

HISTORY

21



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*Front Cover: Francis Bearl, Laura Hutchinson, and Alice Bechenbach.
Photo in the Federal Cartridge Company employee group photographs
collection.*

Object ID: FCC 2020.0533.02.037.071



From the President

We are nearly to the end of the Year 2021. The days are getting shorter, and the average daily temperatures are getting colder, there is a scattering of snow and a hint of ice. I always think that this is the time of the year we need to recognize what we have been putting into our “Grateful Jar” for the year. I am humbled and amazed at the strength and creativity and perseverance of our staff and cadre of volunteers, the ACHS Board of Directors, and of you—our members and visitors. I have seen the excitement in the eyes and voices of new visitors, and the friendliness in the

voices of our long-time patrons. We have been able to listen to the stories of Anoka County residents in their own voices on the bi-monthly Podcast “drops”. I anxiously look forward to each new podcast looking forward to getting to know someone in a new and personal way. I love listening in on the conversations. While gathering with family and friends as we begin 2022—perhaps celebrating the Winter Solstice, enjoying Holiday gatherings, or the Ringing in of the New Year be mindful of the stories being shared. Take Pictures. Take notes. As you know “the Present is the Past of the Future”. You never know what gem of a story may be unexpectedly shared! I can’t wait for the yet to be told stories to be revealed!

Lotus Hubbard, ACHS President

From the Director

New Year, new ideas, new goals...right? Nah. What I love about ACHS is that everyday seems to bring something new and interesting into my life. We're perpetually looking for opportunities to improve the status quo and do more with the resources we have, whether it's financial, human, or the physical collection.

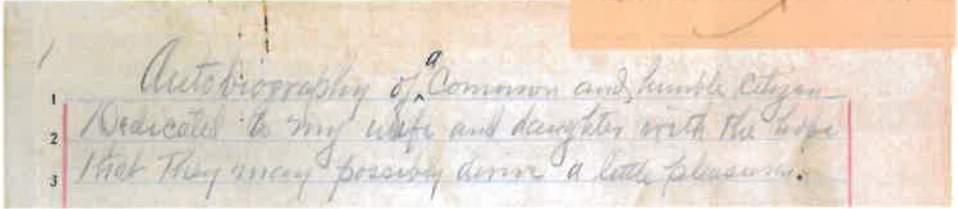
That said, January is a perfect time to reevaluate the direction of the museum, our programming, and the communities we serve. How well are we doing? Where do the voids exist? What can we do to preserve the legacy of Anoka County? One of the areas we would like to expand is the accessibility of our website and program content to other languages. Do you and yours understand sign language? Spanish? Somali? A tribal dialect? Please let us know. Even better, we would love to gather some oral histories from our county in a native language then translate it for our English speaking patrons.

Thanks!



Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, Executive Director

Autobiography of a Common and Humble Citizen



Editors note: The following excerpt comes from our archives, in the Hart file. Although the document is undated, we estimate Frank Hart wrote this autobiography prior to 1920. In it, Hart recalls details of his childhood on the undeveloped land of Anoka County, school, and most notably, the cows he had to use in place of horses during the horse flu epidemic of 1872. The full version of this document is available upon request at ACHS or in the Vault for our subscribers.

Dedicated to my wife and daughter with the hope that they may possibly derive a little pleasure.

The records disclose that I was born on the 23rd day of December 1854 at Rochester, N.Y.

I am informed that soon after my birth my parents moved to Chicago, Il. When my father worked as a carpenter for about a year, thence to St. Paul when he continued work as carpenter and builder, until the fall of 1858, when he bought a single barrell [sic] muzzle loading shot gun, (in fact all guns were muzzle loaders at that time) and started on foot and alone with a view of locating on a piece of land. He came to Anoka, a village of a few hundred people, and then traveled northeast about ten miles when he selected a 160 acre tract of land. At that time the U.S. Govt.[ernment] survey stakes were easily located, the survey having been only a few years previous. Upon this land he built a one room log house about 12x16x8, with two half windows and one door, into which he brought my mother and me on or about the 8th of November, 1858. Our nearest neighbor, a bachelor, an old sea captain, living about ½ mile distant.

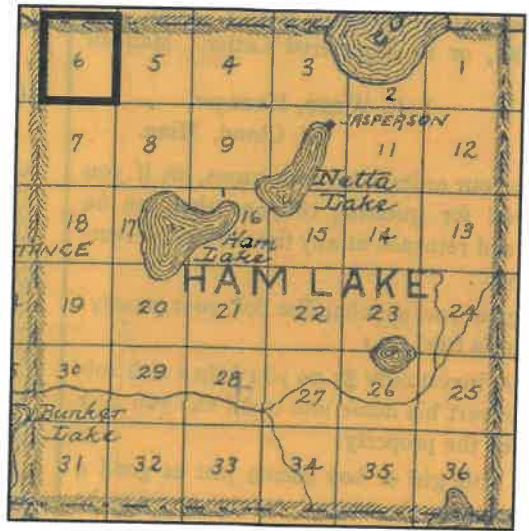
The next neighbor in one direction was about 6 miles distant, and the other way about 10 miles – a Mr & Mrs Cooper in what was then known a Quaker Settlement, where a few Quaker families had settled a few years previous. My mother informed me that she did not see another woman from November until the last of March 1859

when Mr and Mrs Cooper came along on their way to Anoka and stopped to get warm and for dinner...

I don't need to mention the fact that there were no school or educational advantages in our neighborhood. I was probably about seven years old when my parents decided that I must have some intellectual instruction. They procured the services of a young lady, a Miss Mary Cundy, who came to the home, where she lived as one of the family and devoted, probably the greater part of her time for 3 months instructing me, her only pupil, to read, write, spell, etc. I think I was more proficient in the "Etc." The following summer another young lady was hired for a few months to continue my instructions in the etc. However, I didn't graduate and the following winter I was sent to board with ~~the~~ our friends the Bunker family, at Bunker Lake, where I attended a district school for the balance of that term, a period of about six weeks as I remember, with Miss Carrie Teller as teacher.

And yet, I didn't graduate. But I did learn what it meant to be homesick. Oh, how I did suffer for the first two weeks. Not so much during school hours, but the evenings. I thought the weeks would never pass, when my father would come to take me home. And he always did. After another year or perhaps two, it became evident that if I was ever to know anything, something must be done to get me into school. Therefore the folks abandoned or rented the farm, built a house in St. Paul, on what is now the corner of University and Western Ave. and moved there. And for nearly three years I attended the Adams School. A portion of the time I delivered a gallon of milk each morning to the Principal of the school, a Mr G Sidney Smith, necessitating a walk of nearly two miles, sometimes when the thermometer was hovering around the 40° below zero mark.

At the end of three years circumstances were such that it seemed necessary for me to leave school and go to work, which was perhaps the greatest mistake of my life. However, it is too late to regret it now. But I am sure I would have received much more pleasure and probably accomplished more for myself, my family and the community in which I have lived. But lets forget it.



Approximate location of Hart family farm in Ham Lake



HORSE FLU EPIDEMIC, 1872:

The US economy and life moved along as a result of working horses. The flu symptoms they experienced included a rasping cough, fever, nasal discharge, and weakness that incapacitated the animal for weeks if they survived. It's estimated that 2% of the nations 8 million horses died from the disease.

Why did I have to leave school and go to work? We were milking some four or five cows, and my father became so crippled with rheumatism that he could no longer make the long trips to the old farm after hay, and it became my duty to take his place. It was the winter of 1872 and 73. And such a winter: for ninety days the mercury did not rise above zero. And I can truthfully testify that for the majority of that time it was from ten to forty-three degrees below. [zero] It was the winter of the epidemic of "pink eye" or epizootic, when many horses died and every horse was afflicted with it and were out of commission. [sic] for several weeks. Probably six or eight. Among our stock of cattle was a pair of steers that my father intended to fatten and sell for beef in the spring. They had never had a yoke on or been given any training for work, and it became my duty to attempt to use them in place of the sick horses. The day before I started on my first trip after hay I attempted to drive them a little and

accustom them to the yoke. A grocer discovered me and offered to buy them for a delivery team, all horses being sick, and offered \$150⁰⁰ for them. More than three times what they were worth and fully that much more than we finally sold them for. But my father thought if we disposed of them we would have no way to haul hay and the cows would starve to death. So on the following morning I started for the old farm at daylight. The experiences of that day and the following night if fully recorded would fill a whole page – Sufficed to say that I finally arrived at the Leddy home on the farm now owned by Louis Jepson at one o'clock in the night. I awakened the family, a very hospitable and warm hearted Irish family, and they made room in a shed for the steers and on the floor of the kitchen for me, where I slept soundly the balance of the night. The next day I succeeded in getting through to the Arthur Powell place about a half mile above the old Powell place when I staid [sic] another night. The next day I hired Powells ox team and put them on the lead and started for the old home where I loaded on a four-ox load of hay. I thought about a ton and half. But I doubt if there was quite a ton. I returned to the Powell place where I stayed another night leaving the following morning just as I could see a streak of light in the east. I now was on my way home with 4 oxen and a load of

hay. A fall of snow in the night had filled the track full. Having the old ox team on the lead put them so far from me that I could not reach them with whip or goad stick which they soon discovered and my progress toward home was very moderate indeed. The snow at the side of the track was from two to four feet deep, making it poustieably [positively] impossible for me to walk beside the team to urge the leaders. But finally my patience was exhausted and I jumped from the load beside the steers and with my goad stick, quite forcibly goaded the leaders which resulted in their making a lunge ahead, breaking the yoke on the steers. Here was a real dilemma. After investigation I concluded that if I could reverse the yoke it would probably hold. That meant that I must take off the leaders and tie them to a tree, then tie both steers to a tree to re-yoke them. Of course all of this took time. And since I was only moving about a mile an hour, when moving at all, it made me rather uneasy. This happened about two miles below Sand Creek, fully as desolate and lonely as the western plains. During the afternoon the sun came out and with my exertions in the soft snow, my pants of which I wore two or more pairs, became wet to the skin. I arrived at wood Lake about 5 miles this side of what is now New Brighton, just sundown.

Here I fed the teams without unhitching them and ordered supper, by taking a little hay, gathering some dry limbs and building a nice little fire, not to cook by,

but just for company. I probably stayed [sic] about an hour, but my clothes didn't dry in that length of time. Oh how I did hate to leave that fire. I had not seen a person since before day light and didn't expect to until I got home, and didn't. But go I must. At what I judged to be about eleven o'clock I arrived at the junction of roads, one going to Minneapolis the other to St. Paul. The old or lead team had been driven that road to Minneapolis, and in spite of my entreaties insisted in going that way and in their determination to do so, turned so short that the hay rack struck a stump about two feet high at the side of the road. Here was another dilemma. After investigation I decided that if I could back the load about a foot and succeed in getting



the team at a right angle the other way I could clear the stump. The hard job was to back off. Of course the steers on the pole or tongue was the only power for backing up, the lead team pulling with chain which wouldn't push back worth a cent. However, I backed the old team as close to the steers as possible, getting all the slack of the chain, then used all of the persuade [persuasive] power of my goad stick over the heads of the steers with the result that I cleared the stump. I then had to use some diplomacy with the big team to turn them square away into two feet of snow, to clear the stump. But, Amen. I succeeded. I presume I had lost another hour before I again resumed [resumed] my homeward trip. However I had gotten quite warm again, and the road was broken into quite a good track. I was becoming some what fatigued and made up my mind that I would ride if I didn't travel more than half an hour per mile. By this time the oxen had become so accustomed to my strong language that it had no effect on them and when they felt disposed, as they often did, they would stop and listen. Well to make a long story short I arrived home just a little after 4 o'clock in the morning. Now the mistake we made was not in selling the steers. I could have hauled the load much easier with the one team attached to the tongue where I could have reached them. But, other folks make mistakes some times and that was not the first nor the last one that I have made.

The horses finally recovered and I drove them the balance of the winter, and made many trips nearly, if not quite as hard as the one just recorded.



Who was Frank Hart?

Born in 1854, Frank Hart attended the Adam's school in St. Paul, receiving merit certificates in 1868 from his teacher, Mary Greenleaf. He married Ada Purmort in Anoka in 1878 and worked as a clerk in the County courts for many years—his signature is on several documents in the ACHS collection, including the one pictured above (Certificate of Citizenship, Gust Peterson, 1900, ID 2018.0844.017) His name also appears in records of the Kiwanis Club, the State Bank of Anoka, and the Masons.

ALL THE SHENANIGANS ABOUT TOWN

FORM

P1

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

16-59815-2

1950 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY...

Those known for how to track ancestors back deep into the annals of history met in December to host a program called, "Preparing for the 1950 Census Release." Host Cathi Weber took attendees through what to expect when the data is released on April 1, 2022. The US Federal census is taken every 10 years but contains a 72 year privacy restriction, which delays information on most individuals as adults.

More information on the release can be discovered online at the National Archives, www.archives.gov, and searching "1950 census". You can discover information on Americans in the US, those living abroad, and members of the armed forces. The information covers the contiguous 48 states, Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, the Canal Zone, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Questions on the census included street name and house number, name, relationship to head of household, race, sex, age, and birth place. The ACGS meets quarterly, ACGSMN@yahoo.com

FUN WINTER PROGRAMS...

After reading the Frank Hart autobiography, ACHS staff were reminded that HOW a person tells a story often feels more important than the specific information it contains. But creating that magic for future generations feels daunting at best! We're here to help. Join Rebecca Desens for a three-part series of Storytelling 101 via Zoom this winter to:

- Sharpen your skills of describing the mundane (just how DO you brush your teeth?) January 18, 7 p.m.
- Identify the story under the story (February 15, 7 p.m.)
- Putting it all together (March 15, 7 p.m.)



Can't make the live program? Fear not. A recorded version will live on our website so you can tune in on-demand when your schedule allows. Zoom links will be emailed a week prior to the program and also posted at AnokaCountyHistory.org on the home page and events calendar. Recorded programs will post within a week of the live date.

ROBERT EHLEN COLLECTION

Bringing new artifacts into the archive is always exciting, but there's something particularly special about rediscovering a collection that has been here for years. One of these is the Robert Ehlen collection, which is comprised of Mayoral correspondence, school board policies, and Robert Taft campaign fliers among many other documents.

The Robert Ehlen collection isn't flashy to look at. When we pulled it from the shelves for re-sorting it was just two bankers-box-sized cartons full of paper. There are no artifacts, no art, and very few photos. It is a collection that is prized because of the information within it, not how it looks on display. Because while it may not look like much, it's absolutely fascinating. Did you know, for example, that Federal Cartridge employees who were also parents lobbied for Ehlen to stay on the school board? He was always working to improve the quality of Anoka schools, and was also one of the primary forces behind establishing school sports. Did you know that while he was manager of the Twin Cities Ordinance Plant, Ehlen made connections with Washington military officials? After WWII was over, he even used these connections to help young veterans secure pay that was promised to them for their service. Ehlen wasn't only connected in Washington, though. During his time as mayor, he corresponded with multiple Minnesota senators and governors, as well as other mayors from all over the state. He had particularly energetic correspondence with both the mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and often compared costs of utilities in the big cities to Anoka, always looking for a better deal for his constituents.

Perhaps one of the most interesting discoveries, though, is the fact that Ehlen hated President FDR. He staunchly opposed the policies of the New Deal, had prints of anti-Roosevelt songs and poems, and his correspondence to similarly-minded men are full of sly references to "the New York Man," as FDR was sometimes referred. Ehlen's papers are also full of campaigning materials supporting Robert Taft, a Republican runner during the 1940 election. During the 1940 election, the Republican party argued against the continuation of New Deal policies (such as those that allowed the land to heal after the Dust Bowl or provided jobs for large-scale infrastructure projects around the country) but they were also firmly anti-war, specifically the war in Europe. They didn't



Robert Bartley Ehlen [1905-1986]

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Blank stationary from Anoka's Taft for President club, in which Ehlen was chairman of the Executive Board.

like President Roosevelt's non-committal attitude about "the European War," and were firmly opposed to this country's young men dying on foreign soil. It's particularly interesting to think of Ehlen, long-time employee of the Federal Cartridge Company and later the plant manager of TCOP, as actively supporting an anti-war candidate. However, it also gives the sense that his politics and his beliefs were about far more than just what was good for business.

And this is all only the tip of the iceberg. The Robert Ehlen collection depicts a man who worked tirelessly for his community, who sought to improve it through education, politics, infrastructure, and labor. So much can be gleaned from its contents, but unfortunately, very little can be said about *how* it came to ACHS. We don't know what year the collection came to us, only that it was a long time ago. We also don't know who donated the collection, though we suspect it may have been the Ehlen estate or some of his relatives. We also don't know what happened to the rest of it. The Robert Ehlen collection is too small, covering only the late-1930s and into the mid-1940s. For instance, we only have one year of mayoral correspondence, but we know that Robert Ehlen served in that capacity over a decade. So where is the rest of it? It's very possible that it was lost or destroyed during Ehlen's lifetime, as we do everyday with papers we don't consider important. However, it's also possible that these files are still out there somewhere, either in an undocumented corner of ACHS or forgotten in a relative's attic. Maybe one day we'll find out!

Robert Taft, candidate for U.S. President, signing a photograph for Ehlen, Sept. 6, 1939. The signed photograph is also in the collection.





ACHS Remembers



To those members, volunteers, friends, and neighbors who are no longer with us—you will be missed.

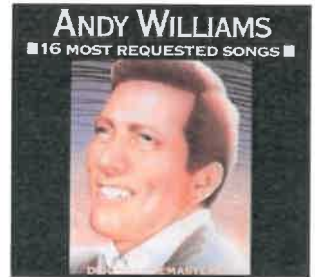


RICHARD LANG 1939-2021

Richard Duane Lang, age 82, of Ham Lake, MN passed away on Friday, November 19, 2021. Richard was born August 27, 1939. Richard graduated from Anoka High School and St. Cloud State where he started on the Defensive Line for the football team. Dick majored in Political Science which later led to five terms as Anoka County Commissioner starting in 1980. There was a mutual admiration and respect between Dick and his constituents whom he always had time for. Dick was strong in his faith and he and Mary were long term parishioners of St. Paul's Catholic Church in Ham Lake. Coaching youth football and baseball was a passion of his for many years.

CHRISTINE NORDIN DREW 1948-2021

(From son Jeff) Mom/Chris passed away their sleep, at Providence Place in Minneapolis MN. Tonight, they performed a beautiful walk-out ceremony lead by a prayer and played her favorite song as she left the facility, "The Impossible Dream" by Andy Williams...please listen to it in her memory. Mom did not want a funeral, and has requested to be cremated with her ashes spread at a special place to her, which we will certainly do.



Robert Dordan 1951-2021

Robert A. Dordan age 70 of Coon Rapids, MN passed away December 3, 2021.

(From daughter Jen) I've had more than one "worst day of my life". The difference is, my dad was always around for the ones prior to this with either humor or a solution to the tune of, "Who's legs do I need to break?". Of all of memories I have of my dad, my favorites are ones with his grandkids. Too see that stubborn, outspoken, and sometimes gruff old goat speak in the softest voice to my little girls was truly a sight to behold. He would do things that he didn't do in his younger years. He would play on the floor with him, despite having a

fused back and many bionic parts, he would make them silver dollar sized pancakes with chocolate chips for no occasion at all, serve shrimp for all three meals sometimes just to put a smile on their little faces.

How ever you best remember my dad, I hope it puts a smile on your face.

I would do anything to live the day this picture was taken again. Beauty Shop Bob may have had a tough exterior, but this is who he was to me.

KNOCK IT OUT—DO THE THING

When people think about volunteering at the museum or historical society, many times the vision encompasses working with the “old stuff.” It is true, our collection needs care and folk to help digitize it. But there are other tasks which fly under the radar and that you would definitely notice if they weren’t done—such as fresh coats of paint in the exhibit hall.

We’re starting to prepare our hall for an exhibit about Federal Cartridge’s 100th anniversary and need a blank canvas to work with. The yellow walls that worked perfectly as the backdrop for a 1970s living room, don’t work for an exhibit about the centennial of a company.

One night this November a volunteer group from Eagle Brook Church in Blaine came prepared to paint it all in one go. The group specifically formed in order to volunteer at places in their community. They arrived after the museum closed for the day, prepared to knock it out and just do the thing. Some claimed the painters tape and taped off carpeted baseboards, others made sure to lay the plastic tarps while others dove right into the paint.

They were victorious! But while the walls are now uniformly white, the space still needs some preparation to make it ready to tell Federal’s story. We need to create a false wall to temporarily hide the Dan Laws mural behind (the mural is too big to move to a new location.) We need to add horizontal siding to mimic Federal’s Clubhouse to our house peak (you can spy a corner of it, above), and we need to construct a long



storage bench to create additional seating and sneaky storage in the far end of the exhibit hall.

Volunteering is more than working with the “old stuff.” It’s about building and caring for the space where we can share those stories.

Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS All lists are current to December 16, 2021

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THANK YOU TO MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS FOR 2021

ACHS staff wear many hats at the museum and sometimes we stack a few on top of each other to get the job done. We can't say it enough— your phone calls, emails, text messages (carrier pigeons?) of support carry us through the day.



Knowing we not only have your support financially, but also emotionally and as an advocate for local history in the community takes weight from our shoulders. We can spend our time doing maintaining the collection, helping people conduct research, making our materials accessible online, creating videos and programs, reaching out to students, organizing events, and posting to social media.

The time you spend as a volunteer can't be understated either. With only three full-time and three part-time employees, your donated hours expand the fun and interesting things ACHS can do with history. Again...thank you for a stellar 2021!

History Center Hours—New Winter Hours!

Wednesday –Saturday 10-4 p.m.

Call us for a research reservation or to schedule shenanigans!

ACHS Board Meetings

Second Thursday of each month. 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

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

History 21: The Podcast the first and third Friday of each month. Subscribe and never miss an episode.

Dec 17: Al Kordiak, former County Commissioner

Jan. 7: Flora Aldrich, novelist

Jan 21: Dennis Berg, memoir



Storytelling 101 with Rebecca Desens:

Where: Zoom. Link emailed or at AnokaCountyHistory.org

When: Jan. 18, 7 p.m.— Sharpen your skills of describing the mundane
Feb. 15, 7 p.m.— Identify the story under the story
March 15, 7 p.m.— Putting it all together

Keep up with the Fun at ACHS!



Anoka County Historical Society



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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