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History 21 (in honor of the 21 cities in Anoka County) is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit. The ACHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

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Table of Contents:

3 - Letters from the ACHS
President and Director
4 - Understanding Delia
8 - ACHS New Mission &
Values Statement
10 - We Went LIVE!
11 - One Man: Serving in the Navy,
Army & Air Force
12 - Ghost Tours 2020
13 - Volunteer World:
Our New Procedures
15 - Upcoming Events

*Front Cover: A pile of sawed lumber in the yard of the Washburn Sawmill, Anoka. This picture was used in their advertising. Undated.
Object ID: 2057.6.86*

From the President

I recently read an African Proverb: “When an Elder dies, it is as if a Library has burnt down”. When I read this, I thought a couple of things... 1) Darn I guess I could be considered an Elder and 2) I think of the stories of my family that are forever lost because I never heard them. We have been talking about how vital it is to capture the stories of the people and families who have called Anoka County “Home”. How important it is to gather them ALL.

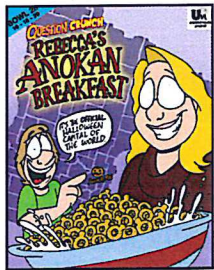


The Holidays are approaching and even though for now it’s often virtually, it’s a good time to gather family anecdotes. We developed an oral history questionnaire you can use as a talking guide. Look for old letters and diaries and photos. Share them and talk about them to find out more while those that remember are still here. Oh! How I wish I had paid more attention at family holiday dinners when the toddies and conversation flowed with the memories!

This year make it a family project to decorate your Holidays by documenting the stories! Take the time to wrap yourself in your Family’s History.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lotus Hubbard".

Lotus Hubbard, ACHS President



From the Director

I’m excited for 2021.

We have an amazing opportunity to explore the world of digital programming, video editing, and podcasting. Never before have the stars aligned such that technology, a #HistoryHappensToday mentality, and the public platforms of social media allow organizations like ACHS to self-publish, promote, and survive.

(Google “Question Crunch podcast” or “The Big Scary Show podcast” and see who you find!)

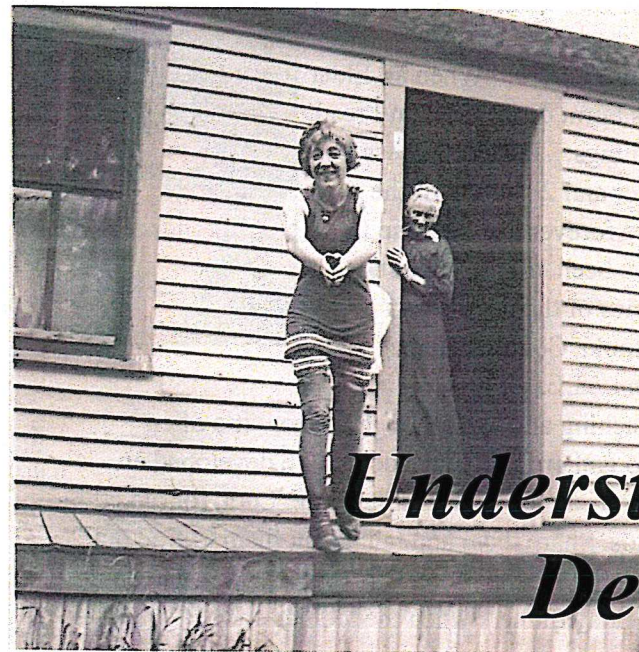
We can do this. We can flourish. Now, more than ever, Anoka County needs local history to document a legacy—the one we’re living every day. What role will you play?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Ebnet-Desens".

Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, Executive Director

Coon Rapids, East Bethel, Fridley, Ham Lake, Hilltop, Lexington, Lino Lakes, Linwood, Nowthen, Oak Grove, Ramsey, Spring Lake Park, St. Francis

Andover, Anoka, Bethel, Blaine, Centerville, Circle Pines, Columbia Heights, Columbus,



Understanding Delia

By Daryl Lawrence, ACHS Board of Directors

“Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end! ‘I wonder how many miles I’ve fallen by this time?’ she said aloud. ‘I must be getting somewhere near the center of the earth.’” -Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

When was the last time you fell down a historical rabbit hole? It’s always been easy for me to do. Back before the internet, I would reach for a nearby encyclopedia or visit my school library to find a book on something that piqued my interest while reading about something else. Now it’s easier than ever to truly lose yourself in history; I can spend hours clicking through related Wikipedia pages, only to forget how I originally started.

Another corner of the internet that is highly dangerous to a historian’s preconceived notions of time management is Ancestry’s website. Like many, since COVID swept the nation and back to our homes, I found myself with more time to pursue passion projects. One of mine was rounding out my family tree with details I had on paper, but hadn’t been translated to an electronic medium. As with most genealogists, I pay the closest attention to my immediate ancestors; after all, I wouldn’t be here without them. However, I take extra

care to tend to those whose line has died out. My stance is there is no one else to

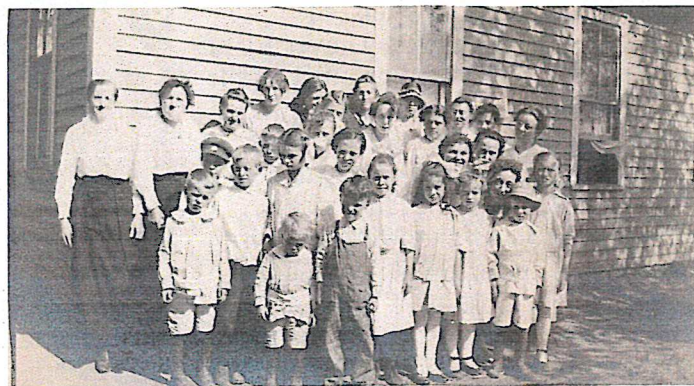
Above: Delia practicing her diving form. Photo Courtesy Daryl Lawrence

take care of documenting their stories, so I need to do it before the details are lost and no more than bland statistics on paper or in a database. Name, date of birth, date of death. It seems so cold and impersonal for people who lived full lives and I take it as a personal mission to help round out their personal histories as much as possible.

It was while I was tending one of the records of this type of ancestor that I saw something odd—a picture. I generally don't upload pictures to Ancestry, as I would rather take a more personal approach and share pictures with those who contact me and are interested, so I knew it wasn't I who had added this picture. In fact, I hadn't seen this picture ever before. For the person in question, I considered myself lucky to have a couple dozen or so pictures of her; she died in 1928, so the fact that more than two dozen snapshots of a person who died so long ago was surprising. I was definitely curious about this, so I clicked and found the user who had uploaded the picture.

“I am doing some work on my family tree (aren't we all?), and I am doing some work on Elmer Olson,” read my message, “I haven't really touched his record at all, but wanted to make sure Delia was marked as his wife. Anyway, that's when I ran across the photo you had uploaded of the two of them and it took me by surprise- as I wasn't aware of anyone else having pictures of them! I'm just reaching out to see how you may be connected and how you have photo of the couple.”

Elmer Olson, my great-great uncle, had outlived his wife by 20 years. Delia had died young, leaving behind Elmer and a seven year old son, Jack. My grandma was born a few years after Delia died, so never met her. She knew Delia well enough to identify



Delia with the students of Glen Carey School, District 57 in Ham Lake. Photo Courtesy Daryl Lawrence

her in pictures, but knew little else aside from that. As I looked at the pictures of Delia, I could feel positive, warm, caring energy emanating from her through the decades. Delia had been a schoolteacher for a local district in Ham Lake and had loved her time with the children; one of the pictures I have of her outside the schoolhouse with students showed her clearly

enjoying being around them. The pictures of her with her husband and son showed her to be affectionate and happy. She's definitely someone I wanted to know more about, but had concluded that I probably just wouldn't.

Months went by and I didn't hear anything from the person I had messaged; not unusual, as Ancestry has a clunky messaging system and one typically doesn't even go on the site unless they are actively engaged in working on research. In the midst of a humid, hot week in July, I was surprised to receive a message back. The mysterious photo uploader was named Nora, and she was Delia's great-niece. Delia was her mother's aunt and while growing up, she heard a lot about Delia from her grandmother, who was Delia's older sister. "*Delia was the most loved of the Sorenson sisters,*" wrote Nora in her first message to me. That was enough for me to be highly interested in what else Nora had available, including some letters and additional pictures.

I felt so fortunate to have a new-found distant cousin (by marriage) who was in the same position as me—the family historian. Both of us had pieces of Elmer, Delia, and Jack's story, and together we were able to piece together what had happened with the family so long ago. Delia suffered from cancer and had battled it for a couple years before succumbing to it in 1928. In her last months, she received treatment at the University of Minnesota; despite fading quickly, she remained upbeat and positive while writing one of her last letters to her mother, dated less than a month before she passed away. The letter was written the day of the 1928 election and Delia pondered not voting that day, as well as asking if her parents had voted. Even as she could no longer hold down food, Delia focused on the positives, "*I will never forget the lovely care I have had here, and for such a long time, too.*" I never knew this side of Delia, or had even seen her handwriting, before Nora scanned and shared it with me. It was a remarkable thing!

Delia and her family, the Sorenson's of Anoka, worked with my family, the Olson's, to ensure young Jack would be taken care of after her death. Nora and I spent quite a few lines of correspondence putting together the



Delia and Elmer.

Photo Courtesy Daryl Lawrence



Delia and her son Jack.

Photo Courtesy Daryl Lawrence

sequence of events, with a little supplemental help from my grandmother, thanks to a phone call I made to her on the subject. Delia and the two families knew Elmer to have a drinking problem, so they landed on a plan whereby Jack would be taken in by Alfred and Minnie Olson, his paternal uncle and aunt, to be raised. Nora translated a letter Delia's mother, Ernestine, had written to her sister in Danish:

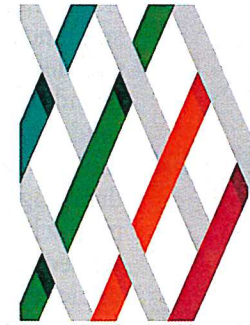
"You asked if Delia knew what illness she had. Yes, she knew that for 2 years and knew there was no hope for recovery, but she was always in good spirits. The first year she had to leave her little boy, but she knew that they [Alfred and Minnie] would be good to him, and they promised her that he would go to school and go to high school when he is old enough to go and that is a good thing. We are really happy those people have him and his father can't take him from them."

From my part, I knew that Jack had received his primary schooling in Ham Lake, and then had gone to live with another aunt and uncle, Emma (Olson) and Melvin Moore in northeast Minneapolis; there was no transportation in Ham Lake to get Jack to Anoka High School in the late 30s, but the Olson's made sure he got the education they promised Delia he would get while she was dying.

By putting together our resources, Nora and I were able to reconstruct what happened as an outcome of two families losing a much-loved member, and how they came together to ensure the protection and education of her only child. Almost a century after she died, Delia's love and care were again known. Although there is no one left who knew her in person, Nora and I know just a bit more about her than anyone has in decades. So jump down that rabbit hole, folks- you never know where you'll end up!

Daryl Lawrence has served on the ACHS Board of Directors for a year. Prior to his election, Daryl worked with the Gather Committee and staff as a volunteer helping to preserve the collections.

**ACHS Board of
Directors announces
refreshed mission
statement and new
values statement**



Facing Change:
Advancing Museum Board
Diversity & Inclusion

For the last two years, ACHS has participated in an initiative called “Facing Change” led by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). This program selected 50 museums from five cities across America ready to concentrate on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) conversations at a governance level.

After attending retreats, meeting with our consultant monthly—then every other week—having discussions off-line with each other, reading, thinking, and analyzing every last word, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to accept new defining language to guide the future of ACHS.

Our mission is to gather, preserve, and share the stories of all the people and communities that are part of Anoka County.

The Anoka County Historical Society is an inclusive organization. We are accountable to the community for presenting and celebrating the stories of Anoka County, as well as those which still need to be told. We invite people to join us on a journey to ignite curiosity about our past and understanding of our present.

COVID-19 caught us all off-guard and will continue to change our lives in ways we can't even anticipate yet. At the History Center, we took advantage of the systems we had already moved to the cloud to allow staff to seamlessly work from home. Well, with no printer, it was a little clunky, but nothing we couldn't work around!



We worked with people remotely, digitized research requests, and created online programming. We applied for grants, received grants, and presented in online conventions. We experimented with new ways to use social media, video editing, and storytelling. We digitized our Ghosts of Anoka Walking Tour. We held an online fundraiser.

Now, more than ever, #HistoryHappensToday.

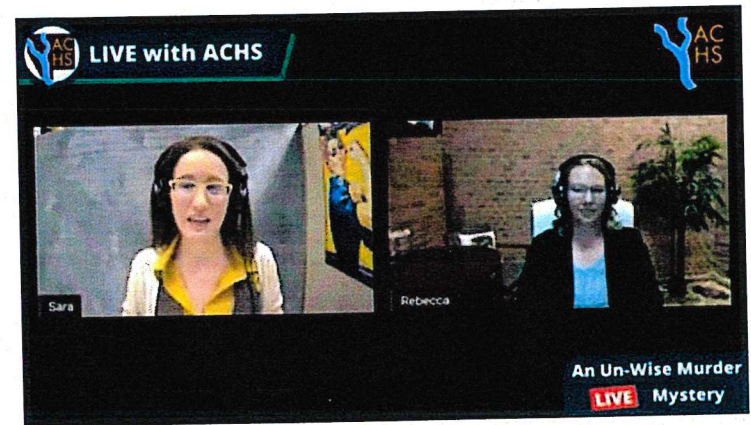
What ACHS can accomplish in the middle of a historic pandemic, economic crisis, and reimagining of our social system can't be understated. With the right people, tools, and resources, we can document the ongoing story of our changing communities for future generations. We can make the collections more accessible to people of all geographies, age, calendar schedules, and economic means. We can use the internet to gather, curate, and disseminate information in ways not possible even 20 years ago. We can provide some much-needed distraction to the increasingly divisive nature of our society.

Please join in giving the staff of ACHS a standing ovation for the exemplary work they have accomplished recently. We will continue to work hard for you to not only protect the legacy of Anoka County already in our archives, but also the stories yet to come.

By making a financial gift toward our 2020 annual appeal, you will help ACHS close the gap in lost programming revenue from this year. A pledge of any size for 2021 would help the Board of Directors prepare an accurate expenditure budget.



(Above) Staff zoom call Meeting in March. (Below, left) Audra's home office vs Sara's home office (Below, right) with "borrowed" ACHS microfilm machine.



WE WENT LIVE!

Our fundraiser, An Un-Wise Murder, on September 19 streamed LIVE with success. We were proud to share the program with nearly 90 viewers. It was a first foray into a large-scale digital program and we loved the accessibility of being able to share in the fun no matter where you lived. Unlike a traditional event, we can offer the program for On Demand viewing, just like a movie rental on Amazon.

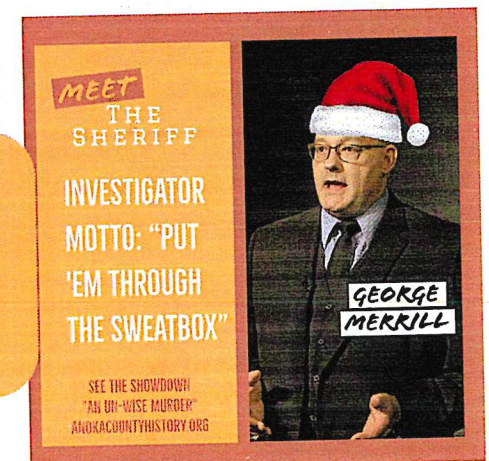
Since COVID-19 cancelled the Annual Meeting on its originally scheduled date in March, we will combine this essential gathering with our annual Holiday party on December 8 at 7 p.m. Join us for an encore viewing of “An Un-Wise Murder”, celebrate ACHS as an organization, and gather with other members virtually via Zoom.

Members will receive an email link on December 1 to attend this event.

WHEN: Tuesday, December 8

TIME: 7 p.m.

WHERE: Zoom—watch for an email with link details Dec. 1



The Korean war broke out in June of 1950 and by July, U.S. troops had entered the war on South Korea's behalf. The war must have been on the minds of Louis LeTendre, Jr. and three of his buddies when, after a night of celebrating at the Apple Inn near Lino Lakes, they decided to join the Navy. The next day they went to Wold-Chamberlain Field (now MSP International Airport) and enlisted. However, after the "celebrating" wore off, they decided they didn't want to be in the Navy. Before they resolved this with the Navy, Louis received a draft notice from the Army in May, 1951 and was soon off to basic training at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Days later the Navy shore patrol arrived at his parent's house looking for him. This was eventually settled, allowing Louis to stay in the Army.



Louis and his fiancée, Mara Lou, had been planning to get married in June of 1951, but now there had to be a change in plans. After Louis completed his basic training, Mara Lou travelled to Georgia and they got married on July 7, 1951 at the No. 10 Chapel at Camp Gordon. Mara Lou had hoped to find work in Georgia until Louis shipped overseas but she couldn't find any so she returned to Minnesota. Louis left for Korea in November of 1951.

While in Korea, Louis sent Mara Lou white silk pajamas with a matching robe and slippers. The pajamas are embroidered with dragons. Mara Lou generously donated this set to the Anoka County Historical Society in 2002.

Although Louis was in the Army, he served with the 440th Signal Battalion attached to the Fifth Air Force, probably part of the SCARWAF (Special Category Army Personnel With The Air Force). Louis has the unusual distinction of having enlisted in the Navy, being drafted by the Army, and serving with the Air Force. He was sent home after a year in Korea in November, 1952.

Louis saved many articles of clothing from his time in Korea and donated them to ACHS in 2002. Most donations of military clothing are limited to the uniforms, but in this case, we also got his socks, belt, garters, knitted gloves, hats, and boots. Also, most unusually, we also received four tank tops in olive drab and two pairs of boxer shorts, one pair in olive drab and the other white. Most people would not have saved such a complete assemblage of clothing, but without people like this we would not have half the items we have in our collections.





A (Mostly) Virtual Anoka Halloween

The need to make our *Ghosts of Anoka Tour* and Halloween exhibits digital this year came with both victories and challenges. In the victory category, we were able to provide digital alternatives of both! Students and faculty of the Hennepin Technical College helped create a fully digital, watch on-demand Ghost Tour, while ACHS staff created virtual galleries of Halloween collectibles hosted on our website.

In the video, seven guides take the viewer on a digital tour of all the familiar places you would go on the traditional walking tour. With the new format, we can share additional information, photographs, and even stories from one of the business owners herself.

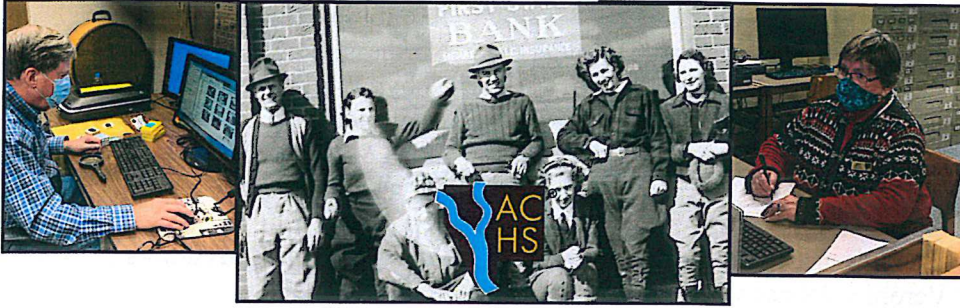


Highly recommended! I watched it last night.
Like · Reply · Message · 19h

On the challenge side, digital and limited in person options were not enough to match what the Historical Society was expecting the tours to raise in funds for the museum. The Ghost Tours are the biggest fundraising event of the year, bringing in nearly \$15,000 last year. As we write this, with 11 days to go until Halloween, we have raised only 18% of last year's revenue.

2019	VS	2020
1,655		171
\$14,975		\$2,685

This very visible example of the year no one expected makes our 2021 budgeting exceptionally difficult. ACHS, will rely on the generosity of the public, members, and established donors for funds while we reinvent what it means to preserve history in a post-COVID world. Together, we can succeed!



We're getting the hang of this!

As volunteers start to come in more regularly to the museum to work on projects again, we are figuring out our new systems together. Jane, upper right, comes in on Thursday's to help tackle research requests we receive through our website, but also people who come to visit the building in (masked) person. Dave, upper left, has resumed wading through photographs or slides from potential donations to the museum. In this set are images of St. Francis High School homecoming from the early 1960s. After Dave scans them, he will create records in our database and they will be available for others to search and view. Expect to see our favorites on your go-to social media. 😊

Each volunteer organized their schedule with me, for a 2 or 4 hour shift, and have a dedicated work station while at the museum that is separated and distanced from any other work space. While they work hard, Cindy oversees the front desk and makes her rounds at the top of every hour to sanitize work stations and bathrooms as needed. After volunteer shifts of work, we reset, give it a spritz and wipe down and do it all over again. It may be hard to see in the photographs, but I have assurances that all three are smiling behind their masks.

Right now our volunteer program is set at trickle—and that's ok. We don't have the capacity to handle drop-ins, or play like we have in the past. But I keep thinking about all those rocks that have been worn away and moved with just a trickle of water. The key is to concentrate our efforts.

So that's what we're doing—becoming the OJ Concentrate of volunteering. We'll get back to being juice when we have room in the fridge.

Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

General Donations

American Legion Edward B. Cutter
Post 102
Dick & Helen Bennett
Richard Bergling
Karen Davis
Alan Hansen
Lynne Hansen
Veronica Johnson
Karen & Don Johnson
Alison Marzolf
Janet Meyer
Mary & Scott Nolan
Stephen & Marilyn Perry
Thomas & Kristi Sullivan
Patricia H. Theobald
Wesley & Cheryl Volkenant

Artifact Donors

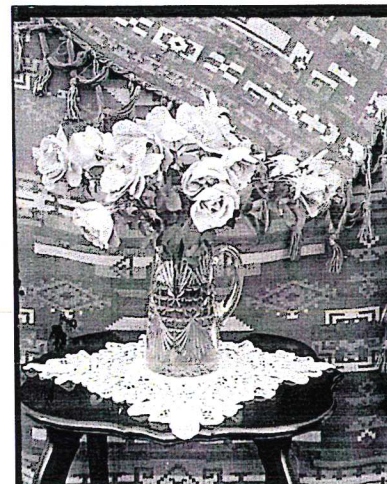
Abiding Savior Lutheran Church
Dick Bennett
Tony Bolander
Diane Grinde
John Jost
David Larson
Barbara Reichel

ACHS Sustaining Members

Northeast Bank
Robyn West
Roof Medics, LLC
Brian & Allison Schmitt
Terry Overacker Plumbing

ACHS Business Members

Anoka Dental
Anoka Knights of Columbus Council
2018
City of Coon Rapids
Fifth Avenue Dental
Hammerheart Brewing
Hawaii Nail Spa
Nowthen Historical Power
Association
Peterson Shoes
Pierce Refrigeration
Plants & Things
Rum River Restoration



NOTE FROM ACHS:

We would like to extend our most heartfelt and sincere condolences to the Pearson family of Ramsey who are members and volunteers at ACHS. They recently suffered a personal loss in a very public search for a missing relative.

As the holiday season approaches and 2020 draws to a close, we take this space to offer you and your community strength and healing for the next challenge.

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History Center Hours.

Open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10 a.m.—2 p.m.

ACHS Board Meetings

Second Thursday of each month. 6 p.m. via Zoom

Open to membership and the public. Find link to attend digitally at AnokaCountyHistory.org on the calendar

ACHS Holiday Party Annual Meeting

WHEN: Tuesday Dec. 8

TIME: 7 p.m.

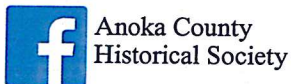
WHERE: Zoom program. Link sent to members via email Dec. 1 or upon request.

We're hiring!

While saying goodbye to Audra as our Archivist, Curator, and Collections Manager still doesn't feel real, we want to welcome a new face to the position soon. Please spread the word that we're hiring, directing anyone interested to our website or Zip Recruiter to discover the job posting.

The Anoka County Historical Society will close the first week in November to recognize the dedication of staff during the first six months of COVID-19.

**Keep up with the
Fun at ACHS!**



AnokaCoHistory

For more information on our programs, check out the Events section on the ACHS Facebook page or our website calendar.



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