

# The Prairie View

EDEN PRAIRIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

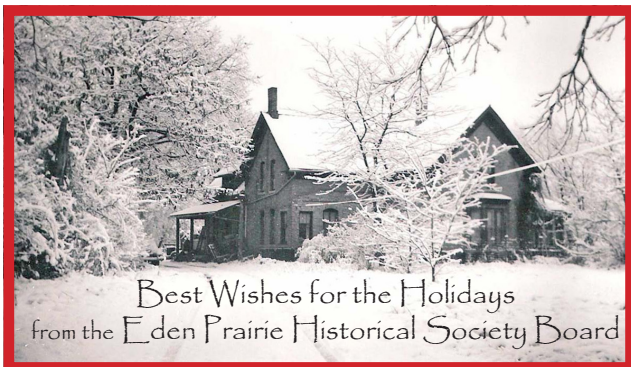
WINTER 2011



## *from eden prairie: the first 100 years* LOUISE MITCHELL REMEMBERS



“Christmas meant bundling up on a silent night for an hour’s ride to Shakopee for an [evening] church service. We rode in sleds with big boxes that had straw on the bottom. The snow used to twinkle and it was just beautiful. There were no sounds but the bells on the horses. The ride was smooth because there was so much snow back then. Our little church had a Christmas tree that touched the ceiling. There were real candles on the tree and pails of water were set around in case it caught fire. It was about 8:30 when we got home and found Santa Claus had been there. We got few toys and more practical gifts such as hand-knitted scarves, mitten and stockings. One Christmas I got a doll. It had china hands and a china head with eyes that opened and closed with real eyelashes.”



Best Wishes for the Holidays  
from the Eden Prairie Historical Society Board

## *history center & museum news* RILEY FAMILY ROCKER BACK IN TOWN

It’s been a busy time at the History Center and Museum. We’ve enjoyed visitors from Prairie Adult Care, Cub Scout troops and ladies from the Eden Prairie Senior Center as well as local residents just stopping in to say hello and chat a bit. A real highlight was Sylvia Burns’ visit from Fairbanks, Alaska! Sylvia came with a special mission and a very special gift ... her beautiful old rocking chair which is original to Eden Prairie’s Riley farmhouse. Today, the farmhouse is part of the Eden Prairie Heritage Preservation-designated Riley-Jacques Farm at Lake Riley Park.

The rocker belonged to Sylvia’s grandmother, Anna Teeling who married James Riley in 1907. Anna was widowed in 1917 and remarried Ed Tutewohl of Vermillion. She spent the rest of her life in the area and died in 1984 at 100 years old!



Sylvia shared that she always loved her grandmother’s old rocker and bought it from her while in her teens. She treasures the fact that at least four generations of her family have been rocked in that chair. For many years now Sylvia has lived in Alaska but comes back to Minnesota when she can, to visit family and friends. Recently, she decided it was time to return her much-loved rocker to its Eden Prairie home and share its history with the community. The Riley Family Rocker now has a place of honor at the History Center and Museum and is on long-term loan to the Historical Society by Sylvia and her family. We hope you get a chance to come see this lovely new addition to our collection, as well as some other new items we have on display. Our hours are Mondays, 11:00-1:00 or by appointment (call me at 952.934.5995).

Kim Carlander, Curator

*a few icy truths*

## YOU HAVE TO LOVE WINTER IN MN

**DID YOU KNOW** that 10% of the earth lies beneath ice (about the same percent that's being farmed worldwide) and that glaciers and polar ice store more water than lakes, rivers, groundwater and the atmosphere combined?

**SLOWER THAN MOLASSES IN JANUARY.** A little know fact is that molasses "goes" 0.0001 mph, compared to:

- a snail - 0.03 mph
- a tortoise - 0.13 mph
- the hare - 35 mph
- a speeding bullet - 1,100 mph
- and lightning - 100,000 mph

**HEAD TO INTERNATIONAL FALLS** January 12-16 for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Icebox Days. Bundle up for the "Ode to the Cold" poetry contest, the "Puck Shoot & Chili Feed," the "Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Run" and the frozen-turkey bowling event. *Who thinks this stuff up?*

**CLIMATE.** "Much has been said detrimental to Minnesota upon this point by irresponsible and designing persons. It

is true the temperature two or three times during about two months usually reaches a low degree but in these instances it is for but a few days at a time, while in the meantime a more pleasant climate could not be found." So promised the 1889 pamphlet **Minnesota As It Is** which was published in many languages by the St Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway to encourage immigration.

**IT SEEMS NICER IN NICE.** Eden Prairie's latitude on the globe, roughly 44° north, is darned close to that of southern France. Go figure.

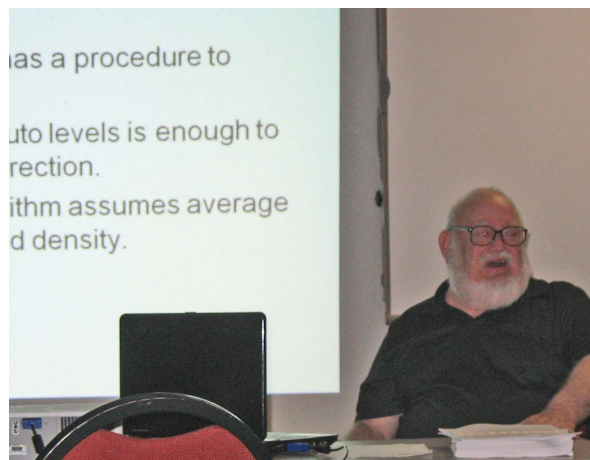
The **Minnesota Historical Society** has so much going on this winter at its historic sites and museums: "A Victorian Christmas" at the newly-more accessible and interactive Alexander Ramsey House; "Christmas on the Farm" at the Oliver H. Kelley Farm; and a discussion with Larry Millett about his new book **Once There Were Castles: Lost Mansions and Estates of the Twin Cities**. The list goes on and on. Check online at [www.visitmnhistory.org](http://www.visitmnhistory.org) for details.

*wow! the fall was really jumping with historical society events*

## OPPORTUNITIES & ENTERTAINMENT GALORE



(clockwise from upper left) § The annual Eden Prairie Antique Fair at Smith-Douglas-More House Dunn Bros Coffee. § Dave Pavlekla led us through "Genealogy 101" with participative activities and discussion. § Christie and Sammy Nichols *in character* for the Second Annual Ghost Walk at the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House. § Dave Kopperl presented "Preserving Family Photographs" with a Power Point, examples of old photos and discussion.



Hope you can join us for next year's Spring, Summer and Fall events and programs!

## THE RILEY-JACQUES HOMESTEAD

Patrick Riley and his son Mathew immigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1845. We know that prior to arriving in Eden Prairie, Mathew worked in Lowell, Mass. and in 1853, arrived in St. Paul, where he ran a public ferry at Fort Snelling for two seasons. We also know that by 1854, Patrick had built a log cabin and was farming on the shores of a lake in Eden Prairie that would soon bear his name. Mathew Riley followed his father to Eden Prairie and by 1857, father Patrick owned 58.8 acres of farmland and Mathew owned 160 acres, wrapping around the north and eastern shores of Lake Riley. After Patrick's death the land was divided, consolidated and rearranged until Matthew's farm consisted of around 200 acres.

Most Eden Prairie farmers during the 1850's and '60's subsisted on what the land yielded. They cleared land, planted, hunted, gathered and harvested what they needed to live. The farm customarily had a dairy cow to provide milk, butter and cheese. The family's diet was mainly potatoes, pork and corn bread, occasionally fish, venison and other game. In season, nature provided a bounty of wild fruits like grapes, strawberries, raspberries and plums. Maple trees yielded syrup and the bogs provided cranberries. Honey was a special treat. But the subsistence farmer still had an occasional need for cash; to pay for taxes, land, livestock or manufactured goods. So, when there was a surplus of produce or meat the farmer found a ready market at Fort Snelling or the growing communities of St. Anthony and St. Paul. During the 1870's, '80's and '90's the majority of Eden Prairie farmers, including Mathew Riley, put nearly all of their cropland into wheat production. The wheat boom in Eden Prairie was enabled by advances in technology: the widespread availability of McCormick's reaper, developed in 1831, and the arrival of rail transportation into (and out of) Eden Prairie by 1871.



Two new structures were built on the Riley farm during this period. Both still exist; a good-sized granary and the impressive Greek Revival-style house, overlooking Lake Riley. The house is a handsome example of "second generation" homes being built in the area after the Civil War. Mathew Riley died in 1912 and his son, James took over the farm until 1917, when he died. Ten years later, James' wife, Anna Teeling Riley (see story on page 1), sold the farm to Michael Jacques. Two generations of Jacqueses lived on the farmstead. One son Jerome and his wife Elaine raised six children and lots of cows and chickens on that farm. Until 1941 the house did not have indoor plumbing or electricity; it was heated by wood-burning stoves and lit with kerosene lamps. In 1990 Elaine Jacques sold the house, farm buildings and what remained of the land to the city of Eden Prairie. Today, the Riley-Jacques Farm is part of City parkland called Lake Riley Park and has been designated an Eden Prairie Heritage Preservation Site. Elaine Jacques remained involved with the family farm by donating money for restoration of the buildings and was interested in the City's plans for the farm until her death in 2004 at age 87. I think she would be pleased.

*The illustration is one of the specially commissioned notecards available from the Historical Society, picturing Eden Prairie historic sites. The one above shows the newly restored barn and the charming Riley-Jacques home in the back on the shore of Lake Riley. Available for sale at the History Center and Museum and at the Cummins-Phipps-Grill House.*

## the tropical fruit that means hospitality?

### THE EXOTIC PINEAPPLE

We've seen it carved in wood and stone, cast in brass and pewter and pounded in tin. As a decorative motif, it is traditionally used, inside our homes and out, as furniture finials and in pediments over doorways, on gate piers, guest beds, at points of entrance and as a centerpiece on the dining table. The pineapple is the quintessential symbol of hospitality. But why?



This tropical treat is native to Central and South America. One of the earliest written accounts of pineapple is found in the journals of Christopher Columbus. When he landed on Guadeloupe in 1493 he found a fruit that looked like a great big pinecone so he named it "pina". The misnomer stuck, at least in the English language, giving us the word *pineapple*. Columbus was astonished and delighted by his sweet discovery and returned to Spain with pineapple plants and cuttings. Cultivation of the exotic fruit on the continent (other than in hothouses) was highly unlikely so European sailors started spreading cuttings ... and the pineapple spread quickly throughout the tropics. But the "tropics" were still a long, long way away from most European and American tables. Getting perishable produce to market and onto the table promptly is no real problem today but in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it was a triumph. And so the luxury of giving or serving fresh pineapple became the supreme gesture of friendship and hospitality. It stands to reason, therefore, that the exotic pineapple became, and remains today, a decorative motif symbolizing hospitality.



## make your silver shine

### TIPS & TRICKS



Polishing silver is a chore but many of us believe it to be worth the effort. Here are some common sense and new-to-me tips and tricks from Southern Living magazine.

- 1. Polish It** Remove tarnish from even the most intricate pieces by placing silver on aluminum foil in your sink, sprinkle with baking soda and pour boiling water over it. The tarnish will literally fall off. Rinse and pat dry to avoid water spots. If you prefer store-bought polish, be sure to apply in a circular motion, wash and dry.
- 2. Use It** Silver isn't just for special occasions. Frequent use brings out that rich patina. Rinse right after using to prevent tarnishing - sulfides from foods like eggs and mayonnaise can stain. Use a gentle dish detergent, avoiding anything with citrus. Silver made after 1939 is dishwasher-safe; just remove before the drying cycle.
- 3. Storing It Properly** Storing your silver pieces properly reduces tarnish and upkeep. If displaying in a cabinet, place a piece of chalk nearby; it absorbs chemicals that cause discoloration. If you have a silver drawer or chest, line it with Pacific Silvercloth, an acid- and sulfur-free material that keeps your treasures practically spotless or use special anti-tarnish bags.

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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