

History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 5

September — October 2009

Fifty Years and Counting

by Holly Broden, *Contributing Writer*

SERVING:

- Andover
- Anoka
- Bethel
- Blaine
- Centerville
- Circle Pines
- Columbia Heights
- Columbus
- Coon Rapids
- East Bethel
- Fridley
- Ham Lake
- Hilltop
- Lexington
- Lino Lakes
- Linwood
- Nowthen
- Oak Grove
- Ramsey
- St. Francis
- Spring Lake Park

Situated in the northeast portion of Anoka County, East Bethel is a city with an interesting past. Although the township was organized in 1857, it was not incorporated into a village for another 100 years. It was the persistence of those early pioneers that helped establish East Bethel and set the course for its future.

The first postmaster and one of the early pioneers was James Cooper and evidence of his influence in the area is still present. A

convenience store on the east side of Highway 65 that says “Cooper’s Corner” suggests the importance of the man to the area. His ledger book, with entries from 1842 before he came to

Minnesota, is part of the Anoka County Historical Society collection. Cooper is credited with naming the city, “Bethel” which means “the House of God” in the ancient Hebrew language. He served as the first postmaster in 1863 in a storefront on the site of a former Quaker settlement. The Quakers were the first settlers in Bethel Village. They quickly established a school and a church, but left following the Indian Uprising of 1862. They never returned to Bethel.

Other settlers that left during the Indian Wars did return. In 1857, when Bethel Township was organized, names such as J.H. Canny, James Cooper, Elisha Day, Louis Mitchell, Edward Pratt, and James and John Dyer were prominent. Bethel Township had a population of 423 in 1880 and 617 in 1900. Life went on pretty much as expected for awhile. That is, until village status was sought by Bethel Township.

Continued on page 5



James & Rebecca Cooper



Cooper's Corners store and gas station, 23705 Hwy 65, East Bethel, July 1990.

ACHS — 75 Years of Gathering, Preserving, and Sharing County History

They’d been already working on the idea for months before the first formal meeting, held in Library Hall at the Carnegie Library in Anoka, was called to order on September 15, 1934. It was the first meeting of the Anoka County Historical Society.

The group of dedicated people in attendance appointed a slate of officers that included president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and corresponding secretary. The corresponding secretary's duties included acting as a custodian of all the society’s important papers. A motion to procure a “proper receptacle” for those papers was approved. The group then appointed a committee to review the “acceptability of all material offered with power to accept or reject the same.”

Change the date and the names and this could almost be a review of an ACHS board meeting from 2009! Today’s board has many of the same offices with the same duties as in 1934, the most important of which was—and still remains—the “proper receptacle” in which to keep our county history.

In 2009, that receptacle is the Anoka County History Center rather than members’ homes or a closet at the courthouse as in years past. Gathering, preserving, and sharing that county history was—and still is—the only mission of ACHS.

In 2009, we have a committee of staff and board members who review all items offered as donations to the collection, just as in 1934. Today they are called the Acquisition Committee and their job remains the same—they are charged with reviewing the offered items and accepting those things that best tell the county’s story.

The second ACHS meeting, held on October 1, 1934, saw the approval of the constitution (today we call this document the by-laws) and a discussion of membership. Eleven people became members at the first meeting and more joined in October. Former county residents and their children were especially invited to become members, even if they lived out of the county. The 2009 membership list of ACHS has members from all over Minnesota as well as from 14 other states!

The 1934 board authorized payment of 80¢ to the *Anoka County Union* for advertising Society meetings and this same newspaper still carries notices of events at ACHS in 2009. It was a good partnership to continue 75 years later!

Continued on page 7

History Center News is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

Anoka County History Center & Library

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Anoka, MN 55303

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E-mail: achs@ac-hs.org

www.ac-hs.org

History Center Hours:

Tuesday 10-8

Wednesday-Friday 10-5

Saturday 10-4

Board of Directors

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

Vice President—Tom Sherohman
(District #4)

District #1—Patti Kurak

District #2 — Bill Prugh

District #3—Dick Johnson

District #5 — Jan Anderson

District #6—Judy Hanna

District #7—Bart Ward

At Large A— Lori Yager

At Large B—Dan Frank

At Large C—Tom Ward

At Large D—Terri Cleveland

At-Large E — William Erhart

At-Large G — Catherine Vesley

At-Large H — Harvey Greenburg

County Commissioner Liaison—
Dick Lang

Staff

Executive Director—Todd Mahon

Program Manager—Vickie Wendel

Admin. Assistant—Pat Snodgrass

Volunteer Coordinator—Maria King

Curator Projects—Marilyn Anderson

Office Staff—Gail Dahl, Carol Dordan,
Don Johnson, Alan Santoro,
Pat Montgomery

Janitorial—Sandra Thorsen

The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

From the Director's Desk...

By Todd Mahon

You Can Help the Barn Dance

It's that time of year again; it's time for the Harvest Time Barn Dance on October 3. For those that have never attended this fun event, it is a major fundraiser for the Historical Society. It features great food from Those Pork Chops, Buggy Whipp's music will get everyone dancing and enjoying themselves. For many, the event highlight is the live and silent auction packages.

This year has been especially challenging for us to find sponsors for the event. We are still out there soliciting, but it looks like we might have only about half of the sponsorship revenue we have had in years past. This event is profitable as a fundraiser, but there are costs for the band, the building rental, publicity, and special event insurance that are the same, regardless of how many tickets are sold.

With that in mind, finding great items and packages for the auctions is more important this year than it ever has been. The better the quality, and the greater the quantity, the more funds that will be raised through the auction.

This is where you, an ACHS member and friend, can really help us out. Do you have season tickets for a local team or to one of the many Twin Cities theaters? If yes, please consider donating tickets to a game, event, or performance. You will receive a letter confirming the donation that can be used for tax deduction purposes. If you don't have tickets, perhaps you are a valued customer at a local business and can request a gift certificate for a service or merchandise. If you are a crafter or hobbyist, you could also donate high quality, hand-made items, like quilts, woodwork, or unique crafts.

All of these are great ideas. ACHS staff and board members are currently making dozens of requests. Some of us make our own substantial contributions to the auction. Please help us make the Harvest Time Barn Dance a great success. For more information on how to contribute an auction item, see page 4. If you have questions, call us at 763-421-0600.

From the President...

By Paul Pierce

ACHS Ghost Tours are very popular! Most programs tend to have a fairly short life cycle—interest peaks highest at the beginning, then wanes. That is one reason why we often change our exhibits.

This is NOT the case with our tours of possibly haunted sites! The stories of those who have witnessed the apparitions or the evidence of their existence have continued to be in great demand. If you have not yet taken the tour, I highly recommend it. Make reservations or buy tickets at the History Center, but the tours at this time of the year are very busy and they are often sold out.

We have many great stories to share on our "Ghost Tours" and participants often add their own experiences of mystery and the unexplained. It has given us a lot of new leads and material for possible new ghost tours. We keep these stories in our files.

Unless you have experienced something you can't explain, you are probably skeptical. I am naturally inclined to disbelieve in ghosts and I need substantial evidence to change my view. The phenomenon of hauntings and apparitions has been studied by competent professionals for a hundred years without a definitive answer or indisputable proof. Add to that the overwhelming number of shams with magician-like tricks and double exposures and we should be doubtful. The proliferation of digital formats and computer generated graphics and effects allow almost anyone to "doctor" pictures, film, or audio making it impossible to detect a phony.

The idea is well worth pursuing. Definitive proof of an afterlife would have important implications for the concepts of the soul, reincarnation and religion in general. Could the stories in the ACHS files add to our already diverse array of sources for answers?

I have never personally experienced definitive proof, but I had a tenant who said she often saw a ghost in her apartment. She took a Polaroid photo and it showed a half side view of an old man's face. When her kitchen light bulb popped during one of his visits, she told him to "go to the light" and he never appeared to her again. Six years later, another tenant in that same apartment told about seeing a ghost and she described that same old man.

If you take the tour and find you want more, call Maria King at 763-421-0600 and become a ghost tour guide. It is only because of our dedicated volunteers that we have been able to keep up with the tour's popularity. Thanks to the volunteers especially—and keep watching for ghosts!

Story of an Artifact

A Story in Stitches

A group of Anoka County women gathered, probably sometime in the 1940s, and began a quilt. They chose fabric they had at hand—often printed cloth sacks from flour or feed. They removed the seams, washed and pressed the fabric to use in sewing. They came up with an unusual pattern of stars separated by white hexagons. Some of the women carefully added their names and where they lived to their hexagons. Making a signature or memory quilt was fairly common in the 1930s and 1940s, especially if the recipient was moving away.



The quilt top was assembled, but for some reason, it was not finished. For the next 70 years, give or take a few, the quilt top disappeared. Who had it or where it traveled is unknown.

In June of 2009, a letter came to the Anoka County Genealogical Society. It read: *I live in a retirement community near Tucson, Arizona. We have a communal sewing room where fabric and other articles are often donated. Someone brought a charming quilt top started by women in Minnesota. The fabrics look to be from the 1940s. There are a few names embroidered on the top. Two of the women were from Anoka. I would love to mail it to you if you would like to have it.*

The letter was signed, *Segrid Salmon* and she attached several photos showing the quilt top with its embroidered names.

The Genealogical Society gave the letter to ACHS and began researching the names on the quilt. Indeed, this quilt top was made by Anoka County women!

Mrs. O.E. Olson was from Ham Lake. She had been born Pearl Danforth in Hope, North Dakota, where she grew up to marry O.E. Olson in 1901. They moved to Ham Lake Township where they farmed and raised their children. Pearl outlived her husband by almost six years. She was 72 years old when she died in 1957. Her



hexagon noted she was from Constance, a neighborhood in Ham Lake.

Mrs. B.H. Titterud was Nellie Hanson when she was born in Cedar in 1880. She married Berger Titterud in 1900 and they continued to live in the Ham Lake area where both had been born. Nellie was known to suffer with asthma. She raised their family on the farm and it was said that “handiwork was her diversion from household tasks.” One kind of handiwork she did was obviously quilting. Asthma took Nellie to the hospital in 1943 where she died unexpectedly from a heart attack.



Ruth McClurd stitched her given name on the quilt rather than Mrs. Zennan Phelps McClurd. She also put the rural mail route that brought their mail to them from Anoka, *Route 4*. She was born Ruth Danielson in Ham Lake, daughter of Bessie and Oscar. Oscar died in 1918 and Ruth’s mother moved to Andover where she married Jack Cull. The family moved back to Ham Lake when Ruth’s mother inherited the land her grandfather had homesteaded so many years earlier. Ruth married in 1935 and during WWII, her husband enlisted in the Navy. They moved to Washington State in 1946 and retired to California in 1972.



Using what is known about the women who signed the quilt, we can put a good date to it. Ruth McClurd was not married until 1935, so the quilt had to be started after that since she signed her married name, but before they moved to Washington in 1946 because of the address Ruth signed. We can further narrow that window of creation for the quilt because Nellie Titterud died in 1943, putting the quilt between 1935 and 1943.

Further research on other names may provide more information, but without question, this unique and well traveled quilt top has a place in Anoka County history. If one of these women was a member of your family or a neighbor and you have information about the quilt top, please call ACHS and help us piece even more of the quilt’s story together.

Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to August 14, 2009

GENERAL DONATIONS

Anoka Business and Landowners Association
Lyle and Jerene Anderson
Richard V. Bergling
Bruce Derscheid and Marilyn Haubrich
Lucille Elrite
Janet Galvin
Mike and Wendie Lapham
Lynne M. Larson
Orval and Jo Anne Leistico
Linwood Township
Jean M. Morehouse
Joseph Pelawa
Dorothy L. Peterson
Donald and Joyce Sage
Dodie and Herm Talle
Julienne Wyckoff

EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial for Dan Frank

HOME & GARDEN TOUR SPONSOR

Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce
Brook Park Realty
Century 21/ShillMann Realty
Edward Jones Investments
The Artique

SPECIAL DONATIONS FOR THE VIETNAM TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Vietnam Veterans of America, Anoka Chapter 470

MEMORIALS

In Memory of Lucille Lehn
Roger and Dottie Carlson

In Memory of Carol Houser
Roger and Dottie Carlson

ARTIFACT DONATIONS

City of Anoka	Lawrence Langmade
Anoka County Highway Dept.	Alice Packer
Laurel Bendix	Robert Porter
Diane Buganski	The Pospisil Family
Marlys Burman	Registered Abstractors
East Bethel Seniors	Segrid Salmon
Elise Chang	Lorraine Soderquist
Foster W. Dinwiddie	Ron Wendel
Chuck Drury	
Edward Evan	
Janet Galvin	
Joan Gorham	
Mary Ann Hoyt	
Don Johnson	
Jim Kordiak	

KORDIAK EVENT DONATIONS

Jim Kordiak

IN HONOR OF

David Legrid's service to ACHS

Roger and Dottie Carlson

BARN DANCE SPONSOR

MinnCo Credit Union
Village Bank
Luther North Country Ford

Welcome New Members!

Christine N. Drew – Brooklyn Park, MN
Linda Kelly – Sunfish Lake, MN
Lynne M. Larson – Anoka
David and Judie Schink with Dan, Ben, and Tom – Champlin
Gary and Karen Siewert - Anoka

Barn Dance Donations needed!

We need your help during these more challenging economic times to make the ACHS annual Barn Dance fundraiser the success it has always been. We are seeking items for the silent and live auction packages. Do you have tickets to a play or a game you can donate? Can you knit a beautiful wool sweater to donate? Build an elegant wooden chair? Be creative! Can you offer a package to mow someone's lawn and weed their garden? Think of things you could do or create that are quality items people would be excited to place bids on. Call ACHS to donate to the Barn Dance Auction. All donors receive receipts for tax deduction purposes.

***The Anoka County Historical Society
extends our sincere sympathy to
the family of:***

John "Jack" Galvin

who died January 29, 2009

Jack was a long-time member of ACHS.

Lucille Lehn

who died July 5, 2009

Lucille was the "face" of ACHS for many years as she served on the board and as an active volunteer.

Up To Date

- ◆ The Board of Directors meeting for September will be held at the History Center at 6:00 on September 10, 2009. The October meeting will be on the 8th. The public is welcome to attend board meetings at any time.
- ◆ **ACHS WISH LIST — can you help?**
 - +Anoka High School yearbooks from 1937 to 1943 and 1955 to 1961.
 - +A heavy duty, good quality, paper shredder.
 - +Stories and photos about prior uses of the theatre building on Main Street in Anoka.
 - +Stories and especially photos of the Anoka County Sheriff's patrol stations, people, and equipment.
- ◆ Sign up to be our fan and join the fun on Facebook! It's a quick way to see what's happening anytime. Click the link from our webpage:

www.ac-hs.org



Volunteers, you did it!!

By Maria King

Summer is a busy time and July is probably *the* busiest month at ACHS, leading us to count even more on our outstanding volunteers who came through in a big way. Just in the month of July, 71 people volunteered 543 hours to ACHS! This covers the Home and Garden tour, the Ghost Tours, Riverfest, the Fair, not to mention all of those everyday needs to keep the library and museum operating. A heartfelt THANK YOU goes out to each an every volunteer.

The fair is an example of the outreach our volunteers accomplish. We see about 75 visitors an hour in the farmhouse. Multiply that by ten hour days for six days and you can see why these events are so important to our outreach efforts! Special thanks to Pete Karpe for his help with the butter making equipment!

The summer may be winding down, but our volunteer needs are not. The enthusiasm for our "Ghost of Anoka" walking tour never seems to diminish. As fall approaches, more tour guides are needed. It's not too late to get trained and be in place for the Halloween rush (making the tours even more fun!)

We need the indexes in our community boxes updated as new material is added to these collections almost daily. Computer familiarity is required for this job.

Lived in the county our whole life? We can use your special talents to help us sort and identify slides donated to ACHS. This could be a really fun project for a pair of people with long memories in the county!

Call Maria at 763-421-0600 to get involved!

Fifty Years and Counting, *continued*

In the spring of 1957, a committee was formed to take necessary legal steps to incorporate as a village. The incorporation was approved by a 232 to 161 vote on June 4, 1957. A subsequent court challenge was put forth by Coon Lake residents who claimed the population statistics weren't met for incorporation. The group asserted that the Coon Lake Beach district was not contiguous with the new village and should not be included in the new village, according to an August 12, 1958, Anoka County Life newspaper article. For nearly two years, legal proceedings challenging the incorporation went on. There were times when it looked like village status for East Bethel was doomed. A judge in the Minnesota Supreme Court case ruled in Aug. 1958 that the township was too large and rural to be a village. It was only through an intercessory act by the Minnesota legislature, (passing bill no. 666) that validated and legalized the incorporation of East Bethel Village. An Act of the Minnesota Legislature in 1974 changed the status of all villages in Anoka County to cities, including the City of East Bethel.

Information compiled from ACHS files and sources as noted



Minnesota's Governor Orville Freeman signed the bill making East Bethel a village on April 27, 1959, shown here with members of the East Bethel council.

Newest ACHS Member!



ACHS Executive Director Todd Mahon and his wife, Nikki, have a new baby girl!! She was born Monday, August 17th, 2009, and her name is Alexis Evelyn Mahon. She weighed 7 lbs, 4.5 oz. Mom, Dad, and Alexis are doing fine at home together

for a couple weeks before Dad returns to his office at ACHS. Congratulations, Nikki and Todd!

Come on down to the

Anoka County Historical Society's Sixth Annual

Harvest Time Barn Dance



\$25
Advanced
Tickets

Saturday, October 3, 2009

6:00pm to 10:00pm ♦ Anoka County Fairgrounds

Join us for a harvest feast, catered by "Those Pork Chops," and then put on your dancing shoes for the live sounds of Buggy Whipp. Waltz your way over to the auction tables and walk away with a "barn good" auction item. From gift certificates to fine art—there's something for everyone. Proceeds from this event will provide support for the Anoka County Historical Society.

Dinner and Dance Tickets:
\$25 (advance) ♦ \$30 (at door)
Dance Tickets (after 7pm): \$15
More Information:
(763) 421-0600 ♦ www.ac-hs.org

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Monuments to Life Cemetery Tours

Explore the stories of those who reside in our “silent cities” during the Anoka County Historical Society’s *Monuments to Life* cemetery tours. These tours are evenings filled with stories, traditions, characters, history, and symbolism.

Tuesday, October 6—Forest Hills Cemetery, Anoka
Thursday, October 8—Joyce Chapel Cemetery, Coon Rapids
Saturday, October 10—Old Bethel Cemetery, East Bethel

Come to one or come to all three!

Tickets for individual tours are \$6.00 (ACHS members)

\$8.00 (non-members)

Ticket Packages 3 Tours for \$15.00 (ACHS members)

\$21.00 (non-members)

Tickets are limited and must be purchased in advance!

You will receive maps with your ticket purchase.

Get your tickets at the Anoka County History Center,

2135 Third Avenue, Anoka,

or by calling 763-421-0600 with your VISA or Mastercard

All tours begin at 7:00 p.m. and go on rain or shine, so dress for the weather. Be prepared for walking in low light and standing as we visit graves and hear the stories they have to tell. Tours last about an hour.

ACHS — 75 Years, continued from page 1

The second meeting was also when a list of “county chairmen” was handed in by Mrs. Lena Chase. County Chairmen’s duties were not defined in the meeting minutes, but it appears chairs were expected to represent their areas and help collect the history of their communities. This kind of county-wide representation has taken different forms through the years at ACHS and is most currently reflected in the election of our board members by Commissioner District. This ensures our focus is the complete county and not any one area within it.

With all the foresight those founding members of ACHS displayed, it is no surprise that they took their business of keeping history very seriously. Still, they knew how interesting and how much fun history could be, too. At only their second meeting, they decided they needed to have history programs at the meetings to continue their mission to not only gather and preserve history, but to share it, too. The minutes do not tell us what that program was, but they do tell us about another way they shared history and it’s a way we still use today.

After the business meeting in October of 1934, various members stayed around, chatting and telling stories

about the Anoka County history they knew. *Mrs. Faherty gave an account of an early wedding and its watery consequences; Mrs. Chase told of Elder Twitchell and his cow, Mrs. Goss distinguished between the early Marys, and Dr. Scipio Bond spoke of his difficulty in getting back and forth across the Mississippi with his fiddle.*

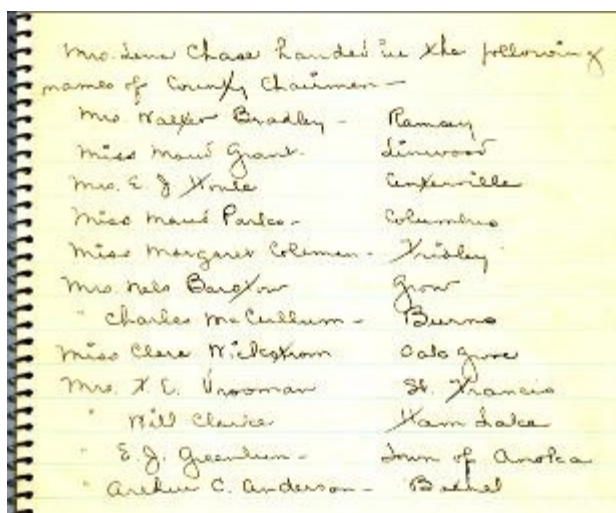
This storytelling, too, is still done after (and even during!) ACHS board meetings, special events, exhibit openings—indeed in everything we do every day! This sharing of history is our connection to history and our role in it. Besides that, it’s fun and we always learn something!

Unfortunately, not all of those stories, like those at the end of the early minutes, are recorded in our files. We have made and continue to make efforts to document these “reminiscence” kind of stories through oral history interviews.

We have also invited people to write down their stories and submit them to ACHS. We have received some of the survey sheets mailed with the last *History Center News* and we’ve included the survey in this newsletter again. Fill it out, return it and be prepared to see it used in an upcoming exhibit. We’ve got plans in the works for an exhibit that will look at the everyday history of our lives and your history could be a part of it!

At a time when things around us are changing so rapidly, it is almost comforting to look at the mission of ACHS and find it comparing so favorably with the original mission set out 75 years ago. Yes, we’ve certainly up-

dated and changed how we do it, but the mission remains the same. Gathering, preserving and sharing Anoka County’s history was a passion in 1934, just as it is today and we are glad you share that excitement and passion. Let’s pass it on and let the next 75 years be envious of the way we kept our history part of history!



The “county chairmen” from the ACHS 1934 minutes.

Coming Events

September 3, 5, 17, and 19 at 7:30 p.m. Ghosts of Anoka Tour

October 1, 3, 15, 17, 24 & more Halloween week 7:30 p.m.

Meet at the History Center. Tickets required. This special Ghost Tour takes guest to places where something unexplained has happened and lets them decide what it might be! This tour is just over a mile long and is in the twilight and evening hours. Adult tickets are \$7 for non-members, \$5 for members and \$3 for children under 18 years. Get your tickets early, as we sell out of these popular tickets *fast!* Remember, we accept VISA and Mastercard.

September/October Lobby Exhibit Anoka Masonic Lodge

(Anoka County History Center Lobby.) This special guest exhibit takes a look at the 150 years of history behind the Masonic Lodge in Anoka. Members of the Lodge have put together a great display to highlight some of their projects and accomplishments as well as answer a few questions about their organization. This exhibit will remain in the lobby through the fall.

September 12, events scheduled all day Linwood Family Fun Day

(Linwood Town Hall) This family fun event is a Linwood tradition and ACHS will be a part of it this year with the traveling Vietnam Exhibit in the Grange Hall. Expect pancakes, music, a silent auction, displays from the Linwood Fire Department, and even Elvis!! See the Linwood website or call Linwood Town Hall for more information. Everyone is welcome!

September 26, events scheduled all day City of Nowthen Heritage Day

(Nowthen City Hall, 19800 Nowthen Blvd.) Celebrate the history and heritage of Nowthen! The day begins with a pancake breakfast starting at 7:00 am and is filled with historical displays, crafts, food, games, music, and more! ACHS will have an exhibit on Nowthen history from 10:00-4:00.

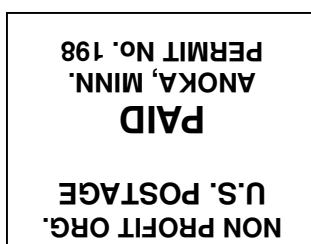
October 3, 6:00 p.m. Harvest Time Barn Dance

(Anoka County Fairgrounds) Dust off those dancing shoes and come for a great meal, wonderful music, fun, and fabulous auction items at the Historical Society's biggest event of the year! This is a not-to-be-missed event, so get your tickets now! For more information, see page 6.

October 6, 8, and 10, 7:00 p.m. Annual "Monuments to Life" Cemetery Tours

The 7th annual Monuments to Life cemetery tour series. This year's tour starts at **Anoka's Forest Hill Cemetery on Tuesday, October 6th, at 7:00 p.m.** Next is the **Joyce Chapel Cemetery in Coon Rapids on Thursday, October 8th at 7:00 p.m.**, and the tours wrap up on **Saturday, October 10th, at the Old Bethel Cemetery in East Bethel at 7:00 p.m.** Buy a single tour ticket or save money with a ticket package for all three! See page 7 for more details.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society
2135 Third Avenue North
Anoka, MN 55303
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