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Deephaven Historical Society Newsletter
Summer Report 2004

Fellow Members of the Deephaven Historical Society,

Deephaven City Council and the Cottagewood Store Foundation had tentatively scheduled Friday, July 23rd at 5:30 PM for the Friday night cookout at the Cottagewood Store to feature once again David Brackett's famous Bean Pot recipe of the late George Brackett. Unfortunately Dave is not available for this date and we need to reschedule the Bean Pot. Keep checking with the Cottagewood Foundation Friday Night Grill specials for further information.

George A. Brackett came to Minneapolis at age 20. He worked as a Procurement Officer and cook at Fort Snelling during the Civil War. He became wealthy in meatpacking, flour milling, real estate, etc. In 1869 he was hired to provide supplies for the crews constructing the Northern Pacific Railroad across the plains and later contracted to build on the Great Northern and the Canadian Pacific. Brackett buried bean pots for 24 hours along the routes, ready for the crews when they returned after the day's work.

Known for his public-spirited attitude, he served as Mayor of Minneapolis, organized charity relief including the shipment of 2,000 barrels of flour to the Johnstown Flood survivors, and hosted the 1892 Republican Convention in Minneapolis. As first commodore of the Lake Minnetonka Yacht Club, he hosted post-regatta parties on Brackett's Point, serving beans (and hand-churned ice cream).

In 1897, after gold was discovered in Yukon, Brackett began selling provisions to Klondike miners. He met Joseph Acklen from Nashville who planned to build a road across Chilkoot or White Pass.

Brackett became a partner and completed the road after partners and money ran out, with \$15,000 from his good friend, James J. Hill.

DHS To Give Museum Presentation to the City Council.

The long awaited request of the City to allow the Deephaven Historical Society to build an addition to the City Hall to house the Deephaven Historical Society Artifacts will occur in late August or September pending Council agenda availability. The addition will be a traditional Deephaven design including a veranda for the cool summer nights. The walkout structure will have a walk through from the main Council Chambers to the main exhibit area. Down stairs will be storage and meeting rooms. The preliminary costs are set at \$200,000. Should the Council approve the plans, fund raising events will be held frequently, until the money is raised to fund the project. Any benevolent benefactor wishing to underwrite the project would be greatly appreciated. Look for more details in the next newsletter.

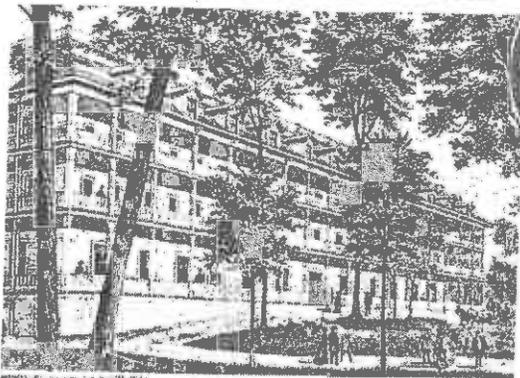
Renewed Membership

Thanks to all who sent in their renewals for DHS membership. Our membership remains strong at 125+. If you have friends that are interested in participation in the DHS please refer them to any officer of the DHS and we will make sure they get an enrollment form or send them to City Hall to pick one up. For you annual members consider upgrading to a ten-year membership for only \$100.

Thanks to Bob & Nancy Woodburn

Due to Council Chambers double booking our June event required a move. A great big thanks to the Woodburn's for inviting the DHS across the street to their home where our speaker, Todd Warner, gave an exciting and interesting talk on Historical Boats. The Woodburn's are typical of the wonderful people who enjoy the friendships and activities associated with the Deephaven Historical Society. Thanks so much!

DEEPHAVEN-SAIN'T LOUIS HOTEL



St. Charles Gibson
Attorney
Austrian Knight
Prussian Commande

Built the St. Louis Hotel and his beautiful "Northome", which burned in 1894. St. M. Bennett built "Cedarhurst" on the same site. Walter Douglas (Dusky Ditz) built "Walden" on the hotel site.

Hotel St. Louis had 200 rooms, a bath on each floor, gas light later electric and a telephone. 1879-1908

HOTEL ST. LOUIS

The first of Lake Minnetonka's five largest resort hotels was Deephaven's Hotel St. Louis. Opening in 1879, while the Lake Park Hotel was still being built in Excelsior at Tonka Bay, the St. Louis received guests one year ahead of Wayzata's Arlington Hotel, three years ahead of Jim Hill's Lafayette Hotel and six years ahead of Hotel Del Otero at Spring Park.

The St. Louis was a rectangular gray building with green trim overlooking Carson's Bay and Bay St. Louis. It had three floors with a veranda on each level and some 200 gas-lit rooms besides dining rooms, a parlor, smoking room—and a bath on every floor with "plumbing of the highest quality." Before long it had a telephone and electric lights and bells. Behind the hotel was a row of neat white cabins for Negro servants who worked at the hotel or had come with visitors from the South.

This hotel drew most of its guests from New Orleans, St. Louis, Kansas City and other southern cities. Visitors could take a branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway directly to the hotel, or ride the M. & St. L. Railway to its nearby Deephaven depot where carriages from the hotel awaited them. Most Lake Minnetonka hotels found the '80s gayer than the '90s, because business slowed as new trains took vacationers to more distant lakes. And then there was the Panic of '93 when people stayed home by the hundreds. The '90s at Hotel St. Louis, however, brightened considerably when the hotel began hosting Northwestern Lawn Tennis Tournaments annually. Yet style and elegance that typified life at the St. Louis did not diminish on the tennis court. In July of 1891, for example, the St.

Louis management offered \$250 in prizes for tournament winners. After Victor Etting, of Chicago, won the men's singles championship that year, Deephaven's Ward Burton wrote: "He (Etting) overcame all opponents. Yet he was immaculate in white flannels, starched collar, bow tie and a narrow brim straw hat."

The most captivating character in the story of the St. Louis Hotel was Charles S. Gibson, a brilliant lawyer from St. Louis, Missouri. Some have called him "father of the lake" because he was making improvements and popularizing the area long before its rush of vacationers began. Already in 1870 Sir Charles had hired landscape architects from Boston to come to his heavily timbered quarter-section of land to choose a site and plan the "vistas" to be cleared for his "Nort Home." His enthusiasm must have been contagious: four years later, when Lake Minnetonka hotels could accommodate only 625 guests, 100 of the summer visitors had come from St. Louis alone.

In 1876, the first issue of Dimond's Lake Minnetonka Tourist noted that architects designing Gibson's summer home said it was "the first big house on the lake to be built of finished lumber." By midsummer of the following year, Gibson's wife and their six children moved into the large new house from the tents they had been occupying during previous summers. And then Gibson was ready to execute the rest of his plan for this summer resort area: to build a hotel on the remaining 100 acres of his land overlooking Bay St. Louis.

Lawyer Gibson was not lacking in experience: he had rebuilt a hotel in St. Louis and "got it out of the red" after it had been destroyed by fire. Now his goal was this hotel at Lake Minnetonka to be put up by southerners, financed by their capital, and managed by men from the South. An ally with Gibson in this project was W.D. Washburn of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway. An example of promotion of Hotel St. Louis appeared in the local newspaper on July 17, 1878.

The managers of the M. & St. L. Railroad and other influential Minnesotans (Gen. W.D. Washburn, Prof. W.W. Folwell, H. M. Carpenter, Mayor Rand) invited 150 gentlemen and their ladies from St. Louis to enjoy an excursion on the Hattie May and a banquet at Colonel Gibson's beautiful new home. The purpose of this occasion was to impress the

Southerners with the attractions at Lake Minnetonka, among which would be their host's nearly completed Hotel St. Louis, and to promote interest in extending the M. & St. L. line to the Lake Area.

Gibson's accomplishments at Lake Minnetonka were, of course, only a part of his life. As a lawyer in St. Louis, his distinguished career brought him special honors. He was made "Commander of the Knights in Austria by Emperor Franz Joseph and decorated by the German Emperor with the Commander's Cross of the Royal Prussian Crown...an order usually given only to Prime Ministers." These honors came to him as sole counsel in a celebrated case brought by the King of Prussia "establishing the autocracy of the government of that country." A decree obtained by the Supreme Court of Missouri. Although his honors and decorations had nothing to do with English knighthood, people began calling Gibson "Sir" Charles. Even so, it is doubtful that the honors gave him any more satisfaction than his summer home and popular hotel at Lake Minnetonka.

Gibson's house burned about 1894, shortly after his death. Son Gerolt Gibson then sold the Northome property to R. M. Bennett, who hired W. C. Whitney to design and build "Cedarhurst" on the site of Gibson's "Nort Home."

Because business was poor around the turn of the century, Hotel St. Louis was demolished in 1907, after a huge public sale of all its furnishings. The following year Walter W. Douglas, of Quaker Oats fame, began building his home on the site of Hotel St. Louis. Two years later the Gibson period ended when heirs of Sir Charles completed sale of his property in Subdivision No. 1 of Deephaven Park.

DHS Meeting Schedule

Deephaven Historical Society meetings are held the last Saturday of each month at 8:30 AM at the City Hall. All members are welcome. These meetings involve planning and reporting by the committee chairs, the board, and the President. Plans for the upcoming year are discussed as well as decisions regarding the gathering and distribution of funds.

Committees:

Finance	Dan Nelson	952-449-0730
Publicity/Publ.	Bob Gerlicher	952-474-7248
Museum Dev.	Tim Alt	952-470-8889
	& Mark Read	952-474-4091
Newsletter	Bill Robinson	952-473-3130

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Photo Credits from the following books:

"Lake Minnetonka Historic Hotels" by Ellen Wilson Meyer

"Life in the Early Days of Cottagewood 1900 - 1908" From the Memoirs of Ruth Hill Leslie, Edited by Thomas Hill McCarthy

"Lake Minnetonka 1850 - 2000" A pictorial history of things and places on Lake Minnetonka by Leo C. Meloche

This books, along with several others are "For Sale" at Deephaven City Hall.

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