

# The Prairie View

EDEN PRAIRIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2011



*dave pavelka presents*

## GENEALOGY 101 ON JULY 14

Dave Pavelka, an Eden Prairie native, founded the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International 25 years ago. Today the organization has over 3000 members from every state of the union. Dave has a passion for genealogy and is always eager to help people start their family histories. He says, "We study World History, United States History and Minnesota History but know very little about our own family history. Today, with on-line access many resources are available to speed the process. Joining ethnic family history societies provides sources for European pre-immigration information. Networking in these organizations (and on-line) may link you with others who are also researching your family names. It is the stories and pictures you collect that make the detective work of family history unique to each person. You will find yourself traveling across the United States and in many cases visiting ancestral villages in countries around the world. Some people collect stamps, others coins; collecting bits and pieces of family lore can be a lifetime hobby. Let's get started."

### ***Genealogy 101: Researching and Saving Your Family History***

What: a 2-hour class for all levels; beginners or old pros

Date: Thursday evening, July 14 from 6:30-8:30 pm

Location: Eden Prairie Library Meeting Room

FREE but we would appreciate you letting us know that you will be attending by making a reservation at [www.edenprairiehistory.org](http://www.edenprairiehistory.org) or mailing your reservation with name and a contact to: PROGRAMS, Eden Prairie Historical Society, 8080 Mitchell Rd, Eden Prairie 55344.

In preparation for the class, consider the following:

- What is your family's ethnic group?
- When did your family emigrate to the United States? From where?
- Where did your family settle?
- How far back have you traced your family history?

Answer as many questions as you can and send the info to Dave with your reservation. This will help him tailor the class to you, your experience and your needs.

*grand re-opening in style*

## SOGGY BUT SENSATIONAL

The Cummins-Phipps-Grill Grand Re-Opening and dedication of the Brick Patio on May 22 was indeed soggy but sensational. Even torrential rains did not stop the show. Clockwise: Mayor Tyra-Lukens applauds the Historical Society's work with a toast; the newly laid Brick Patio; some bailing was required; major donors Carol and Joe Stoebner; and spring still life.



## *a liberating experience*

# A CYCLING REVOLUTION

Biking: we think of competitive racing, healthy family time and aerobic exercise. But at the turn of the last century, America's total captivation with biking was nothing short of a social, political and technological revolution. The bicycle is "of more importance to mankind than all the victories and defeats of Napoleon," asserted the *New York Times* in 1895. Maybe a bit dramatic but the observation reflects the remarkable passion for bicycling that swept the nation by the 1890s.

At the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, several English-made bicycles spurred the popularity of what came to be known as the "ordinary," a cycle with a front wheel four or five feet in diameter and a stabilizing trailer wheel. Although undoubtedly exciting, the rider's high and far-forward center of gravity often resulted in the dreaded "face plant." By the mid-1880s the rapidly evolving "safety" bicycle, utilizing same-size front and rear wheels, came on the market and around 1890 inflatable pneumatic tires were added. Overnight, everyone was on wheels! Bicycling "has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world," exalted Susan B. Anthony in a 1896 *New York World* article. And the next year, the *Chicago Post* observed, "The fashionable girl no longer lolls about in tea gowns and darkened rooms, but stands beside you in short skirts, a sailor hat, low shoes and leggings, ready for a spin on the wheel." Naturally, not all bystanders greeted women's cycling with such enthusiasm, questioning and criticizing the propriety of the new fashions and objecting to unsupervised encounters!



*Young Eden Prairie ladies "on the wheel."  
EP Historical Society archives*

Cycling clubs were formed in rural communities and urban centers. Some emphasized racing, some were purely social but all pushed for better roads. One such band of enthusiasts, the League of American Wheelman, became a powerful voice for bicycling and successfully lobbied for bicycle-friendly legislation. After distributing 60,000 copies of its pamphlet "The Gospel of Good Roads," the League won nationwide support as people saw that better roads would bring higher property values, improved mail delivery and easier transport of commodities. The potential for expansion in the new bicycling industry seemed limitless but trouble was just around the corner. A new vehicle known as the horseless carriage began appearing on the new paved roads that bicyclists had lobbied to create. In another twist of fate, bicycle mechanics were the very technically-savvy inventors that tinkered with and designed the first successful American gasoline automobiles. By 1908 when Henry Ford introduced the Model T, the Golden Age of the Bicycle was coming to an end.

Cycling as a primary means of transportation may have declined but recreational biking is alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Eden Prairie we have manicured bike trails, the recent City-sponsored Cycling Expo and the Senior Center's Bicycling Club. And coming full circle from cycling as history, we have the Eden Prairie Historical Bike Tour. Each spring, for the last 21 years, this much-anticipated event, conceived and coordinated by Ron Case and Mona Finholt Hanson, hits the road. Ron

says, "Every year we bring along our entire atrium or section, so it numbers about 230 students and 20 adult chaperones (mostly parents). We've designed two routes. Our western route leaves Oak Point and travels down Anderson Lakes Pkwy/ Scenic Heights to the LRT bike trail, stopping at the History Center & Museum, the Old Consolidated School, the Smith-Douglas-More House, the Riley Barn and Dorenkemper Log Cabin, the Eden Prairie Cemetery, sometimes the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House and then back to Oak Point. The entire circle is around 13 miles and takes 5 hours (including stops for lunch etc.) The eastern route goes east on Anderson Lakes Pkwy to Nesbitt Park, then to Pax Christi for a Wolf School talk, down

to the river for a walk up the bluff, over to the Pleasant Hills Cemetery, back to the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House and then back to school. This trip is around 11 miles and takes slightly less time." With the reorganization of classes within the district's elementary schools the May, 2011 Bike Tour is probably the last.

photo Leah Shaffer, Eden Prairie News



## *making it happen*

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our Annual Meeting and Grand Re-opening of the History Center & Museum, the Bearpath Tea and the Grand Re-opening of the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House including the dedication of the brick patio drew large crowds! The Historical Society is definitely evolving and growing. I'd like to extend a special thank you to three women who have helped that happen. Betsy Adams chaired the Anderson Schoolhouse Project which raised the funds that enabled Curator Kim Carlander to weave her magic at the History Center & Museum and Jan Mosman to spearhead the effort for the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House reawakening.

Plans are now underway for the August 13<sup>th</sup> Fifth Annual Antique Fair at Dunn Brothers Coffee located in the historic Smith-Douglas-More house. Come enjoy a cup of coffee in the morning while you shop ... and a glass of wine in the afternoon! New dealers have joined many of your favorites from former years. Check our website and Eden Prairie News for more information. And yes, we always need volunteers for our events. Contact me at 952-949-0915.

And finally, congratulations to three newly-elected Board members, Bob Hirt, Valerie Ross and David Kopperl. Thank you everyone for your support of the Historical Society. I look forward to seeing you this summer!

*Kathie Case, President*

## *summer fun*

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**June 11 Dorenkemper Open House** during "Rocking Riley" at the historic Riley-Jacques Barn. 4:00-8:00. 9100 Riley Lake Road

**July 14** Dave Pavelka's **Genealogy 101: Researching and Saving Your Family History.** 6:30-8:30. Eden Prairie Library. See page 1 for all of the details.

**August 13 Eden Prairie Antique Fair** at the Smith-Douglas-More House Dunn Bros. Coffee. 9:00-4:00. 8107 Eden Prairie Road

**September 10 Sunbonnet Day** at the Riley-Jacques Farmstead with informal tours and refreshments at the Dorenkemper House.

## *historic preservation*

### OLD ... AND PROUD OF IT

The EP Historical Society CPGH Task Force has been working at the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House for about a year and projects range from scraping rust off tools to completely remodeling and plumbing the first-floor. The goal is to use the house and site plus preserve historic integrity. The triple bonus surprise is that this project provides savings of money, energy and landfill space. Who knew?

I. Money: New construction costs are higher than comparable existing homes, a result of increasing material and transportation costs as well as labor. Imagine building a 3500 square foot, solid brick home with dining room, parlor and porches for entertaining, plus kitchen and five upstairs rooms on 3.5 wooded acres in Eden Prairie for less than \$100,000. The Cummins-Phipps-Grill House can now serve as a conference center, classroom and social gathering space with charm, accessibility and functionality.

II. Energy: Tearing down an existing structure, hauling it away, bringing in manufactured materials and equipment to build on the same spot uses vast amounts of machinery, gasoline, oil and electricity ... it provides employment, but then so does remodeling and repair of the original. The concept that new, efficient buildings are the best way to be green and save energy includes a long-range pay back period. If costs to tear something down are included, the energy-savings take six decades to recoup. Richard Moe, National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), notes, "No matter how much green technology is employed in its design and construction, a new building represents a new impact on the environment. The bottom line is that the greenest building is one that already exists." Historic buildings were often designed more economically, points out Will Stark of the MN Preservation Alliance, in that "they usually have smaller spaces that are easier to heat and operable windows and shutters, shading the sun and allowing cool breezes." A specific example was given in The Minnesota Preservationist by the owner of Turning Point Woodworks: "Due to being constructed from old-growth wood, original windows [in pre-1936 buildings] will still outlast any replacement windows when combined with periodic maintenance." It goes on to say, "... and with good, tight-fitting storms or combinations, an older window can come close to the efficiency of a newer window".

III. Landfill Space: "Building construction depletes our natural resources, contributes to air and water pollution and releases carbon dioxide. Reusing our buildings minimizes the demand for new resources and lessens the amount of waste deposited in landfills," emphasizes the NTHP director of sustainability research.

Richard Moe: "Preservation is simply having the good sense to hold on to the things that are well designed, that link us with our past in a meaningful way and that have plenty of good use left in them." This year's motto of the NTHP suits the Eden Prairie Historical Society and our endeavors to preserve local historic sites: **Old is the New Green.**

*Jan Mosman, EPHS CPGH Task Force*

## *the good 'ol summertime*

### A PEEK INTO THE PAST

Fun summer outings enjoyed by families living in Eden Prairie in the 1930s were largely spent close to home. This was partly due to the Depression and partly because milk cows don't take a vacation. As this was dairy country your neighbors didn't have time to help you take some time off to take a trip as they had their own herd to take care of.

One of the few "commercial" attractions in Eden Prairie at the time was Northrup King's free trial flower gardens. Located on what is now Flying Cloud Drive, at the intersection with Anderson Lakes Parkway, it was often good for repeat visits to enjoy the various phases of blooms. Afterward a picnic was often planned at Staring or Riley Lakes, good choices because they were close by and were great spots for swimming and fishing.

On starry nights we would sometimes slide our bedding onto a piece of canvas then pull it outside to behold the heavens in all of their splendor. An occasional shooting star or a glimpse of the northern lights was an added bonus back in the days when the clear atmosphere revealed the many constellations. And a slight breeze was welcome to ward off mosquitoes. The hoot owl reminded us that it was bedtime and time to get back into the house.

One thing we were not short of during the Depression on the farm was food, especially meat, corn, milk and vegetables; we had, in most cases, an abundance. And my mother always tried to have flowers on the table. We'd pick wild flowers from the woods, like violets, bloodroots, anemones, crocus, honeysuckle and hepatica. Summer corn roasts were remembered in particular and we would often bring our hand-powered ice cream maker with ice from our ice box (since we didn't yet have electricity.) Some favorite after-dinner games were softball and "handicap races" in which you had to run while holding one ankle.

*by Reuel Long*

## *bits and pieces*

### THERE'S ALWAYS A STORY

**AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY:** A homeowner doing some work on property on Prairie View Dr. (it runs off of St. Andrew Drive, which is north of the old St. Andrews Church in the N.W. corner of Barker Road/Mitchell and Valley View) came across 3 grave stones and reported them to the Police. The Officer who is working on this asked the Historical Society if we had any information that might help identify the graves. We believe that the Remus family lived in the old farmhouse on the property for awhile. If this rings a bell for anyone, please let us know and we'll pass it on.



**GRILL FAMILY DESCENDENTS VISIT THE HOMESTEAD:** The Cummins-Phipps-Grill Task Force met on May 4 for a wonderful evening of shared photo's, documents and stories with Audrey Grill (center) and family. Bob Grill (Pappy and Mildred Grill's nephew), his wife Audrey and their 7 children all helped on the farm, especially in the summers, until 1976 when Mildred was moved to a nursing home and the homestead was sold to the City. Pappy ran a drive-in theatre so they all worked there too. Cool!

**MUSEUM & RESOURCE CENTER:** Our recently redesigned History Center and Museum is open Mondays (except holidays) from 11:00-1:00 or by appointment. Call Kim Carlander at 952.934.5995 for more information.

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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