



Anoka County  
Historical Society

# HISTORY 21



Volume 53 No.3 May/June 2023  
[AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)

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

### Board of Directors

District 1: Al Pearson

District 2: Wes Volkenant

District 3: Orville Lindquist (Treasurer)

District 4: Lotus Hubbard (Ex. Officio)

District 5: Richard Oxley (President)

District 6: Open

District 7: Open

At-Large A: Allison Schmitt

At-Large B: Dennis Berg

At-Large C: Daryl Lawrence (Sec.)

At-Large D: Maddison McNamara

At-Large E: Scott Nolan

At-Large F: Paul Pierce III

At-Large G: Steve Florman (Vice Pres.)

At-Large H: Open

County Commissioner Liaison:

Mandy Meisner

The ACHS board positions will reflect the new Anoka County district map after the annual meeting on May 21.

### Staff

Rebecca Ebneth-Desens

Executive Director

Debra Given (Volunteer Coordinator)

Sandra Mackenthun

Collections Manager

Christina Bergstrom (Office Staff)

John Johnson (Office Staff)

John Johnson (Office Staff)

Christy Mckenny (Office Staff)

## Table of Content

3 - Letters from the ACHS President and Directors

4 - History of St. Francis Consolidated School

10 - Collections Corner: G

12 - Cemetery Tours

12 - Annual Meeting

13 - Volunteer World: Save the

14 - Thank you to our supporters

15 - Upcoming Events

Front Cover: Undated photograph of St. Francis High School.  
Object ID: 2019.0549.014



## From the President

ACHS is gearing up for summer events and city festivals! We just spent time with the good folks of Ramsey at the Ramsey Business Expo, talking about local history. Look for our ACHS booth throughout the summer and stop by for exciting tidbits on Anoka County.

The Anoka County Historical Society offers an exceptional opportunity to explore the past through local cemetery tours. These tours are an incredible way to learn about the history and culture of the region while also discovering unique and intriguing stories about the people who lived here. Knowledgeable tour guides will take you through time, sharing fascinating facts and stories about the area's heritage. You can choose from the Glen Cary Cemetery Tour in Ham Lake or the Forest Hill Cemetery in Anoka.

Our mission of preserving and sharing the history of Anoka County is more important now than ever before as we face the challenges and uncertainties of the modern world. Together, we can preserve the rich legacy of our county's past and ensure that it remains a vital part of our cultural heritage for generations to come. You can help by adopting an artifact or donating directly to ACHS by going to [AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)

Richard Oxley, ACHS President

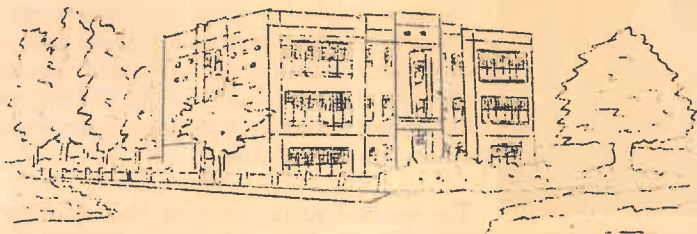
## From the Director

I have a solid affinity for spring. Since many of the significant changes in my life have happened about now—giving birth, buying a home, starting and ending jobs, my own birthday, deployments—I associate it with renewal and readjusting. The cave of winter I've been crouching in gives way to the warm air of the more welcoming outside world. I can get in a good stretch of the back, a deep breath, and allow my toes to wiggle in the earth.



The museum has taken a similar breath in the last few weeks. We're preparing for our festival season, a new series of Cemetery Tours, and more walk-in visitors as the temperatures rise. The restrictions of COVID are falling farther into our memories as volunteers return to their workstations and hug us in greeting. Thank you for bringing joy to our daily lives at ACHS and making this a community rather than just a JOB.

Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, Executive Director



## H I S T O R Y   O F   S T .   F R A N C I S C O N S O L I D A T E D   S C H O O L

*Digitizing the collection remains a high priority for ACHS to ensure both preservation and accessibility into the future. The article, printed in Volume I, issues one and two of the school newspaper, provides a glimpse into history from a different perspective. Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure have not been changed.*

---

In 1851 the county commissioners were required by statute to divide on petition the inhabited portion of each county into small school districts as the people demanded. These local school divisions were called common school districts because the school work of the early days comprised only the "common branches". Even today this title has been continued to apply to the very small school systems that operate in the open country and in the very small villages. It is from these common school districts that the entire public school system of Minnesota has evolved. There were in Minnesota in 1880, 4,165 and in 1932, 7,258 of these small districts. It is a fact that these small school districts increased in number during the most prosperous period of the Northwest and in spite of the fact that highways improved year by year. In other words, it has been most difficult to uproot these small districts even though there is now little justification for the rural district.

In 1911 in response to a movement that was bringing about a longer rural school unit the consolidated school district was made possible by an act of the Legislature known today as the Holmberg Act. This form of school organization permitted the consolidation of two or more districts into one large area for the support and management of a centralized school.

The advantages of the consolidated school over the one room or one-teacher school as an instrument for rural education have made possible many desirable ends. In the first place the organization, administration, and supervision of consolidated schools have all

the advantages of the larger schools, It has brought into the schools such courses as the commercial, normal, agriculture, domestic science, manual training, and the established preparatory college courses. There is a more equitable division into grades with larger classes, better gradation of pupils, better trained teachers devoting their time to one or two grades, the possibility of more thorough work, and the offering of more subjects. Longer school terms are made possible and better equipment has been provided. To the child there is the undoubted advantage in the stimulus of the greater group, the wider play activities, and the extended circle of acquaintance. It has also provided a more adequate school plant, more healthful conditions for school children, and a more equitable distribution of the burdens of school taxation. Certainly consolidation and transportation have been accepted as correct educational policies.

The condition around St. Francis in 1911 was no better than any other place. Seven districts became seriously interested to talk over the proposition of consolidating themselves into one district. These districts were located as follows: The village of St. Francis school was located on the present John Lindbloom residence site; the one east of town was the Emmans' district; the one north of town was the Clayson district; the one west of town was near the Mattatut farm; the one southeast of town was called the Grass Lake district and was near the Burgess farm. There were two districts south of town, one was District Number 12, near the Leonard Breyen farm and the other was near the John Talbot farm. On August 26, 1911, the seven districts consolidated by a vote of 143 to 116 into the Independent Consolidated School District No. 12. It was the first evidence of school consolidation in Minnesota, an educational advancement of which St. Francis can always be proud.



*Sunnyside School west of St. Francis. 1922.*

During the year, 1912, three meetings were held for the purpose of issuing a \$25,000 bond to the State of Minnesota for the building of a school house. The first meeting on August 24, 1912, resulted in the vote of 177 to 146 against bonds; the second meeting on September 24, 1912, resulted in the vote of 170 to 169 against bonds, and the third meeting on October 11, 1912, resulted in the vote of 163 to 4 for bonds. On December 13, 1913, a special meeting was held in which they voted to purchase the Streetly and the Gilman land for 31200 for the new school site and playgrounds.

The construction of the present building was started in 1914 and was completed in 1915. The architect for the building was Kirby T. Snyder of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The three story brick building was at this time



*First issue of The School Crier, 1936.*

one of the finest school buildings in the state.

Again on April 27, 1915, a special meeting was held for the purpose of issuing a \$20,000 bond to the State of Minnesota to take up floating indebtedness incurred in completing and equipping the school house. It was voted in by a vote of 39 to 1.

During the period of construction of the present building, school was held in the old school house and in the Methodist Church. The first year's enrollment of pupils in the new building totaled 231. Leslie and Elizabeth Nutter, who graduated in 1915, were the first graduates of the school. A. L. Winterquist was superintendent at this time. He served through the years 1915 and 1916. During these years the following departments were in operation:

A manual training course, a music department which consisted of a boys' and

girls' quartet, a boys' chorus, high school girls' and boys' mixed chorus, a thirty piece high school band, a seven piece high school orchestra, a domestic science department, besides the required subjects. In the winter time the domestic science class served hot lunches to the pupils and the teachers.

The school district provided nine horse drawn vans to transport the pupils to and from school. These vans are our present sled bodies. They were placed on wagons during the fall and spring and, of course, on sleds in the winter time. A special shed was built for their protection during the vacation months. No one seems to know exactly when the change from horse drawn to motor vehicles took place. This change permitted a rapid transfer of pupils from farm to school. At present there are still nine routes from which some 185 pupils are transported daily to school by motor vehicles.

In 1931 the domestic science department was discontinued. This was made necessary by the demand for certain high school subjects for those pupils who planned to enter higher institutions of learning. It is hoped that the near future will permit the return of this much needed department to provide a course for the girls of grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 corresponding to the course in industrial training now offered to boys of these grades.

Since the beginning, the following superintendents have served in the St. Francis School:

A. L. Winterquist 1915, 1916	H. L. Ronne1 1922, 23, 24, 25, 26
F. L. Rairden 1917	F. C. Thompson 1927, 1928
G. Bodine 1918, 19, 20	M. B. Thompson 1929, 1930
E. E. Lischfeske 1921	L. R. Anderson 1930, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35

Superintendent Anderson was recently re-elected by the Board of Education to serve his seventh term.

It is very interesting to note that our school district has a floating population that is probably controlled by the industrial activity in Minneapolis and St. Paul. As the city industry decreases, the back-to-the-farm movement increases our school population, It is very likely now that the school population will decrease somewhat as industrial activity increases.

TABLE OF ENROLLMENT

School Year	High Sch'l	Elem.	Total	Graduates	School Year	High Sch'l	Elem.	Total	Graduates
1915			231	2	1926	62	145	207	11
1916				6	1927	70	161	231	7
1917	54	173	227	14	1928	65	175	240	10
1918	59	188	247	9	1929	65	142	207	13
1919	77	198	273	11	1930	66	168	224	11
1920	66	187	253	12	1931	71	164	235	9
1921	70	178	248	9	1932	71	174	245	11
1922	69	111	180	12	1933	83	189	272	12
1923	52	145	197	17	1934	81	180	261	16
1924	43	151	193	11	1935*	106	147	253	15
1925	69	151	213	5					

\* As of March 16, 1936.

The above table presents a tabulation of the pupil enrollment in the high school and the grade school, and the number of graduates of the St. Francis school since 1915. Complete enrollment figures for the years 1915 and 1916 were unobtainable. During the past few years our high school enrollment has increased rapidly due chiefly to the influx of out of the district high school pupils. Our school benefits considerably by enrolling these pupils. The state aid received by our district in October 1935 averaged \$97 per pupil.

In the fall of 1935 our school was changed to a six-year undivided high school. This type of organization is one

NUMBER OF OUT OF DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS BY YEARS		
1927 - 29 pupils	1930 - 33 pupils	1933 - 60 pupils
1928 - 28 "	1931 - 39 "	1934 - 44 "
1929 - 29 "	1932 - 41 "	1935 - 51 "

in which both the junior and senior groups are housed in one building as a single unit. It calls for one superintendent and one faculty, whose members usually teach throughout years seven to twelve inclusive, and one student body comprising the junior and senior groups. This type of organization is recommended in schools enrolling fewer than two hundred pupils in years seven to



*St Francis High School 1934-1935 senior class.*

twelve inclusive, The value of such an organization is that a more gradual transition is possible in bridging the gap between elementary and secondary education. Departmental teaching provides a finer degree of presentation by a teacher who has either a major or minor in the subject taught. This new organization also permits exploration and guidance for each pupil in order to discover

educational and vocational possibilities before specialization begins.

Certainly, nowadays the feeling prevails that the minimum of a high school education is essential to an understanding of the problems of modern life. A secondary education was formerly thought to be a preparation for college, but today the meaning and purposes of education have been subject to great modification. Not only should a program be planned to provide for those who desire to take advanced training, but also planned to meet life needs. Our present program of subjects will help to bring children into adjustment with the rapidly changing social order by developing in them the ability to cooperate with others, to function in community life, to work happily, and to live richly and abundantly. Our school curriculum, the past three years, has passed thru marked changes to keep up with new educational thought and practice.

Our Industrial Training course is offered to the boys of grades 7, 8, 9, and 10. The department was reorganized in 1933 to meet the new department standards. We now offer general mechanics to the boys of the 7th grade, woodwork, drawing, and elementary electricity to the 8th grade, drawing and woodwork to the 9th grade, and sheet metal and ornamental hand metal work to the 10th grade.

This year the boys of grades 7 and 8 prepared in their drawing class 25 plates which consisted of specification plates, T slot bases, prisms, and V Blocks. The last part of the year they have entered the shop 2 and have made bookends, tie racks and what-nots.

The 9th grade pupils made 41 drawings during the first semester. These drawings included the bench hook, dove-tail Joint, valve stem, ink well stand, clutch thimble, foot stool, prisms, notched block, tool slide, pinion, etc.

The 10th grade boys studied sheet metal work the first semester. Here they learned the fundamentals of planning, cutting and soldering sheet steel. Some of the many projects were match boxes, cake pans, cookie cutters, dust pens, funnels, pails, fishing tackle boxes, troughs, flower pots and waste paper baskets. The last half of the year these boys have been making magazine racks, ferneries, and tables, occasional tables,



desk lamps, floor lamps, and milking stools from bar iron. This is known as ornamental cold iron work.

In September 1935 the school board introduced a commercial course. This course consists of Economic Geography, Bookkeeping, Typewriting, and Shorthand. Fifteen new typewriters, five LC Smith, five Royals, and five Underwoods, and typewriting tables were purchased. The demand for the course was evident when 34 pupils enrolled for typewriting alone. Under our rapidly changing social and economic conditions, there is a need for people to have a general knowledge of business if they are to manage their personal affairs and to participate intelligently in public affairs. Our commercial course is established to meet both the needs of those who plan to enter business as a vocation and of those who plan to use it for personal use.

The above summary illustrates the progress our typing pupils have made since the beginning of this school year. The table reads as follows: At the end of the first six weeks period the median speed in typewriting was 12 words per minute (in ten minute speed tests), the highest rate was 21 words per minute, and the lowest rate was 7 words per minute. The increase in the median speed in successive six-weeks periods indicates the progress of the class.

The standard of achievement required by the state curriculum in regard to speed in typewriting is "the ability to write from 30 to 35 words per minute for ten minutes with a maximum of seven errors." It is hoped that everyone in the class will reach this standard before the close of school.

Nine out of the fifteen Shorthand I students have qualified for the 60-word a minute Speed Certificate awarded by the Gregg Company. The standard of achievement in Shorthand I is to "be able to write from dictation familiar matter at the rate of 70 words a minute, and new matter at the rate of 55 words a minute."

## **WE HAVE QUESTIONS...**

We fell in love with this article since it reflects a student view of district history captured only a few steps away from school consolidation. So why did the girls' home economics classes get canceled, but the boys' hands-on skill classes did not? What about typing at only 12 words per minute? Let's consider how the NEW TECHNOLOGY of a typewriter presented a learning curve to people. We also take the soft press computer keyboards for granted compared with the muscle required for a manual typewriter. We're also interested in the changing philosophy of how valuable a high school education is to students in preparing them for the social demands of society. The schools had begun shifting their role in forming functional community members.

*How does this article compare with stories from your elders? What is their perception of curriculum, consolidation, and history?*

## COLLECTIONS CORNER

Last year ACHS received a digitization grant from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund to preserve the Olson family collection and increase its accessibility for research purposes. We hired Nienow Cultural Consultants and ARCH3, LLC to tackle the daunting task of making nearly 5,000 documents, photos, and slips of paper relating to multiple generations of the family searchable in our database. Our staff member, Don, used our photo studio to make images of 3D items and documents larger than a flatbed scanner.

Staff, interns, and volunteers will now work through May to write metadata—pieces of information like measurements and identification of people that stick to a digital image—before uploading everything to our database, Collective Access. By the end of summer, we hope to have a portion of the collection available on our website through MNCollections, ready for your inquisitive natures!

The Olson family collection contains information from several generations of landowners in Ham Lake. A dairy farm wife, Effie Olson kept studious records of the family's holdings, including how much they spent on repairs at Ham Lake's first tavern. The land where the Olson's once lived and worked developed commercially during the past 40 years, leaving none of the original buildings. However, due to Effie's efforts, the family's story—and that of Anoka County growth—can be told.

Effie's daughters continued recording transactions and rural lifestyle when they became stewards of the collection. Their contributions added chapters to the story from the 1980s to the early 2000s. Unusual documents include details of a family member's treatment for addiction at an Anoka County facility in the late 1980s, which

presents an important aspect of history not currently present in the collections. Another unique story told by the collection is that of a gay man born in Ham Lake in the 1920s who grew up in the community. This represents one of the earliest known stories of homosexuality in our county and its preservation is incredibly important.



Fortunately for ACHS, the Olson family collection contains a considerable amount of official government documentation of various sorts. A homestead certificate [below] given to John Olson on April 20th, 1885 is among one of the more prized government documents included. This is of particular significance because this type of document is not typically still in the possession of the settlers' family members. It also helps researchers



to place and date the beginning of a family's story in Anoka County.

Although it may seem like just a quintessential photograph of air travel in the 1960s [above], for ACHS and other researchers it is so much more than that. It gives

future researchers the opportunity to track movements of Ham Lake residents across time and space. Artifacts like this one [below] complicate the history of early rural Anoka County residents and reveal global influences that a rural Minnesota family experienced.

This is just a sampling of the different types of artifacts that ACHS is actively processing for the grant, but the research potential of the Olson family collection is exponential. The Olson artifacts will contribute significantly to our efforts in making ACHS's collection a reputable research-oriented historical collection.



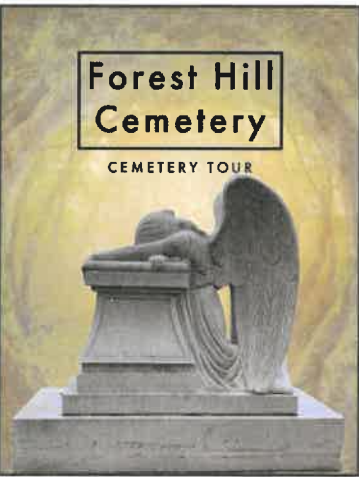
## CEMETERY TOUR

Wander Glen Cary or Forest Hill cemeteries with your tour guide to hear stories of the people buried there. Each cemetery has their share of hidden stories including an argument that split a church in two, connections to the Civil War, and even a murder suspect (only one...that we know about).

Tours begin at 11 a.m. at the cemetery.

**Glen Cary, Ham Lake:** May 6 & June 3  
**Forest Hill, Anoka:** June 10, June 24

Purchase tickets at  
[AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)



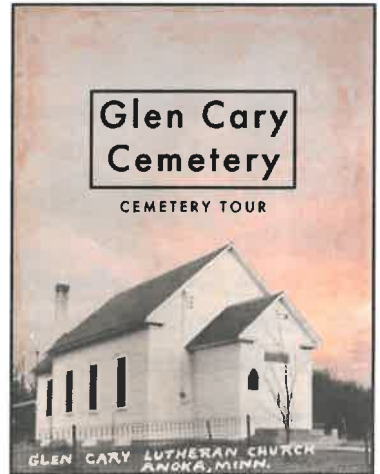
---

## ANNUAL MEETING

Did you *really* think we would let our members walk away empty-handed? Absolutely not! Here's your chance to experience a portion of the Glen Cary cemetery tour with a bonus Q&A session with author Sara Given and guide Daryl Lawrence.

Join us on **May 21 at 2 p.m.** for a short business meeting before the tour. We will install our newly elected Board members, approve the financial report, and give a "State of the Museum" report. We will have refreshments, treats, and a goodie bag for our members!

**You'll find tickets for the full tour at [AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)**





## FAQ's

### Who can be a volunteer?

ANYONE! Come yourself, or sign up with a friend.

### But seriously ...who can volunteer?

Kind people interested in learning and sharing the old stuff.

### How much of a time commitment?

Any time is a gift.  
Pick one shift or more

## Calling all History Friends!

Even though it doesn't feel like it some days, summer is just around the corner. I promise! And that means we have started to organize and prepare to bring ACHS to our favorite festivals.

## We need your help!

It takes about 75 volunteers to staff for our three biggest events of the summer. They are a chance for us to share Anoka County History with new friends, hear new stories, and be a visible resource in the community. And honestly, visibility is a big component in sustaining and growing the museum.

## What can you do?

Check your calendar and save the date for these events. Share the link with friends. These events are a great way to volunteer as a family or group. No worries, all training is provided, and we have a lot of fun along the way.

July 8: Anoka Riverfest & Yard Sale  
July 25-30: Anoka County Fair  
Aug. 18-20: Nowthen Threshing Show



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sara Given' with a smiley face drawn at the end.

Scan the QR code to view and sign up for shifts, or email me directly. Looking forward to sharing the sunshine, and history fun with you this summer!

Sara Given  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

**General Donations**

Janice Bergstrom  
Marlys Burman  
David Groth  
John & Shaaron  
Freeburg  
Tom French  
Mike Gamache  
Lotus & Richard  
Hubbard  
Karen & Don Johnson  
Bonnie Maue  
Harold Netkow  
Anthony Palumbo  
Dale Peterson  
Tom & Jan Redmann  
Jo Lynn Rohady  
Allison Schmitt  
Dawn Sieber

**New Members**

Elaine Marie Alarcon-  
Totten  
David Groth

**Adopt-An-Artifact**

Steve Florman  
Bradley J. LeTourneau  
- Blackbird  
St. Patricks Knights of  
Columbus

**ACHS Sustaining  
Members**

Ginny Bites LLC  
Troy & Karen Brown  
Scott & Michelle  
Hardesty  
Lotus & Richard  
Hubbard  
Veronica Johnson  
Bradley J. LeTourneau  
- Blackbird  
T.J. Malaskee  
Scott Nolan  
Northeast Bank  
Lynne & Terry Rickert  
Allison & Brian  
Schmitt  
Ned Storla  
Wes & Cheryl  
Volkenant

**ACHS Business  
Members**

Anoka Knights of  
Columbus Council  
2018  
Billy's Bar & Grill  
Fifth Avenue Dental  
Forward Real Estate  
Consulting LLC  
KU-MA-IN  
Nowthen Historical  
Power Association  
Nate Otto  
Peterson Shoes  
Pierce Refrigeration



**HISTORY 21 THE PODCAST!**

The first and third Friday of each month.  
Subscribe and never miss an episode.

Don't miss the latest episodes of the ACHS Podcast:

- 3.06 Coon Rapids Dam
- 3.07 Vickie Wendel
- 3.08 Cemetery Tour Behind the Scenes
- 3.09 Essential Questions with the Alliance of  
Midwest Museums

MONTHLY

**History Center Hours—SPRING and SUMMER HOURS**

Closed Sunday, Monday

Tuesday—1-7 p.m.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—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.

**Annual Meeting (hybrid via Zoom)**

See page 12 for more information

**When:** May 21, 2023 at 2 p.m.

**Where:** Glen Cary Cemetery, Ham Lake (please dress for an outside event)

**AC Genealogical Society meeting**

**When:** June 20, 6 p.m.

**Where:** ACHS Philo Room

**Cemetery Tours:**

See page 12 for more information

**Tickets:** \$18, AnokaCountyHistory.org or by calling 763-421-0600

Glen Cary Cemetery Tour

**When:** May 6 & June 3, 11 a.m.

Forest Hill Cemetery Tour

**When:** June 10 & June 24, 11 a.m.



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



Anoka County  
Historical Society



AnokaCoHistory



Anoka County  
Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600  
[AnokaCountyHistory.org](http://AnokaCountyHistory.org)

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ANOKA, MINN.  
PERMIT No. 198

-----  
City of Spring Lake Park  
1301 81st Ave NE  
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432-2188  
-----

554322188 0033

