AC Anoka County Historical Society ISTORY ILL



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Front Cover: Jon Arfstrom Lesson 9 for the Famous Artists Course. This lesson focused on multiple figures in varying perspectives. Jon finished these assignments on December 29, 1954. He earned a B- on all three assignments. Instructions for this assignment are 2018.1690.034.J.

Object ID: 2018.1690.019



From the President

By the time you read this, we'll be approaching Thanksgiving. The year has gone by very quickly. We are "manufacturing history" at a rapid rate!

At the end of each Ghost Tour I lead, I ask guests to think about the first major event they can remember – the biggest thing they recall happening in their childhood. The answers are fascinating – in my groups, they range from JFK's assassination (November 1963) to the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster (January 1986) to 9/11 (2001) to events

even more recent. Mine is the first moon landing, Apollo 11 (July 1969). I was

quite young, but it made a big impression on me!

My point is this: Each of us is making history every day. One of the most exciting advancements in the history field in the last 30 years has been the increase in studies of regular people like you and me, instead of a constant focus on generals, presidents, and kings. What we do and say today will matter to our great-grandchildren. What records are we leaving them? Do we take the time to write down our impressions of the events that shape our world? One young man suggested we do TikToks for posterity – why not? Just keep a record, no matter how small.

I never cease to marvel at how we are all connected—with each other and our shared past. I'm glad to be on this journey with you.

Steve Florman, President

From the Director

Happy New Year!

With the close of Ghost Tour season, the museum takes a breath to reorder itself. It feels like a New Year each November when we take time to file all the things, clear the clutter off the desk, and schedule programs for winter and spring. We re-evaluate the exhibit proposals, look at the strategic plan, and polish budgets.

As with every fresh start, we're filled with optimism and hope for another successful year. I'm grateful for the

staff, volunteers, and board members who work together to create the ACHS machine to preserve local history. I'm excited to dig deeper into the story of James Sheppard and Burns Lake, to follow where the stories of Vietnam era families leads us, and to help Circle Pines have a successful 75th

anniversary celebration. We will hang some Jon Arfstrom art at North Central library, bring the Civil War to middle school students, and even give ZOOM presentations to the Rochester Community College.

Here's to another fabulous year!



Rebecca Ebnet-Desens,



By Blaine Historical Society

Veterans have been a part of Blaine from its very beginning—a beginning that goes back to the Civil War era. In a large city, it is easy to lose track of individual stories over many decades. It is also easy to think about "Veterans" and specific conflicts while losing sight of the stories and contributions of individual people. The individual stories are what add dimension to the dates, facts, and places of the history books.

We are proud to highlight a few of the stories of Blaine veterans and their contributions to the broader world.

GREENBERRY CHAMBERS

Civil War veteran Greenberry Chambers was one of the earliest residents of Blaine, Minnesota. Greenberry Chambers began living in Barren County, Kentucky, as an enslaved person of Frank Chambers. He and his wife Charlotte

(Lottie) had five children. He gained freedom by serving in the Union Army as a private in Company H of the 115th U.S. Colored Infantry. Shortly after becoming a soldier, Chambers was assigned to help erect a stockade at Fort Cynthiana, Kentucky. While doing this, he received a serious injury from which he never fully recovered. He served as a supervisor cook at a military hospital in Covington, Kentucky, until his discharge in July 1865.



After the war, Chambers secured freedom for his wife and three of their children. They moved to Anoka County, where he purchased land and became a farmer. After Blaine Township was created in 1877, Chambers served on the Blaine Township Board of Supervisors, where he was elected constable from 1878-1881 and road overseer in 1882. Chambers was listed as a voter in the 1881 Blaine Township elections.

The family moved to St. Paul in 1884. Chamber received an annual Civil War pension of \$48. Charlotte contributed to the family support by cleaning, washing, and ironing until her death from pneumonia in December of 1884. In 1890, Chambers worked as a railroad porter. He died in 1898. Greenberry and Charlotte

Chambers are buried in Oakland Cemetery in St. Paul, Minnesota.

BETTY ERICKSON

As a twenty-year-old woman, Betty Erickson wanted to do something meaningful to contribute to the war effort during World War II. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) was an opportunity to do that. She needed and received her parents' signature to enlist since the minimum age for enlisting was 21. She signed up in May 1944.

Erickson attended WAC basic training in Des Moines, Iowa. The training started each day at 5:30 a.m. with physical fitness. Throughout her life, Betty continued a regimen of staying fit regular exercise and dancing replaced marching.

After basic training, Erickson was sent to Barksdale Field in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her days included keeping the WAC service records and typing. Shreveport was hot and humid; she said the sweat would run "in buckets." With no air conditioning, Erickson would experience long days, hard work, and K.P.. While Blaine had mosquitoes, her new home away from home had large cockroaches.



Erickson and a fellow WAC at the Enlistment office developed a special friendship. They maintained it throughout their service in 1944 and 1945 and continued it back in Blaine. Their husbands also became good friends. Betty served her country proudly and earned both a Good Conduct Medal and a WWII Victory Medal.

A long-time Blaine resident, Erickson and her husband Lorry had three children - Gary, Janice, and Lawrence. Gary followed in his mother's footsteps and joined the Army, serving in Vietnam.

WILLIS WYATT

Willis Wyatt was drafted into the Army in Anoka County's first draft for World War II. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, his one-year commitment turned into more than four years.



Wyatt's wife, Minnie, supported the war effort during this time by working in the shipyards in Oregon. Their only communication was through letters.

Willis celebrated four of his December 9th birthdays away from home. The first was in Montgomery, Alabama, the second was in Africa at Bath, the third was in London, England, and the fourth was in Paris, France.

Wyatt served in the Second Armored Division. His unit was at the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Their next action was the Battle of the St.Lo Breakthrough, 40 miles from Paris. This was one of the war's fiercest battles and was where Willis was wounded and received the Purple Heart. After an operation and treatment in England, Sgt. Wyatt returned to his unit in Barmen, Germany. On November 28, 1944, Wyatt led six of his men in a

mine clearing expedition. They preceded a column of tanks and infantry Into the town of Barmen. Facing heavy barrages of artillery fire without infantry support, they enabled the tanks to move into the town, clearing the streets. This heroic

achievement inspired the men working with him and earned him the Bronze Star Medal for his

aggressive leadership.

On January 7, 1945, during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, Platoon Sgt. Wyatt made 12 trips, crawling from a covered position to clear an enemy minefield with German infantry 50 yards from him. This extraordinary, courageous action earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, the Nation's Second Highest award for valor.

After a storied service to his country, Wyatt arrived home on VE Day. Following the war, Wyatt, along with two of his brothers, Earl and Gordy, founded Wyatt Brothers Ready Mix. Their company had a significant and positive impact on Blaine's growth. Wyatt and Minnie had two sons who were also veterans from Blaine. Both were in the Army. Roger was stationed in Germany, and Clyde was stationed in Vietnam.



LESTER ZIEGLER

Lester Arnold Ziegler was born August 19, 1931 to Reinhart and Alma (Matz) Ziegler. He married Shirley Thompson on September 30, 1952. They raised one daughter (Vickie Wendel) and remained married for 69 years until Lester passed away on October 24, 2021.

Ziegler was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War and served at Fort

Lewis, Washington, from 1953 – 1955. An adverse reaction to a vaccination resulted in a basic training that consisted mostly of removing cigarette butts and dandelions from the grounds of the Army base. Ziegler was among 16 men randomly chosen by officers for Cooks' School. He enjoyed it and discovered a talent for cooking. Ziegler's first assignment was cooking for the stockade. The equipment was cast iron coal and wood stoves. He was later assigned to cook for Headquarters Company, where he cooked for 35 officers in a state-of-the-art kitchen. He made sergeant in 22 months.

He enjoyed baking. His favorite baking project was cherry pie. When a devil's food cake went awry, his "accidental brownies" were a hit with the officers. He couldn't make them again





because he didn't know how he made them the first time!

Ziegler and Shirley lived in off-base housing and had a car, which allowed him to earn an extra \$2.50 each week providing rides for other soldiers. In Ziegler's words, "We lived pretty good on that extra \$2.50."

After his discharge, Ziegler and Shirley returned to Minnesota. They bought a house in Blaine in 1967, and Lester worked in the grocery warehouse business.

ACHS and the Blaine Historical Society

are always looking for more stories. If someone you know is a veteran who has lived in Blaine and wants to share their story, let us know through our website, www.blainehistory.org. We are always looking for and open to people who can help us tell the stories of our specific corner of the County. It is also worth highlighting Blaine's Veterans Memorial Park, located across the street from Blaine City Hall, honoring all Veterans who served. The memorial includes memorials for each major global conflict and special specialty statues and monuments, such as women

in service, POW-MIA, and military families.

These are just some of the stories of Blaine veterans, set among the larger backdrop of veterans of Anoka County and the State of Minnesota. By saving and sharing their stories, we honor their service and add richness to ALL of our community's history.

Local historical societies don't operate in a vacuum — we talk with each other, read each other's newsletters, and in many cases, hold keys to each other's collections. Maybe someone lived in City A and moved to City B, contributing to both historic records. Maybe a product made in City C made it's way around the state, leaving a trail of stories in it's wake. So is the situation with Anoka's VEERAC production. It turns out that after publishing an article and some social media posts about the VEERAC, ACHS raised awareness enough for the Hopkins Historical Society to make some connections of their own. We hope you enjoy their contribution to the story!



Svec Grocery and S.E. Svec

Someone recently asked the Hopkins Historical Society if this photo of a delivery truck was from Hopkins, MN. Painted on the side of the truck bed was "S.E. SVEC, GROCERIES. HOPKINS." In addition, the phone number "HO 7" was painted on the side of the driver's seat. This spurred the following research into this turn-of-the-20th-century local business and its owner – along with more information about VEERAC. Inscribed on the bottom of the photo is: "Mfd. by VEERAC Motor Company. Minneapolis."

We found a listing for S. E. Svec Grocery in the Minneapolis City Directory, 1901:

Koblas & Svec Meats. John J. Koblas and Stanley E. Svec, grocers 818 Excelsior Ave W (Mainstreet, south side) Svec must have left Koblas Meats at this time and started his own grocery, presumably at about the age of 24. In 1902, Svec is listed as a grocer and the following year, Frank Bennish is clerking for the grocery. Interestingly, a John Bennish works as a meat cutter for Koblas Meats. In 1905, Fred Jeppson and Edwin Seiberlich join Bennish as clerks. A year later, they have left and we find Bennish working with Charles Hedlund.

Unfortunately, there are no street addresses or phone numbers listed for the above, but if the number painted on the truck is to be believed, the phone number for Svec Grocery was Ho 7. The HHS has a wooden delivery box from Svec Grocery as well as several photos of the building and the business. There is no mention in directories of Svec after this and we wonder if he moved?



In the 1937 St. Louis Park Directory, a Stanley and Petrolina Svec were listed on 9th Avenue North in Hopkins. Stanley was a plumber. Was this Stanley E. (probably) or son of Stanley E.? There is a Hop 9233 phone number. Petrolina Chastek Svec's Find a Grave website page shows they were both buried at Shady Oak Cemetery. Petrolina: 1878-1933 (their wedding photo is at right). Stanley's Find a Grave page shows him living from 1878 to 1949. It also includes a photo of him and another presumably of the interior of Svec Grocery (below).



Hopkins Centennial Album, 1887-1987, states that Stanley E. Svec's Grocery was "on the west side of the Odd Fellows Building". [northeast corner of 9th Avenue and Excelsior Avenue West (Mainstreet)] Hopkins, Minnesota: Through the Years confirms this store in 1903 as "S. E. Svec, Staple and Fancy Groceries" and its location in the I.O.O.F. Hall after its construction in 1903 at 823 Mainstreet.

Find the Hopkins Historical Society at HopkinsHistory.org or visit them in the Hopkins Activity Center, 33 14th Ave N.

Research in progress

A panel discussion in partnership with the Anoka Ramsey Community College this spring about the experience of BIPOC in Anoka County has provided an opportunity for ACHS to explore several stories of African American residents in greater detail. University of Minnesota student Thom Sandberg and Augsburg student Miller Krueger took one of these stories and used their research to create a piece (below) to bring a human element to the data points found at MappingPrejudice.umn.edu.

There is no way to hide the ugly fact that the lake known today as Burns Lake was, for many years, known as N—— Lake. Just after the Civil War, an African American man made his home on the shore of this lake in the northwestern corner of Nowthen (then Burns Township). Local stories alleged to honor his legacy by continuing to use this name into the 1970s. Lou Paulson, a Nowthen resident and local history buff, researched the subject for her book on the city. While unable to speak with primary sources, she found secondary sources of historical information.

Paulson's research indicates his name was James Sheppard (with multiple spellings), born in Kentucky (later census records indicate Virginia), and his obituary states he served in a "colored regiment" during the Civil War. There is a dispute about when he arrived in Anoka County, but the 1870 census lists a James Sheppard in Anoka. He arrived in Nowthen soon after that, working for area farmers. He married Mary, bought a farm, and had eight children—all of whom preceded him in death. He attended Anoka Baptist Church and was a member of the Anoka Fire Department. Sheppard died at the age of 70 in Minneapolis in 1913 and is buried in Anoka.

Further research by volunteer Jane Lamagusa has led to the potential identity of Captain Martin, who is mentioned in Sheppard's obituary. The file on J.W. Wells, a fellow African American veteran also mentioned in Sheppard's obituary, at ACHS doesn't shed light on which regiment James served with or whether he was a free black or enslaved. We know a little more about his eight children, such as several died in Anoka County, and one in Minneapolis (Robert's obituary says his funeral was at Bethesda Mission church), and many records remain undiscovered about his wife, Mary. Her state of origin changes depending on the census records, so it's complicated.

Other stories ACHS will research include:

- An attempted lynching in Anoka in 1931 of an African-American named Ernest McDuffey. There were various other accounts of the event, a few records at the courthouse, and an outreach to MNHS, which turned up a couple of case files.
- A student (likely named Susanna) Coleman, who endured severe disciplinary action from a teacher in 1886. The two newspapers reported this based on their political leanings, prompting her mother, Mrs. Wm Coleman, to write an article.
- A production of "The History of Agriculture in Anoka" shown on the Amphitheater in 1916, written and directed by Roe Chase. ACHS has a script that references "darkies" and a photo of the cast, some of whom are costumed in blackface.
- A 1939 film from a Federal Cartridge Company employee picnic, where the first few frames are a person dressed in blackface wearing a police officer's uniform. The newspaper account calls the individual a "comic policeman." One without the other would have no context, but together, it speaks to the era's language.

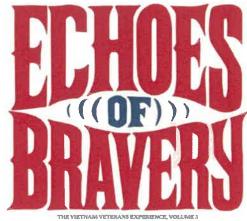
Thank you to our recent donors:

American Legion Post 102, Anoka — \$1,000

Vista Outdoor — \$5,000

Anonymous — \$2,500

These dollars have made it possible for ACHS to apply for a \$10,000 grant to conduct oral history recordings as well as design and



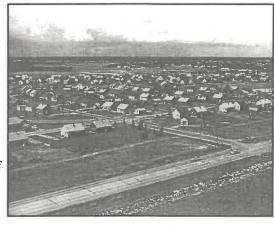
from the Anaka County Historical Society

create a book prototype, and digitize incoming artifacts from Vietnam era families.

ACHS will present more about the Echoes of Bravery project on Nov 8 at the Coon Rapids Senior Center, Nov 9 at the memorial dedication for the Vietnam Veterans of American chapter 470, and Nov 11 at the Andover YMCA. Please visit AnokaCountyHistory.org/Vietnam to donate or leave us a story about your experiences. We welcome the families and employers of servicemembers especially to share the challenges and joys of sharing a life with the men and women in uniform.

Circle Pines 75th **Anniversary**

ACHS looks forward to working with the City of Circle Pines this winter and spring to research and present their 75th Anniversary celebration. Their donation of \$5,000 will support the collection of memories from residents, create exhibits, and gather suggestions for highlighting the past 25 years. ACHS will also contribute to publications and help install tour material throughout the city.

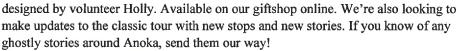


Circle Pines view north from the tower in the 1950's (object ID CP5)

The Ghost Tour Breakdown

As the 20th season of ACHS Ghost Tours come to a close we wanted to reflect on an amazing couple of months. Thank you to all the volunteer guides who represented us and the History & Mystery of Anoka with nearly 1,500 people, the homes and businesses who have shared their stories with us, and whatever weather gods gave us the most beautiful nights (except for the snow on Halloween!)

Keep the spirt alive until next year with your own Ghost Tour t-shirt or merch,





78 Tours in **2** months

 $\sim 1,500$ participants

~\$30,000 raised for ACHS

Wargo's Heritage Lab

Hundreds of kids visit Wargo Nature Center's Heritage Lab each fall to experience a melding of nature and history, immersing themselves in Minnesota's history for a day. The Wargo naturalists are joined by Gibbs Farm and ACHS staff to create seven different stations the kids rotate through. In the latest episode of the

ACHS podcast, History 21, you'll hear Eric Vehe, Program Services Supervisor, share what goes into creating this program and the kids' excitement as we take a microphone into the woods to capture the day.

At the ACHS station, we made the kids apprentice cartographers. Together, we learned about the important parts of maps and what early settlers needed on their maps, and they even created one themselves. Listen to the episode at AnokaCountyHistory.org or subscribe to

your favorite podcast app.



Photo courtesy of Anoka County Parks

VOLUNTEER WORLD: SHOUT OUT TO ALLISON!

On September 14 and October 12, volunteer and ACHS board member Allison Schmitt visited Avant Garden Bookstore on Main St. in Anoka for a history and Halloween storytime. Kids and their adults found a cozy space among the books on the second floor of the building as smells from the coffee shop below wafted up.

After reading a couple of published books, Allison told the story of a unique Anoka Halloween pumpkin called "Winky and the Great Battle of the Pumpkin Patch." The book tells the story of Winky, an eightfoot, lighted pumpkin at the top of Anoka City Hall. Each child received a copy of the story—with blank pages. The children then helped to illustrate Winky's story in an art contest. Participants in the Anoka kid's costume contest also received books. Kids could submit their art to ACHS; one

Oh it was so fun! We have seen Winky so many times, so we loved hearing that story.

stood out: Olivia, age 8, brought the story to life on each page. She even captured Winky's signature wink.

Thank you to Allison who spearheaded this idea and connected with Avant to participate in their Saturday story times. It was so much fun we're headed back with volunteers Allison and Jessica on November

9 and December 14. It was a blast sharing our love of history and stories with new generations!



Thank you for all your help!

Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

Sara Given Volunteer Coordinator

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History 21 The Podcast!

Episodes drop the first and third Friday of each month. Subscribe and never miss one!

Here are the latest episodes:

- Episode 4.18 The Great Depression in Anoka County
- Episode 4.20 The Music Store Ghosts
- Episode 4.21 Wargo Nature Center's Heritage Lab

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

*OZHHLY

History Center Hours—WINTER HOURS

Closed Sunday, Monday, Tuesday

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.

EVENTS FOR YOU TO ATTEND:

Avant Story Time

When: Nov. 9, 10 a.m. AND Dec 14, 10 a.m.

Join Jessica and Allison for stories and history! (try not to eat the crayons)

Give to the Max Day

Nov. 21

The year-end appeal season has begun! Help ACHS reach it's yearly income goals by donating to your favorite nonprofit (wink). All amounts make a difference.

OTHER PLACES WE'RE GOING (AKA WE'RE BUSY!)

• Librarian Day @ ACHS

30 of our closest librarian friends from District 11 will spend an afternoon exploring the resources at ACHS and how students can use them for projects and History Day presentations

- Coon Rapids Senior Center Vietnam
- · Veterans Day at the Andover YMCA

ACHS is on the trail talking about our third volume of the Vietnam Veterans Experience called, Echoes of Bravery. We would love to talk with your club or group! Contact us to schedule.

• MNHS Women's Org Presentation

The Halloween Capital of the World strikes again when ACHS presents about the history and mystery of Anoka, as well as the 2016 jack-o-lantern stamp unveiling.





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