

# Deephaven Historical Society Newsletter

## Spring Report 2009

### Come Cruise With DHS!!!

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It's time for the annual Deephaven Historical Society Cruise on Lake Minnetonka.....Come join us **Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup> of May at 11:30 AM.**

We will board at the usual place, the Bayview Grill, behind the Bayview events center. Harry Allen offered to speak to our group about the history of Lidia Ferguson, one of the earlier settlers in our community. Hopefully, the cruise will fit into his schedule.....

This year's cruise will combine time on one of the Lakes most special boats as well as a picnic on Big Island. That's right... the boat will take us to Big Island where we will leave the boat and have an old fashioned picnic right on the grounds of the old amusement park. We will spend about an hour at our picnic before returning to port. The cruise and picnic will last about two hours.



Price for DHS members will be \$20 and for non members the price will be \$25. Price includes the cruise, the lecture, and the picnic boxed lunch consisting of Ham Sandwich or Chicken Salad Sandwich, Chips, Cookie, Potato Salad and a beverage.

Bring a blanket to sit on, although there are plenty of picnic tables.

**For Reservations...Please Call Nan Nicolle @ 952-473-3682.**

Please send a check or money order within five days of reserving. **Make checks out to "The Deephaven Historical Society" and mail to : Nan Nicolle, 17600 Breconwood Rd., Wayzata 55391.** Due to the overwhelming popularity of last years cruise, space is limited to the first 60 reservations. If we are over subscribed, we will attempt to get a larger boat, but there are no guarantees.



Big Island

- by Barb Sykora

In the early months of 1879, great hotels built on Lake Minnetonka a portion of the land purchased the year before by Thomas Eginton. The investors were Thomas A. Harrow, George M. Jackson and Thomas A. Eginton of Winchester, Kentucky. It was situated on high ground on the shores of Lake Minnetonka with commanding views of St. Louis Bay and Carson's Bay. The wooden building was 217 feet long and three stories tall with spacious verandas on each floor of the hotel.

The famous architect, Leroy S. Buffington, designed the hotel. Buffington had moved to St. Paul in 1871 and worked for an architectural firm of A.M. Radcliffe and got the reputation as an excellent designer of buildings. He opened his own business in 1874 and was commissioned to design the hotel. He drew up plans in December 1878 for a hotel with about 150 rooms.



Leroy Buffington

The design of the building was very simple. Many of the rooms faced the lake to get a view of the lake but also to catch the breezes off the lake. It was an austere building painted gray with a green trim, windows with four light plate glass, and galleries that were ten feet in width that extended around the entire front of the hotel on all of the 3 stories. The dining room was in the back of the structure followed by the kitchen, storage and laundry room. The icehouse could hold 300 tons of ice. It was designed with a ladies' parlor, 18 x 90 feet, connecting with a reception room 18 x 24 feet. It had a reading room and separate billiard parlors for ladies and gentlemen. Most of the hotel rooms were either 12 x 15 feet or the larger 12 x 17 feet with marble basins with water pipes in all the rooms. The hotel had several out buildings including a barracks for the black servants. During his career here in Minneapolis, Buffington designed two other hotels on Lake Minnetonka, which were the Park Lake Hotel, and one of the most famous of resorts on Lake Minnetonka, the Lafayette Hotel.



Lafayette Hotel

day the hotel welcomed travelers was 1879. The name of the hotel was called Harrow House after one of the investors, Thomas Harrow. They advertised the hotel as having accommodations for four hundred people with gas, hot and cold water, bath rooms (not bathrooms) and all the modern conveniences. A Mr. Slocum was the contractor on the building of the hotel.

The season of 1879 started out smoothly. As an example, the boat builder, G.V. Johnson of Wayzata, delivered the thirty rowboats ordered by the Harrow Hotel. One of the investors, George M. Jackson, even had built a small cottage on the hotel grounds for his family who arrived in the early weeks of June 1879. There was even a small editorial article in the "Tourist and Sportsman", June 17th, 1879 issue, stating that the "management of the Hotel Harrow very wisely left out the electric circus-light business in the arrangements of this beautiful resort. Electric lights may do for a show, but the idea of lighting up a summer resort with them looks a little as if there were no natural attractions to draw a crowd."

Then things move very quickly in the wrong direction. Thomas A. Eginton, who had purchased the land from Charles Gibson just the year before, died at the hotel very suddenly. When he arrived at the hotel he was not well. He had been stabbed in the liver, years earlier, and one of the reasons he came here was for the improvement of his health. Upon his death, the other stockholders, Jackson and Harrow, had a huge falling out and fought for control of the hotel. Harrow was the loser. By August 5th, 1879, the hotel had a new name: Hotel St. Louis de Minnetonka and a new proprietor, Charles Eginton, the late Thomas Eginton's father. Charles Eginton said "it is the design of the management to thoroughly reorganize and run the hotel in such a manner that the public can find no cause for dissatisfaction in any of its departments. There has never been a more brilliant opportunity for a hotel than that presented at Lake Minnetonka, and with a magnificent structure such as the Hotel St. Louis...." The former proprietor, Thomas Harrow became the competition on the lake. He became landlord of the Shady Isle Hotel, a small hotel on the Upper Lake (of Lake Minnetonka). The hotel only held sixty people. Harrow told the "Tourist and Sportsman", he would do "the best he can with the Shady Isle Hotel until he can do better."

*Continued on page 3 ...*

**Continued ...Part 6--History of St. Louis Bay by Barb Sykora**

Even with the change in management and a name change, the St. Louis Hotel by all accounts had a great first season. During its first year, the hotel hosted the banquet for the first Minnetonka Regatta, which included clubs from Burlington, Iowa, the Minnesota Boat Club from St. Paul and the Lurline Boat Club of Minneapolis. After three days of competition on the lake when the weather cooperated, all gathered at the hotel on the last evening. The parlor, piazzas, office halls and the dining room were ablaze with lights, music and flowers. The dining room closed at 10 p.m. and dancing to an orchestra began. The crowds were great and all the ladies dressed elegantly.

In 1950, in researching her book, Blanche Nichols Wilson had an opportunity to speak to a gentleman who had stayed at the Hotel St. Louis. At the time of the interview he lived in San Antonio, Texas. His last name was Weatherby and as a child along with his family, has stayed there in 1880. His family was from northwest Mississippi, where the summers were very hot. "Minnetonka and that fine hotel meant (a lot) to our parboiled family. Some magic about that climate! That hotel was like a great private mansion. Man never threw together under one roof more of the comforts of life. Mother liked to dress every night for dinner. Evenings father and mother and we older children would go driving. We brought our coachman and carriage up with us. Beautiful country around your lake and your hills were new to us - no hills in Mississippi."

For many tourists who came to the Bay of St. Louis, this was a chance to get back to nature. Many who came from the southern cities came not only to enjoy the refreshing climate but also to experience "wild nature." George Catlin, an American painter of the American Indians in South Dakota said in 1832 that nature mattered because "the further we become separated from pristine wilderness and beauty, the more pleasure does the mind of enlightened men feels in recurring to those needs." In a letter written to the Editor of "The Tourist" by a recent southern visitor to Lake Minnetonka on August 19, 1880, he tells of his enchantment and praise of the lake. "During my life I had heard much of the great summer resort of Minnesota; but never without personal observation, can on comprehend what Minnetonka really is. Man's mind can imagine things vast, glorious and improbable; It cannot however, grasp blindly and accurately at Nature's great works. The thousands of small, apparently insignificant, and to the uninitiated, non-comprehensive things, which compromise the tools of Nature's workshop, are seen only by the lover of Nature. It is thus that Lake Minnetonka is formed."



George Catlin

The season of 1880 started with the improvements of the hotel. Wings added at each end of the main section of the hotel now gave the hotel 135 rooms. The dining room, which extended in the back of the main section of the hotel, was 40 x 100 feet in size with 18 foot ceilings. A new bowling alley was also constructed on the bank of the lake. The stables were well appointed to furnish guests with carriage and saddle horses. All of the annoyances and difficulty of the opening year have been overcome and everything seems in trim for smooth sailing." The Hotel St. Louis staff was dedicated to making itself a destination for men of wealth and standing.

Also for the season of 1880, a new servant quarters was built in the back of the hotel. In the August 5th issue of The Tourist and Sportsman, Mr. Eginton is quoted as saying that "no fault was found with the quality of food and by an increase in the number and observance of more strict discipline of the servants, the management will accomplish all that is necessary for success."

*To be continued in our next newsletter.....*

**Coming Attractions!**

We have been gifted an interesting biography with material about experiences in the 95th bomb group, 334th squadron, 8th Air Force.

We will run it serially as we have with the "History of St. Louis Bay." We hope you will look forward to this first installment coming soon.

**A Reminder ...**

Some of our membership is delinquent in their dues. If you have forgotten to pay your dues we would appreciate your remittance.

Currently, annual "Friendship" dues are \$20.00, Silver 10 year memberships are \$100.00 and Lifetime Membership is \$250.00.

Please make your check payable to: "Deephaven Historical Society" and mail to: City Hall, 20225 Cottagewood Road, Deephaven, MN. 55331  
We appreciate your patronage!

# DHS

**Acknowledgements –  
Current members  
Thank You!**

John Ahern	John Dupont	Sheila Laughlin	Gary & Susan Rappaport
Harry Allen	Robert & Judith Evans	Walter & Constance Linder	Mark A. Read
Tim & Pat Alt	Mrs. Paul Flaten	Robert & Siri Marshall	Dorothy C. Robb
Tom & Nancy Anderson	M.J. Florance, Jr.	Doug McNaught	Bill & Donna Robinson
Steven & Leah Barnacle	Judi Forsmark	Nancy Middleton	Ben & Roamaine Shank, Jr.
Marty Baskerville	Rosemary Fruehling	Mark & Michelle Mitchell	Jim Schmid
John & Nan Beard	Furst Foundation	Jon Monson	Craig & Maureen Shaver
Mary Lou Bennis	Rob & Ann Furst	Edgar & Elizabeth Morsman	Clinton & Lois Shaw
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Don & Moonyeen Bongaards	Bob Gerlicher	Napolitano—Wallace	Lewis Sopko
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Mildred L. Carbonneau	Barbara & Leslie Hexum	Mr. & Mrs. Harry Peters	Robert & Nancy Woodburn
Alan & Sarah Dale	Gordon & Betty Huber	Julia Cole Peterson	Dr. Gary & Vicki Wyard
Donald Davis	Kathleen Jewett	Bob Pillsbury	George & Cynthia Yared
	Burton Johnson	Tom Pokonosky	
	James & Camilla Johnson	Ronald Poole	
	Mr. & Mrs. Mark Jones II	David Pratt	

**Take advantage of the books that are available for sale at  
City Hall!**

Picturesque Deephaven	\$15.95
The Excelsior Amusement Park	\$11.95
Life in the Early Days of Cottagewood	\$ 6.25
A Post Card History	\$25.00
Lake Minnetonka 1850 – 2000	\$32.00
Lake Minnetonka 1905	\$20.00
The 1893 Handbook & Souvenir	\$10.00
Minnetonka Yacht Club Centennial 1882 – 1982	\$15.95
Tales of the Steamboat Minnehaha 1906—2006	\$20.00
Minnesota Vacation Days	\$34.95

**DHS Committee**

**Finance**  
Tom Anderson 952-474-3515

**Publicity / Publ.**  
Bob Gerlicher 952-474-7248

**Museum Development**  
Tim Alt 952-470-8889  
Mark Read 952-474-4091

**Newsletter**  
Bill Robinson 952-473-3130

Meetings held the last Saturday of each month at 8:30 AM in the Deephaven City Council Chambers.  
All Members Welcome!

**DEEPAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
20225 COTTAGEWOOD ROAD  
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