anoka County Commissioners and former liaisons to the ACHS board Dick Lang (left) and Dennis Berg (right).

*\*2010 figures shown are from ACHS's internal records and have not been subjected to an independent audit.*



# Anoka County Historical Society

## 2010 Annual Report

### Financial Report

BALANCE SHEET	12/31/2010*	12/31/2009	12/31/2008	12/31/2007
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Total Current Assets	492,859	463,865	489,638	527,614
Total Fixed Assets	231,039	297,582	231,038	244,280
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>705,558</b>	<b>761,447</b>	<b>720,676</b>	<b>771,894</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>				
Total Liabilities	123	6,280	3,741	1,950
Total Equity	705,435	755,167	716,935	769,944
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>705,558</b>	<b>761,447</b>	<b>720,676</b>	<b>771,894</b>
<b>INCOME STATEMENT</b>				
Total Support & Revenue	280,223	275,840	187,638	278,133
Total Expense	244,115	237,038	240,647	249,706
<b>NET</b>	<b>36,115</b>	<b>38,232</b>	<b>(53,009)</b>	<b>28,427</b>
<b>REVENUE SOURCES (Gross)</b>				
Anoka County—general	120,263	118,298	57,000	167,000
Other grants	18,954	-	-	8,000
Donations	16,060	34,747	19,920	26,787
Special Events	20,753	13,053	18,879	21,504
Library Services	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000
Admissions	363	603	1,084	1,430
Fees	2,049	7,831	2,863	3,781
Memberships	5,813	5,458	5,267	5,828
Rental income	6,600	7,200	7,200	7,200
Interest income	5,472	8,374	11,878	12,746
Other income	3,896	276	3,547	8,857
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>280,223</b>	<b>275,840</b>	<b>187,638</b>	<b>363,133</b>