

HISTORY 21



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AnokaCountyHistory.org

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

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Table of Contents:

- 3 - Letters from the ACHS President and Director
- 4 - A Spring of History Programs
- 7 - Cemetery Tours Return Again
- 8 - Collections Corner: The Anoka Meteorite
- 10 - Polish Genealogical Society
- 11 - New Management Software
- 12 - Facility Updates
- 14 - Thank you to our supporters
- 15 - Upcoming Events

Front Cover: Weber Farm in Centerville during winter, ca. 1930's-1950's.

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From the President



As we begin this brand-new year, the Anoka County Historical Society is filled with gratitude for your steady support and commitment to preserving our rich heritage in Anoka County. The pages of history turn, and with your help, we continue to write the story of our community for future generations.

In 2023, we achieved remarkable milestones, talked to many people from all areas of Anoka County, but our journey is far from over. We are excited to share our plans for the upcoming year and invite you to be an integral

part of shaping the story of Anoka County's past, present, and future.

To sustain our efforts and expand our impact, we are continuing a vital fundraising effort. Your generous contributions will directly fund new exhibits, educational programs, and preservation initiatives that will further bring more stories of our county's history. As a member of our community, your support is instrumental in ensuring that ACHS continues to be a beacon of cultural tradition.

Whether you are a long-standing supporter or a new member, your participation in this campaign is crucial. Let's come together and make 2024 a year that resonates with the echoes of our shared history. Visit our website or contact us directly to contribute to this great cause. Together, let's make history live on.

Thank you for being the pillars of the ACHS legacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Oxley".

Richard Oxley, ACHS President

From the Director

Other nonprofits in Anoka County will likely agree with me that the work and mission of our organizations themselves is fulfilling, but the volunteers and staff we share our lives with take the cake. We know the storylines of pet antics, the drama of siblings or extended families, or who dropped the jar of spaghetti sauce last week (they will remain nameless!). This closeness brings a richness to our work rarely seen in corporate America or many other jobs.

All that positive to say...it comes with sadness and frequent goodbyes when a volunteer (or even a staff member) can't "play with us" at the museum due to health reasons or a death. We feel the void hard, as it becomes so obvious when the jokes they told, the project they worked on, or the treats they left aren't there anymore. I simply want to say thank you to our humans—past, present, and future. Please know you make a difference in many ways.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Ebnet-Desens".

Rebecca Ebnet-Desens,
Executive Director

A SPRING OF HISTORY PROGRAMS

Winter programs return to beat the chilly doldrums! In order for you to make the most of them, we have prepared a recap of them. All programs will have a hybrid option. You'll find the links on our website under "calendar" or in your email if you have subscribed to updates. Life gets busy, so if you miss a program, fear not—we're recording them. Keep an eye on our podcast feed or posting in the Vault (\$5 per month subscription fee on our website).

Sat
13
JAN

Over 120 years ago, the first male occupants arrived at the newly constructed State

Asylum for the Insane following a battle for the Anoka location. It's history looms large in local lore and this program promises to tease fact from fiction. Come see blueprints of the innovative cottage system for institutional care, hear about the farm on-site, and discuss the site's relationship with the city.

Anoka State Hospital

1p.m. at ACHS
ZOOM available



ONE HUNDRED
TRANSFERRED.

The Patients For The New
Asylum Arrived From St.
Peter, Wednesday.

**Rum Runners &
Temperance Tantrums**
6 p.m. at Forgotten Star Brewery

Wed
24
JAN

ACHS staff is on the road again for a program entitled, *Rum Runners & Temperance Tantrums!* Join our Collections Manager, Kassandra, at Forgotten Star Brewery in Fridley to learn about the champions of prohibition and find out why they carried umbrellas, even on sunny days. The battle over booze in Anoka County started before prohibition was at the forefront of the nation's mind, which makes for some pretty interesting stories. Discover a couple of inventive hiding places for boozy contraband around the county and how law enforcement navigated this divisive period in history.

Love & Valentine's Day in Anoka

1 p.m. ACHS
ZOOM available

Sat
10
FEB



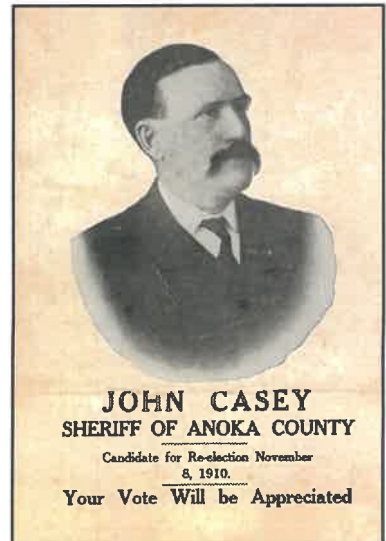
Ever wonder what would happen if you received a “vinegar valentine” in the mail? Don’t Google the answer, come to this program and hear it the old fashioned way! We’ll also talk about the origins of the holiday, see some valentines cards in the ACHS collection, and decide where the best local stores are for your gifting needs...in 1903. Bonus points if you stick around for the lesson on leap year proposal preparation (even though the ladies had liberties to pop the question, rules still abounded!)

Sat
09
MAR

Keepers of the County

1p.m. ACHS
ZOOM available

Anoka county has had its share of murders, robberies, car chases, and heinous crimes of every sort but those dark stories don’t give the full picture of the sheriff’s department. Escaped alligators, crooked politicians, moonshiners, and stolen statues of naked men have also occupied the deputies time. Come hear how the office developed in 1857 and grew to the modern day — not to mention some tall tales behind the badge.



Sat
23
MAR

Quilt Facts and FABRIC-ation

2 p.m.
Northtown Library, Blaine

From the practicality of using scraps to the privilege of purchasing fabric specifically to create a piece of art, quilts have held a starring role in colder climates. Part lecture, part quiz show, this program will tell stories like the courting quilt, which..... Visit with other quilts in the ACHS collection as well as some notable ones around the country. Attendees will have the opportunity to adopt these treasures after the program ends to raise funds for their preservation.



Logging in Anoka County

1p.m. ACHS
ZOOM available

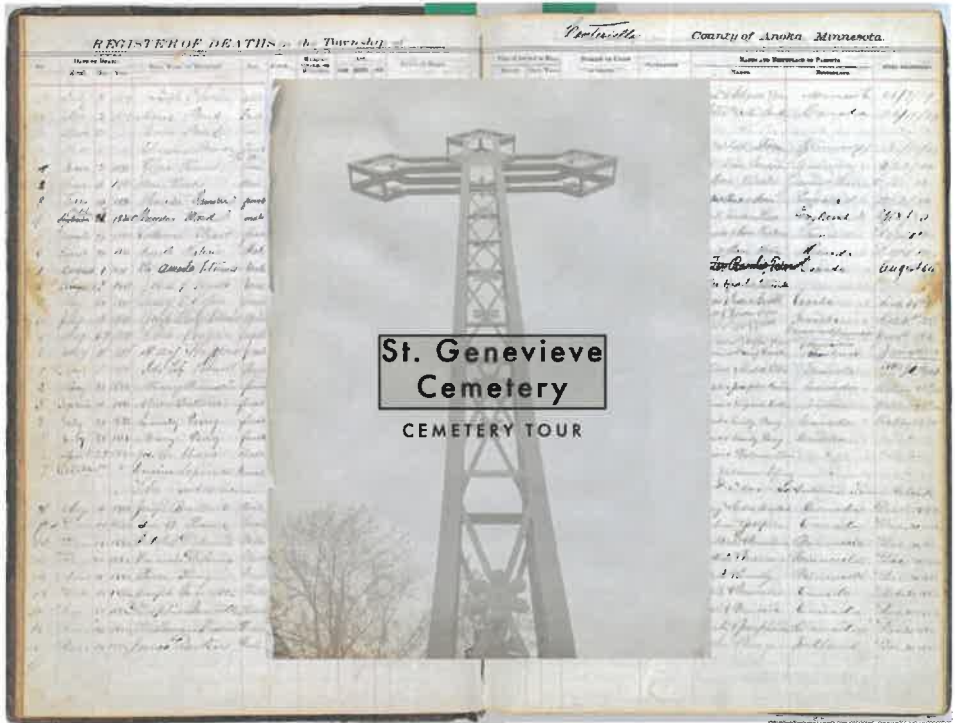
Thu
25
APR

Sawmills, dams, and pine trees, oh my! Join us for our kid-friendly program about the logging industry in Anoka County. We will learn about the county's most plentiful resource and what a day in the life of a logger looked



like. Engage your senses with hands-on collections items that would have been used by the loggers in camp after a long day at work. Find out who these loggers were and where they went once the trees around Anoka were depleted from a first-hand account by George Atwood. It is no surprise that these logging men were seen as the manliest of men because of the labor intensive work they did.

Although their lifestyle was glorified, the jobs they worked were sometimes less than ideal. Learn about the various jobs that loggers could be assigned to and see if you could hack it as a "swamper" in a logging camp along the Rum River in the 1890s.



Cemetery Tours Headed to Centerville

A large iron cross watches over the interred family and friends in Centerville's St. Genevieve's Cemetery. Eugene Peltier constructed the cross in his blacksmith shop on Main St in Centerville and donated it to the cemetery in June 1960. A plaque at the base of the cross notes his contribution, but his last name and relatives can be found on several graves surrounding it, including Oliver Peltier. Born in 1825, Oliver served as chair of Centerville's Town supervisors and farmed in the area for several years. We are researching and constructing the tour, which means diving into all the Centerville resources in the collection. We found Oliver in the town's oversized Death Ledger [above] on Sept 14, 1905, having died at the age of 81 from paralysis. But we also found him in the Town Meeting minutes in 1866, where he oversaw the bids to build a bridge "across the Rice Creek on the Superior Stage Road near the farm of Peter Paul" and Michel Dupree.

Tours will be held in June (date to be announced soon!).

If you have any stories of family who now reside in this cemetery, we would love to hear them and perhaps add them to the tour.

COLLECTIONS CORNER THE ANOKA METEORITE

On October 5, 1935, Daniel Rankin of Burns saw a meteor streak across the sky. While watching it, the meteor broke into numerous pieces, one landing in a field about 450 feet from his house. He went to look for it and found the ground was smoking where it landed. The meteorite measured about 4 x 2.5 x 2 inches and looked like a flint. The *Anoka County Union*



Violet Smith (left) and her sister Elsie with alleged Meteorite

displayed it for a while in their office. The Meteoritical Society catalog does not list this meteorite, which probably means the scientific community never studied it. Its current location is unknown.

The next account ACHS has in our records of a meteorite in the county is a group of three photographs taken in the front yard of the Smith home on Freemont St. in Anoka. One of the photographs is dated June 27, 1938, and the other two appear to be from the same period. Each photo shows a large rock the Smiths were told was a meteorite. The portion of the rock visible above ground is about 4 feet x 1.5 feet. The amount of the rock below ground remains unknown. The location of the Smith house is now the Estates at Twin Rivers. Our records do not indicate what happened to this possible meteorite.

In 1961, Joe Field was excavating for a cesspool on his farm about four miles northeast of the City of Anoka (then Grow Township, now the City of Andover) when he discovered a metallic object weighing nearly 2.5 pounds. The Fields took it to the office of the *Anoka County Union*. The editor believed it may be a meteorite and suggested they take it to the University of Minnesota for testing. The U of M determined it consisted of iron, nickel, and cobalt, confirming it was a meteorite. In 1963, the Fields sold the meteorite to Glenn Huss from the American Meteorite Laboratory in Denver, where slices of it were made available to others. At this time, it was named the Anoka Meteorite—but this isn't the end of the story.

In 1983, Al Stegora used a backhoe in his backyard in Champlin to dig for a new sewer connection. As he scooped up the sand, he unknowingly scooped up a foot-long rock and added it to the pile of excavated sand. A year later, as he was finishing this project in his yard, he noticed this rock that weighed a surprising 123 pounds. It sat by his door for five years; then, he moved it into his garage, where it sat for another seven years. Finally, a friend convinced him to contact the University of Minnesota to find out definitively what the rock was. They had Stegora cut a corner off and send it to them, and they quickly determined it to be a meteorite. The University sent the piece to a meteorite expert at the University of California, where it was decided it was an exact match to the Anoka Meteorite found by Joe Field on the other side of the Mississippi

River. This could only occur if *both* meteorites came from the same meteoroid that broke into several pieces before they crashed into the ground. Since the Anoka meteorite was found first, they are called them Anoka Meteorite I and Anoka Meteorite II. Stegora sold his meteorite to a consortium of institutions: Field Museum of Chicago, Smithsonian Museum, Harvard University, British Museum in England, and UCLA. Stegora required as part of the sale that the University of Minnesota get a piece at no cost and that another piece went to him and his family. But this isn't the end of the story.

The Illinois State Museum excavated Native American mounds near Havana, Illinois, about 450 miles south of Anoka, in 1945. The Hopewell culture made the mounds about 2,000 years ago. Among other excavated items were 1,000 shell and pearl beads and 22 iron beads. As the Hopewell culture had no metallurgy, it was determined that the iron source in the beads was a meteorite. Recent detailed scientific analysis of the beads, including composition and crystalline structure, established that the Anoka Meteorite was the source of the iron for these beads. No marks on the two Anoka meteorites indicated either was the immediate source. Scientific studies suggest the original mass of the Anoka Meteorite before it broke up was more than 8,800 pounds, and fragments were strewn across the landscape--meaning more pieces could

have been found. The Hopewell culture was interested in the foreign and exotic they could obtain through trade. Examples are fossilized shark teeth from the Gulf Coast and grizzly bear teeth from the Yellowstone Park area. It is safe to assume a fragment of the Anoka meteorite found 2,000 years ago was traded to the Hopewells, who made it into beads. The Mississippi and Illinois Rivers probably facilitated trade between Native Americans in the Anoka area and the Hopewells of Illinois. Now, THIS is the end of the story – at least for now.



Above: Slide of the Anoka II Meteorite in the University of MN Collection.

Below: Hopewell beads on a slice of the Anoka Meteorite. Nature Journal, May 15, 2017

GLOSSARY

Meteoroid: an object from space

Meteor: A meteoroid passing through the Earth's atmosphere and burning up.
Also known as a shooting star.

Meteorite: A meteor that survives burning up in the atmosphere and crashes to Earth.



pgsmn.org/

Polish Genealogical Society of MN

By Rosanne Betly

My interest in genealogy goes back to at least the 1980s, and I promised myself I would research my family tree back to the 1600s when I retired—even if it meant traveling from church to church and archive to archive in Poland. I couldn't wait that long, so I had a lengthy conversation with my mother about everything she knew about her family and growing up in Columbia Heights. This conversation serendipitously happened on August 10, 1991, on the 100th anniversary of my grandfather's birth.

I proceeded to spend many hours at the Minnesota Historical Society but soon hit a brick wall. Any information about my ancestors before my great-grandparents was only available in Poland. Apparently, I would have to wait until retirement, after all. Then, in 2014, I received an email from a cousin whose daughter shared my interest in genealogy but had gone beyond me in her study because of tools on the Internet—something that barely existed in 1991. She had located records in Poland, but they remained undigitized. Since I conveniently lived in Kyiv, Ukraine, right next door to Poland, I started visiting the archives every chance I could—there was hope yet!

I'm one of about 236,000 Minnesotans who can claim Polish ethnicity in part or whole. We can find support at the Polish Genealogical Society of Minnesota, which was officially established in January 1993 as a branch of the Minnesota Genealogical Society. The mission is "to share genealogical, biographical, and historical information" about all things Polish, including the Polish culture in Poland and the Polish Diaspora in America. There are currently more than 200 members. The society attends events where people of Polish descent congregate and had booths at events in the Twin Cities area, Bowlus, Winona, Morrison County, and Pine Creek, WI, in 2023. Members receive a newsletter four times per year. Past issues are archived on their website and offer a wealth of information on many aspects of Poland and Polish culture.

The PGSMN holds six program meetings annually, which are open to non-members and available on their website. The group invites individuals new to genealogy and those farther along on their journeys to these hybrid events. The programs include advice on doing research, noteworthy events in Polish history, or sharing an individual's joy in visiting the place where their grandparents were born and finding long-lost cousins. The society provides other tools to its members to assist them in searching for their ancestors, including the Poland to Minnesota Project, vital statistic indexes for churches in the Archdiocese of St. Paul churches from the late 1800s through approximately 1940, the Hoffman Research Library in Mendota Heights, or Missing Branches that connects individuals researching the same family or village.

Polish genealogy feels challenging, but this society is here to help!



A New Management Software in Town

One of the essential tools to run ACHS effectively is our data management software. We use this system to track donations, memberships, artifact donors, and volunteers, as well as send emails, make audit reports, operate the gift shop, and process credit cards. In 2017, we switched from desktop-based Past Perfect to cloud-based E-tapestry. While this move suited us at the time, over the ensuing years, the cost has risen for this service and functionality has stalled. We decided to move to a new product called NEON and began the implementation process in December. So far, the training and support from NEON have been excellent and we're excited to launch our new system in January. Our goals for the switch include using a software that feels more intuitive, will allow for better time tracking and event management, as well as lowering the cost to ACHS — thus spending your donated dollars more wisely.



Tony Dinner Recap



ACHS raised \$3,000 in operating funds thanks to “Cooking with Tony” participants on November 17! This event featured the teaching talents of former County Attorney Tony Palumbo, who created a menu of delectable foods for everyone to eat and help prepare under his direction. The group of 13 began by assembling their appetizers of prosciutto-wrapped asparagus, homemade bread, and baked crab dip, then chopping and tossing a salad niçoise. The guests fell into conversation when Tony regained control of the kitchen and prepared plates of Steak Diane—complete with flaming cognac. The meal came to a

(cough) fruitful conclusion with strawberries tossed with balsamic vinegar. Spoiler alert: the dish tastes remarkably like chocolate! Massive shoutout to the Anoka Masons who allowed ACHS to use their beautiful kitchen, Natalie Hass Steffen for her beautiful table settings and beverage selections, Jane and Wayne LaMusga for their exemplary dishwashing skills, and donation of the rental fee.



Facility update

A significant portion of our budget each year is allocated to preserving the integrity of our building. Like any home, minor repairs add up over time, and those big ones? They hit hard. Fortunately, we haven't had issues with the envelope elements, though we're starting to budget for a replacement rubber roof.

In 2023, we continued to repair the boilers, including a new pump, which is currently on order. We hosted a plumber to repair the hot water heater (washing dishes is so much nicer!) and change the tank on the humidification system. Our new dataloggers (thanks Steve Florman!) now track the temperature and humidity throughout the museum and send notifications when the readings move out of a safe range. The front door now swings with a free will after

some tinkering with the adjuster knob at the top and the lights out front illuminate our way (thanks, Anoka!)

Still on the to-do list for 2024 is professionally cleaning and sealing the chimney in the Philo Room after a rather disgusting revelation that something had died up there.

Connecting with others

ACHS took advantage of some opportunities recently that connected us to a variety of organizations and served several outreach goals:

- The New Jersey Historical Commission invited ACHS to sit on a review panel for their Inclusive History Grant program. The panel selected recipients for funds to support work in the state to focus attention on untold stories or to discover new primary resources.
- The ACHS board has committed to meeting each quarter at a historical location in the county or with an historic group. In November, the BOD selected Forgotten Star Brewery and received a tour of the facility, including a chance to sample beer directly out of the fermenting tank.
- Sometimes the fun comes to us — we hosted the Coon Rapids Historical Commission for a collections tour followed by a Q&A about local history. We are stronger together working toward a common goal of preserving stories.
- If you're part of the Metro North Chamber, you might have spotted our Oldest Pickle banner at the Working With Women table at their November meeting! Meeting local business owners helps ACHS gain sponsors, memberships, and advertisers. (catch the feature and meet the pickle on North Metro TV also!)



The year's final months are perfect for wrapping up projects, checking in with friends, and celebrating our hard work over the past 365 days* (prorated based on when the party occurred.) That means it's party time at ACHS!



In November, all the Ghost Tour Guides gathered in the Philolectian room to decompress from an intense month of tours. There are not enough words to thank them for their efforts in leading our biggest fundraiser of the year. But there is always food (choose your favorite Panera order) and a secret surprise exclusive just for them. This year, the surprise was a branded ACHS Ghost fanny pack. Perfect for a light or phone when leading 20 people around the streets of Anoka for a bit of History and mystery.

In December, we hosted a Members and Volunteers Only Party. Whenever volunteers come to the museum or an event, they put on their “working” hat, concentrating on deciphering impossible handwriting or acting as hosts to welcome new visitors. You also only cross paths with the people on “your day.” Because of that, this day was a chance to relax and get to know people in a new way. We broke out a Minnesota puzzle, had treats, played name games, and enjoyed each others' company. On the way out, there were treat bags for all.



We had so much fun we don't want to wait another year to do it again! Look for more Member and Volunteer Only events in 2024.

Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

General Donations

Sandra L. Ackerman
 Janice Anderson
 Jim & Molly Bauer
 Brian S. Boldt
 Barb & Gene Case
 Shirley Christenson
 Mike & Mary Clark
 Connexus Energy
 Julie Engen
 Daughters of the American
 Revolution Anoka Chapter
 Mary F. Fitzpatrick
 Steve & Lynn Florman
 Mike R. Gamache
 Alice Ganter
 Xin Gao
 Roger Giroux
 Gloria Given
 Alyson Gulette
 Karen Hand
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 Richard Helm
 Audra Hilse
 John Heinrich
 Lotus & Richard Hubbard
 Laura Irwin-Schack
 Julie Jeppson
 Melvin L Larson Jr.
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 Daryl Lawrence
 Donna H. Levy
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 Joe May
 Sandra McFarland
 Valerie McNamara

Metropolitan Library
 Genevieve Meyer
 Janet M. Meyer
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 James Myers
 Alan E. Nedohon
 Steve Nelson
 Scott Nolan
 Phil & Laurie Olmon
 Gina Overacker
 Dorothy Peterson
 Lynne & Terry Rickert
 Skip/Robert Rither
 Chad Roberts
 Linda Jean Rodgers
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 Dawn Sieber
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 Tracie Stone
 Kent & Cathy Tabako
 Timothy Talbot
 Arlene Tesch
 Barb Thurston & Joey
 Norton
 Dennis Tkach
 Barbara Uvin
 Catherine Vesley
 Wesley & Cheryl
 Volkenant
 Bart & Ellen Ward
 Mark Weber
 Ed Wehling
 Marvin & Sally West
 Rita Warpeha

New Members

Philip Harter
 Keri Holloway
 Jon Pratt
 Greg Lundeen
 Mike & Mary Newberger

Adopt-An-Artifact

Mary Jablonski
 Laura Palmer
 Yolanda Fugelso
 Orville Lindquist

ACHS Sustaining Members

Benedictine Living
 Community Anoka
 Troy & Karen Brown
 Barb & Gene Case
 Lotus & Richard Hubbard
 Veronica Johnson
 Bradley J. LeTourneau
 -Blackbird
 Scott Nolan
 Northeast Bank
 Matthew & Shelly Pahl
 Lynne & Terry Rickert
 Robert Rither
 Allison & Brian Schmitt
 Robert & Cynthia Taft
 Rita Warpeha
 Peter Wojciechowski

ACHS Business Members

Bee Memorable
 Fifth Avenue Dental
 KU-MA-IN
 Nowthen Historical Power
 Association
 Peterson Shoes

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



Anoka County
 Historical Society



AnokaCoHistory

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.

Solving Genealogical Mysteries: Case Studies

Get ready to become a genealogy detective alongside professional genealogist Mica L. Anders in the AC Library's interactive workshop. Throughout this session, you'll learn and practice research strategies to crack these captivating cases.

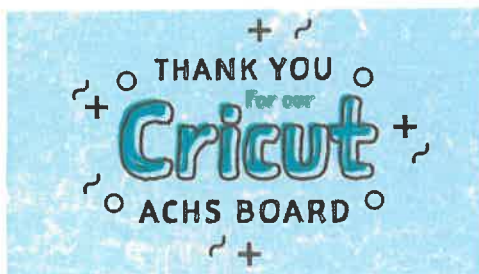
An Anoka County Library Event.

When: 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan 25

Where: Centennial Library, Circle Pines

Calling all invested humans!

The ACHS Board of Directors invites you to look around your neighborhood, social circle, and clubs for the next greatest person to grace our election ballot. Serving on the BOD means attending one business meeting per month plus a few hours in between to use your skills and expertise to advance the mission of ACHS. We know you and your friends love history; that's a given, but what about fundraising, event planning, facility management, or financial investing? Every day, ACHS uses business skills to remain successful in addition to our love of everything in the past. If you, or someone you know, is curious about serving in a leadership role, let us know! You could visit during a meeting, chat with a current board member, or join a committee to get a taste of the role.



A giant **THANK YOU** to members of the ACHS Board who pitched in to help purchase the museum purchase its very own Cricut machine! We are drooling over the amazing things we can use it for around the museum—including leveling up the exhibit labeling in the Exhibit Hall. There is video proof of staff

opening our present, complete with squealing, and a discussion on the merits of tearing versus saving wrapping paper (three guesses which opinion belongs to whom!)

