

# The Prairie View

EDEN PRAIRIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



WINTER 2010/2011

*everyone wore heavy red flannel underwear*

## WINTER ON THE PRAIRIE



Farm life was an isolated, labor-intensive existence for early Eden Prairie pioneers and even though it was 20° below zero outside, all family members still needed to work together ceaselessly to survive. What did they eat and wear and how did they stay warm? What did they do for fun? Thankfully, we have first-hand accounts that answer many of these questions.



Having enough wood to burn was an essential and on-going chore. Trees needed to be chopped down, loaded onto a sleigh, split and stacked. And then, inevitably one had to shovel his way through 4 feet of snow to the woodpile before it could be carried inside to be burned. In early days, each farm pretty much grew, gathered, hunted, raised and preserved what it needed to survive. Ideally, the family diet during the winter was potatoes, salt pork and corn bread, fish, venison, ducks and geese. Winter fruits could include dried apples, wild plums, dried wild crab apples and cranberries. As the farms became more productive, winter vegetables like turnips, cabbage, onions, carrots, parsnips and navy beans, stored in the root cellar, were welcome additions and most families had a dairy cow, chickens and pigs. Sweeteners were maple syrup, molasses and honey.



John Cummins' 1850's-1890's diaries record much about his daily life as an Eden Prairie farmer. His winter tasks included hauling building materials, making tools and crafting furniture. He tended his dormant orchards and cared for his livestock. And of course, there was ice. Ice needed to be cut, hauled and stored in ice houses.



In 1938 Agnes Anderson Twichell wrote Eden Prairie Reminiscences for her grandchildren. "Perhaps," she says, "modern children would wonder why the bedrooms were cold. It was because houses were heated by wood stoves and they were not made to hold fire all night. By midnight the fires were all out and the house grew very cold." "In the bitter winter weather we had hot soapstones, flat irons or sometimes stove lids wrapped in paper, in our beds. Unheated rooms, but woolen blankets and comforters over us and soft feather bed ticks under us made for comfortable, healthful sleep." "Because the houses were cold and draughty," she continues, "everyone wore heavy red flannel underwear ... and our feet were kept fairly warm with heavy, woolen, hand-knitted stockings and high shoes made of calfskin and kept water-tight by frequent greasings with mutton tallow."

Isolated though it was, friends were always at the ready to help and eagerly went visiting to share a convivial, rib-sticking meal and music in the parlor. Admittedly, there have been changes ... but the neighborly spirit of "life on the prairie" hopefully has remained the same.

## *north-south roads shape eden prairie*

### A PEEK INTO THE PAST

Not so long ago, folks from Eden Prairie used a variety of north-south routes, all intersecting today's County Highway 62, to access entertainment, conduct business and attend High School. These roads, County Hwy. 101, Eden Prairie Road/County Road 4, Shady Oak Road/County Road 61 and County Road 18, provided the lifeblood, shape and contours of our City.

As we are well aware, Eden Prairie does not have it's own downtown. When first settled in the 1860s most pioneers arrived via the Minnesota River, settled in the southern half of Eden Prairie and shopped and conducted business in Shakopee, crossing the river on ferries or sleighs in winter. As railroads began crisscrossing the state and roads were better maintained, river travel dwindled, northern Eden Prairie was further settled and our commercial centers shifted north of the town line.

**Highway 101**, always the border between Eden Prairie and Chanhassen, provided northward routes to the growing communities of Wayzata and Excelsior.

Traveling north on **Eden Prairie Road** the destination was the neighborhood of Glen Lake in Minnetonka. Here was Kraemer's General Store and the electric streetcar depot. The streetcar tracks ran through Glen Lake on the south side of Excelsior Boulevard and under a bridge for Eden Prairie Road, where a station was located. That depot was

well used by commuters, farmers taking their goods to Hopkins or Minneapolis, Glen Lake Tuberculosis Sanitarium workers and the popular Excelsior Amusement Park.

**Shady Oak Road** was the gateway to Mainstreet in Hopkins. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century railroads had opened Hopkins to industrial growth. In early days there was a blacksmith shop, livery stable, barber shop, a public bath, saloons and an opera house! Soon there were grocery stores, drug stores, hardware stores, a shoe store, doctors, dentists, the post office ... and Hopkins is where Eden Prairie students attended high school until our Consolidated School was built in 1924. By 1950 Hopkins was the largest commercial center in the western suburbs!

**County Road 18** (now U. S. Hwy. 169) routed north to East End Hopkins for the Minneapolis & St. Louis RR, the Milwaukee RR and the Great Northern RR depots, a grain elevator and two lumber yards. Two of those three depot buildings still stand; one as the Depot Coffee House. Continuing east on Excelsior Boulevard early Eden Prairie farmers traveled in horse-drawn wagons loaded with milk, hay and produce to get to the Minneapolis Farmers Market.

With so much, so conveniently close, it's easy to understand why Eden Prairie never really needed a downtown.

*Reuel Long*

## *what are those cool things?*

### CUPOLAS FROM THE DORENKEMPER BARN



Not so long ago, the pair of cupolas framing the entrance to Marshall's Farm Market were atop the Dorenkemper barn on Pioneer Trail. The farm and barn are no longer with us, progress being what it is, but this story has a happy ending. Carrie Marshall told me that the original 19<sup>th</sup> century barn came down with the help of a tornado in the 1930's and a new barn was soon in place with these handsome cupolas. "It was a beautiful barn," says Carrie. "For a number of years, my father rented land from Alex and Irene Dorenkemper and we grew corn, pumpkins and watermelons there." The farm was located at the rise just as Pioneer Trail goes into Chanhassen and was developed by Dan Herbst as Settler's Ridge. Dan carefully removed the cupolas before the barn came down and the Marshalls stored them without any definitive plan except to save them. As you recall, the Dorenkemper farm house now resides close by at Riley Lake Park.

Cupolas are functional decorative structures used on top of buildings, in our case a barn, to admit light and air. The Marshall's cupolas also sport handsome weather vanes. Last year Carrie purchase the cupolas from Herbst and had a metal worker clean, stabilize and mount them on iron bases to sit flat. "I just wanted to see them stay in Eden Prairie and the Dorenkemper farm was an important part of my childhood. We have gotten so many questions and compliments about them and its wonderful to tell the story. Before the snow flies, we'll put them back in storage to reappear with the veggies."

## news & thank yous

### CUMMINS-PHIPPS-GRILL HOUSE

What better way to spend a mild October day than to wander the grounds of the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House and meet (friendly) ghosts as they recalled their lives during the late 1800's/early 1900's in and around the old farmstead. Guests were introduced to Alexander Hankins (played by George Schell), Edwin Phipps (Bob Pemberton), Martin Grill (Michael DeSanctis), Harriet Phipps (Janna Rennich), a school girl (Christy Nix) and Mary Jane Hill Anderson (Linda Hayen) as well as various women and children (Laurie Pepper, Kathy Case, Aimee Wagner and daughters) and even a coffin-maker (Mark Mosman). Guides Valerie Ross, Chris Honaas-Wildfang and Jeanne DeSanctis filled in with historical commentary along the way. Guests were then treated to the "best apple pie they'd ever tasted". Special thanks go to the Kristen Heeringa for costumes, Sandy Rodenz & Kim Carlander for their help in writing scripts, Marshall's Farm Market for seasonal decorations, Terry Picha for the use of his one bottom plow and Jan Mosman for her amazing apple pies. The Ghost Walk was successful in making Eden Prairie residents aware of the history and future of the house and property. It was also a lot of fun and the Task Force plans to make it even bigger and better next year.

*Jeanne DeSanctis*

## partnerships, mums & tombstones

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

We are so grateful to the new Star Bank in Eden Prairie. We have been working with Marketing Director Cindy Evert to create **Eden Prairie Past and Present** featuring historical photos, as well as a large aerial map of the city. In appreciation for our partnership, Harry Wahlquist, president and chairman of Star Bank presented us with a donation of \$500 dollars. Be sure to stop in to see the display.

On another note, I am excited to share with our members that Carrie Marshall with Marshall Farm has agreed to partner with the Historical Society at the Cummins-Phipps-Grill Homestead by providing seasonal decorations for the porches and interior, such as the beautiful mums this fall. As you drive by, the home will look more welcoming as well as used and enjoyed! Many thanks Carrie.

As I write this message, I have just received a phone call from a resident that discovered a tombstone in his yard while digging to place new pavers. The date on the stone is 1868! The home was built in the 1860's. This will be interesting research. I will pass on details as we learn more! We do have a rich history ... and always more to be uncovered!!!

*Kathie Case, President*

## the monday morning guys

### HISTORY CENTER NEWS



I hear you're looking for some information! I just love it when people are interested in where they live and who came before. We have many plot maps and family files that could be what you're looking for. The most fun thing is to come in to our History Center and do some research. We're open on Mondays from 11:00 to 1:00 when there are always a few local guys here that remember all sorts of things and how it all fits together. Like these regulars (l to r): Dan Lapham, Bob Pemberton, Bob Hirt and TJ Bren. Hope to see you some Monday (excluding Holidays) or we can make an appointment to suit your schedule.

*Kim Carlander, Curator*

## programs that educate & entertain

### YOUR EPHS MEMBERSHIP

Currently, the Eden Prairie Historical Society Board of Directors meets monthly and we hold one annual membership meeting. Members may choose to get involved as much – or as little – as they want. But we'd like to mix it up a bit with fewer Board meetings and more programs and social opportunities for our members. Why? Because we'd like to get to know you better and have you get to know each other better. We plan on developing 4 or 5 programs for 2011. So far we have Genealogy 101: Researching & Saving Your Family History presented by Dave Pavelka and Tips & Techniques for Preserving Family Photos presented by Dave Kopperl. Other topics being considered are: tour of Eden Prairie's historic sites; Minnesota Homefront: World War II, a traveling exhibit from the Minnesota Historical Society; Eden Prairie archeology; and a field trip to the Bloomington Historical Society's History Museum. What do you think?

Sounds like a blast, doesn't it? If one of these topics is especially interesting to you, we'd really like to include you in developing or getting involved with that program. But you're going to have to let me know. E-mail me at [BetsyAdams@comcast.net](mailto:BetsyAdams@comcast.net) or call 952.937.9318. Please share your thoughts and ideas. This is, after all, your historical society!

*photo gallery*

IT WAS A BUSY FALL AND FUN WAS HAD BY ALL



On September 11, the Eden Prairie Historical Society hosted its annual Sunbonnet Day at the Riley-Jacques Farmstead in partnership with the City. Here are (l to r) Jan Mosman, Betsy Adams, Kathie Case and Kim Carlander at the Dorenkemper House.



The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Antique Fair, at the Smith-Douglas-More House on August 14, was co-sponsored by Dunn Bros. Coffee, M&I Bank, the City, the Eden Prairie News, T-ShirtLady.Biz and the EPHS. Sunshine, antiques and shopping galore.



Ghosts and guides at the October 16<sup>th</sup> Ghost Walk and Apple Pie at the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House. Standing (l to r): Valerie Ross, Linda Hayen, Michael DeSanctis, George Schell, Janna Rennich, Mark Mosman, Bob Pemberton, Christy Nix, Jeanne DeSanctis and Laurie Pepper. Sitting: Gina DeSanctis, Chris Honaas-Wildfang and Jan Mosman.



Star Bank's Open House on October 28. For the ribbon cutting are (pictured from left): Jeff Williamson, Jan Mosman, Kim Carlander, Kathie Case and Harry Wahlquist in front of permanent display of early Eden Prairie photos entitled Eden Prairie ... Past and Present.

With the responsibility to protect its past, the Society's mission is to: gather, preserve and protect Eden Prairie's historic artifacts and memorabilia; share the stories of its people and places with audiences of all ages; and foster an understanding and appreciation for historic preservation.

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