

HISTORY 21



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Front Cover: Jessie (White) Houk carrying a deer and holding a rifle in Columbus Township, no date. Object ID: 2017.1764.008



From the President

As an Anoka Ghost Tour guide, I've met the most interesting people from all over the county and visitors from other states. Every tour I give, I hear someone say, "I didn't know that," and it tells me we've struck a chord. We're on the right track. We've engaged them and given them a new perspective on a person, place, or thing in Anoka. It's this curiosity that gives life-long learners the permission to say, "I want to know more." Before

they know it, the tour customer asks more questions, allowing us to help them fall in love with Anoka County's history. Who lived there? How did they live? What did they do for their community? Sometimes a customer will tell their own stories at a tour location. I make sure they say it loud enough for everyone to hear. The more the tour can be about them and their experience, the more connection we have. It also lets us tell them where to get more information. The answer is sometimes no further than *anokacountyhistory.org*. On our website, you'd find our award-winning podcast, exciting video, and fantastic articles that not only pique a curiosity but help to satisfy a longing interest. ACHS has excellent programs and displays that help tell compelling stories of Anoka County. To help gather and preserve these stories, I encourage you to donate and become a member of ACHS. Your contribution will provide programs for schools, displays, and delivery of history with new technologies.

Richard Oxley, ACHS President

From the Director

As the weather changes seasons outside, we also change seasons as a staff of ACHS. With the Ghost Tours behind us, we can turn our attention to the emails we left to back up, the filing and cluttered desks needing attention, and planning. Our winter season will consist of programs and outreach, strategic planning with our Board of Directors, and reinventing the Cemetery Tours for a brand-new fundraiser. As a member, you know it takes a community to run a nonprofit and make continually meeting our mission a successful endeavor. Please spread the word to family and friends about why you're a member, why serving as a volunteer is vital to you, and why contributing to governance discussions is critical for the health of ACHS. We appreciate you and look forward to what the next season has in store for us.



Rebecca Ebnet-Desens, Executive Director

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

Banfill: The Historic Homecoming



By Rebecca Ebnet-Desens and Rich Oxley

“Reunion” often refers to family members gathering to reminisce and catch up. This time, four siblings gathered to reunite with a place and the latent memories it still holds in its walls.

“I think I made the observation immediately walking in that somehow this whole house has shrunk because in my mind it was the size of the grand hotel in Mackinac, Michigan,” said Neil Robinson. “It’s still quite large structurally, but the rooms when you’re a 10-year-old kid walking around and looking at things that are 100 years old back then and fast forward now to being over 70, and I think how much has changed.”

As it’s known on the National Register of Historic Places, the Banfill-Locke House is a Greek Revival-style home built in 1847 by John Banfill in the area once called Manomin (present-day Fridley). It served mainly as a tavern and inn

Above: Relatives of the Locke family paid a special visit to their old stomping grounds on September 27. Members of the Fridley Historical Society, ACHS, and the City of Fridley joined them to hear memorable stories of the past. Pictured here are: Dorothy Gargaro (FHS), Becky Mandaville, Neil Robinson, Elizabeth Robinson Owens, Laura Lere, and Paul Robinson.



John Banfill. He would serve in the first Minnesota State Senate in 1848. (Object ID P2075.5.11)

for loggers and fur traders. In 1876 William F. Brown married Laura M. Locke and purchased the property. The couple maintained a dairy herd and lived in the house while Brown worked as postmaster until he died in 1887. Laura and the children lived in the house until 1912 when she sold it to her brother, Cassius M. Locke. Locke and his wife, Roberta Pratt Locke, raised registered Jersey dairy cattle on the farm and used it as a summer home. They made a few additions to the house, including front and rear porches, kitchen and bathroom electrical service, a pump, a water closet, and a sewage disposal system. Locke died in 1947, and Roberta in 1959.

“The interior of the building itself has been remodeled, which makes a lot of sense,” said Robinson. “But my memories are still pretty strong, and by walking around, they became enhanced. I remember in what we would call the parlor, where there was a pump organ and a roll-top desk, this eagle that had been mistakenly shot by Cassius

Locke—he had stuffed in a very menacing and imposing posture of wings out. That used to scare the crap out of me, and it was apparently it was a bald eagle but immature, so it did not have the noble white head. It was just black and intimidating.”

While the eagle proved a shared, though somewhat disturbing, memory for the siblings, it was certainly not the only one.

“I also remember going into the front room on the lower level and being somewhat intimidated by large furniture, huge pump organ, a piano, and then this gigantic black eagle that was stuffed and sitting on one of the tables,” said Becky Mandaville. “But I also remember in some of the cupboards looking in there, and there’d be all these empty vials. And my mother said, oh well, Cassius, who



(Above) The Banfill Tavern and Locke House in 1977. (Object ID 3000.3.53)

owned the home, his brother was a veterinarian, and I'm sure he used it also because cash raised cattle on a property near here and did the veterinary work for them."

The children's explorations weren't limited to the house, however.

"Amazingly enough, I didn't do much exploring [near the creek]," said Paul Robinson. "I was more fascinated with the large—I guess they called it a

carriage building—but it was a barn that was capable of the horses coming through, and they could unhook from the carriage and take the horses back out and put them in the barn. At any rate, that was a fascinating thing to me, and they also had an upstairs in the barn. That was an amazing thing. We could look out over the grounds, but I never went down to the creek,"

The family has donated some photos and paper documents to the City of Fridley, which will enhance the knowledge of the Banfill-Locke property for future researchers.

"What I loved was the accumulative experiences with my siblings and remembering together, the five of us kind of remembered," said Elizabeth Robinson Owens. "[We said] oh yes, that's where the eagle was, and that's where the pump organ was because I played that when I was a kid visiting as well, and I am very impressed. I think the property is very well-maintained—love those softwood floors. So that was just fun, was recreating kind of our own memories."



A new exhibit in Centerville

The Veterans roll call from the Civil War, WWI, and WWII



Leonard and Mary Weber with their young son, Donald, in the early 1930s. (Object ID 2016.1726.076)

The United States has used systems of conscription, or what we know today as the Selective Service System, since the Revolutionary War era.

Conscription was used in World War I and II with the draft mechanism in both instances being dissolved at the end of hostilities. Prior to U.S. entry into World War II in 1940, the government enacted the first peacetime draft in our nation's history to fill wartime needs rapidly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

**View the exhibit at
Centerville City Hall
through the end of the year**

CENTERVILLE ROLL CALL

This Veterans Day, remember folks like Gedeon Dupre aka Jed, who served as a Private 1st Class, in Company D, Minnesota 127th Machine Gun Battalion, 34th Division having enlisted on 15 July 1917.



You'll also meet August C. Lehmann, who served in WWI as a Private, Company A, 339th Machine Gun Battalion.



With the Colors will be on display so you can look up family members, including Edward Lichtscheidl, who served in WWI and is buried in Fort Snelling National Cemetery.



Name	Rank	Company	Dates of Service
Gedeon Dupre	Private 1st Class	Company D	Minnesota 127th Machine Gun Battalion
August C. Lehmann	Private	Company A	339th Machine Gun Battalion
Edward Lichtscheidl			

A copy of the 1890 Veterans census will be on display at the City Hall in this exhibit.

COLLECTIONS CORNER: SAM HERMANSTORFER LETTERS



The most valuable pieces in the collection are the thoughts and experiences of county residents. When researching the Vietnam War, people can easily find dates and locations, but the feelings and stories of soldiers at the moment are rare. In 2007, Sam Hermanstorfer donated the letters he wrote to his family during his time in Vietnam. He gives a frank look at his time there in these letters and an oral history he gave a few years prior. We've reprinted a few excerpts of the letters here, and on December 2 will share his oral history on the ACHS Podcast.

Excerpts from the Sam Hermanstorfer Letters: 24 MAR. 69

Dear folks:

I don't have anything much to say, I finished my processing today & recieved [sic] all my back pay.

I'm sending 200.00 right away which is $\frac{3}{4}$ of my pay for feb. & mar. The rest Ill keep to go on until I get to my unit. I'm sending \$180.00 per month home, leaving me with approx. 50.00. This is figuring the allotments etc. already withdrawn. I finally managed to purchase a p[ai]r of cheap sunglasses. You can send some Kool aid as the water is warm & rotten (But its wet & I drink plenty) ...

I have to go to a w[ee]k of jungle training from here so will write more later. I wrote Carol (of course) must close as am pretty tired from processing today
Love Sam -

Sun. 30 MAR. 69.

Dear Mom Dad & Mark:

Well we can sure tell were in NAM, last night we were up late again filling sandbags. We were up early this AM again & went to classes all damed day out in the hot sun. Then we find out that we have to pull guard duty tonight. The barracks I sleep in has 2nd relief, (10 to 2) which means no sleep tonight. We had to prepare for a I G. who didnt bother to finish today, so hes coming back in two days. We really have some dumb rules here, like if were going by a town, & they shoot at us, we aren't allowed to shoot back; we have to call in to our base & tell them we are receiving fire from this town, request permission to shoot back, they in turn will go through our chain of command to the South Vietnamese army & ask permission from their top men. If they say to go ahead, then choppers come in & tell the people that we are going to open up. This all takes 6 minutes to be confirmed meanwhile we may be getting our heads shot off. Charlie is the closest thing to a tunnel rat there ever was...

Tues Apr 8 69

Dear Mom Dad Mark:

I just came back from the PX. It sure isn't like the states. At least in the states you can buy what you need, here you cant! It makes me mad that I couldn't even by a ink pen. How did you do with getting together with Carol?

Hope you don't really think im infantry [sic], because Id be hurtin if I was. I got another letter today from Carol. She misses me as much as I miss her.

I purchased a tape recorder & I bought a couple of tapes. The recorder is a Sony 4 track TC 230 the machine costs \$134.00. I bought 2 tapes already recorded today for \$5.00 I bought the recorder a week or so ago.

I'm still living out of my bags. Im living in a tent big enough for 8 bunks. We have a small pump to pump the water into our shower. Our grease rack is a platform made of 4 x 6's. Our 3 shops one for parts etc is a tent & the other 2 are tents for our use to work on a vehicle out of the sun. I cant buy very many things as I have a Ration card that limits my buying. I only worked half a day on easter Sun. & had afternoon off. We went back to work at 7 PM to check the vehicles as they came in for the night. ...

I can tell you right now that I wont extend to get out early. I don't care for this place, as you work everyday & every 3 nights I have guard duty. We only have to work an Hour & a half & then we can sleep but Its monotonous. Im sending my machine home at the end of the month. I have to close for now as I want to write Cindy & Carol.

We don't have clean sheets either.

Must close love Sam.

P.S. Send an Ink pen or 2

11 APR. 69

Dear folks:

... Im working on trucks & jeeps now, & I work every day. There is no weekends. I start work at 7 am & quit for lunch around 11:30 or later. For lunch. I go back by 1 PM & work until 4:30 or 5 then go to supper if I feel like it, but have mostly been eating heated C rations I don't care for the mess hall too well. I have a hard time trying to go to PX as is not within close vicinity. Have to try & get ride or drive myself. But cant get vehicle to easily.

We really get dirtier than hell laying on the ground & sweating up a storm working on vehicles. I have to go to work every night Im not on bunker guard to inspect vehicles when they come in.

We start at 6 PM & are usually through by 7 or so. Then we can do as we please.

We have momason or baybyson to do our laundry. They also clean our tents & make our beds & polish boats. The laundry is separate. But the rest is so much a month.

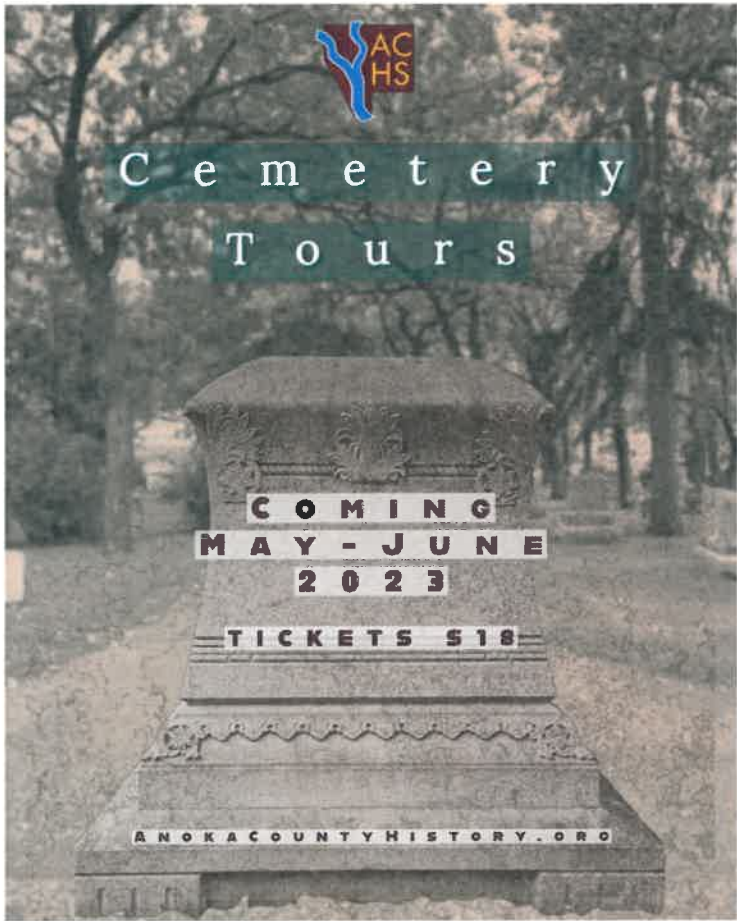
I don't know what else there is to tell you. Oh I get off at 3 PM whenever I have to go on guard, & the day after I have guard, I have the afternoon off.

I'm sending you one of my laundry bills from momason. I have not received all my clothing yet like a pauncho & pauncho liner which is used for a sheet so can have one washed. ...

That's all

Love Sam.

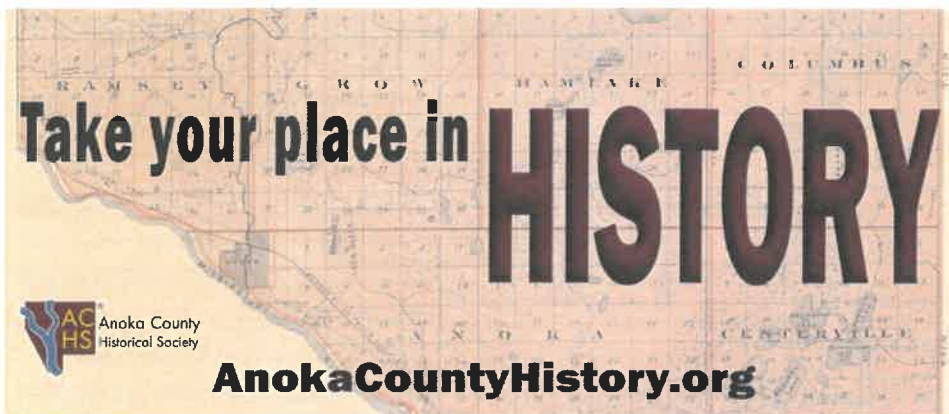




Cemetery Tours are Back!

In May and June ACHS is visiting the resting places and telling the stories of people in Anoka County. You'll also hear about funeral traditions and what the tombstone markings mean.

Choose to go on the regular tour (\$18) or select a Deluxe Ticket (\$28) and enjoy a boxed lunch in the cemetery with your guide for a special Q&A session. Who knows? We might even have a couple special guests up our sleeve by the time spring rolls around.



Look for our new billboard with Discover Anoka on Hwy 169!



The Adopt-An-Artifact program helps the Anoka County Historical Society cover ongoing costs associated with maintaining our artifact collections beyond furnishing that first box or folder.

While the collections budget provides basic supplies for processing new items donated into our care, the previous items need ongoing attention. Staff conduct special “check-ups” on artifacts, produce periodic condition reports, photograph the items, and maintain the database. Even simply sitting on a shelf requires electric and gas payments to maintain a healthy environment for the artifacts.

We want to give the artifacts of Anoka County the preservation they need—and deserve. Maintaining our server, adding special software to keep digital files healthy, and cleaning the physical home of our collections are also essential parts of our work, which require staff time.

Adopt an artifact in the ACHS collection for a year and help us professionally maintain the Anoka County story to the best museum standards!

Adoption Level	
Parent	\$100
Caretaker	\$150
Forebearer	\$250



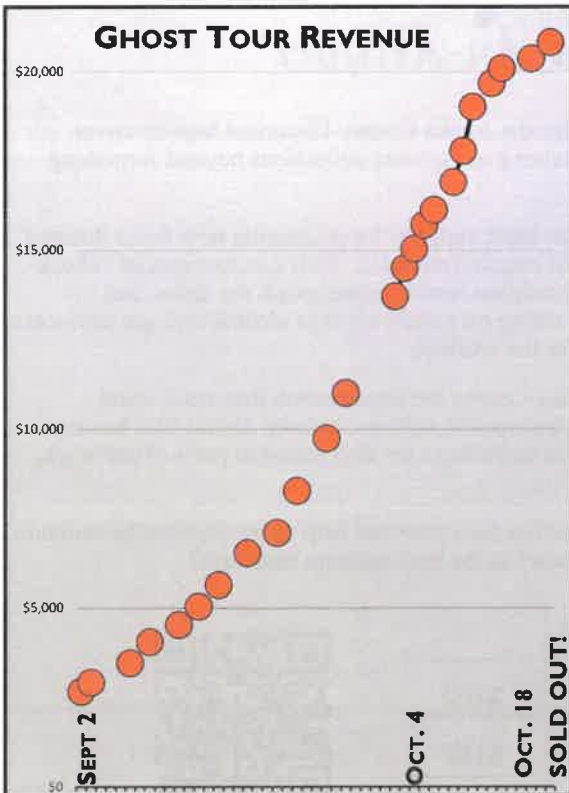


GHOST TOURS - VOLUNTEER WORLD

Sara Given, ACHS Volunteer Coordinator

This year marked the 18th Annual Ghosts of Anoka Tours, and becoming an official adult didn't slow us down. The tours are a staple of Halloween fun in Anoka, and a must-do experience for people visiting from around the county, the state, and even the country and world. There was a human from Sweden (who laughed when they learned their country's crown prince visited Anoka), a couple from LA who was in town to "meet the parents," and visitors from Maine and New Mexico. The in-person tours were sold out by the middle of October, with no active advertisement beyond social media posts mentioning that tickets were officially on sale. Our exceptional, dedicated, and fun volunteer Ghost Tour Guides led **over 1,500 people** on tours, which raised **more than \$21,000** for the museum. That's a big help!

This means there is room for growth as we head into our 19th year. The answer is clear—we need to add more tours. But to offer more tours, we are looking to add



more guides. Each guide receives a ghost tour script but is encouraged to put their own personality and flair into sharing the stories and history.

You may know someone who loves Halloween and would be interested in joining the exclusive ranks of Ghost Tour Guides. Whisper in their ear and send them our way!

Meet the guides who gave their October over to the Ghosts.



Sara Given
Volunteer Coordinator
Sara@AnokaCountyHistory.org

*Reflects public tour ticket sales only

thank you!

TO OUR VOLUNTEER GUIDES! WE LITERALLY
COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.



ANDI—GUIDE SINCE 2018

Crocheted her own Winifred Sanderson wig bringing some Halloween magic to the tour.

FAITH—GUIDE SINCE 2005

Fav. Candy: Reese's peanut butter pumpkins. Has seen the ghost tours almost quadruple in size since she began.

JAMIE (& JAMES) - GUIDE SINCE 2019

Took a short break in between nursing school classes for ghosts. With James as official wrangler and photo holder, this year Jamie took QCTV on a haunted walk.

JERI—GUIDE SINCE 2008

Remembers the tour group that saw a figure in the window behind her which

disappeared when she turned to look.

JAN—NEW GUIDE!

Learned guides need to be prepared for all types of weather so repurposed her Viking Super Bowl Volunteer gear. SKOL!

JESSICA (& PEYTON) - NEW GUIDE!

A tour-goer for many years she declares being a guide is her "dream job!" Daughter Peyton (11) acts as photo manager.

RACHAL—GUIDE SINCE 2017

Oddest tour encounter: a tour crasher who tried to sell the group new windows.

RICH—GUIDE SINCE 2020

Current President of ACHS, Rich helped create the Digital Ghost Tour with his students from Hennepin Technical College.

STEPHANIE—NEW GUIDE!

Fav. Candy: Anything Chocolate. Jumped in as a guide halfway through October which allowed us to offer more tours to happy people.

STEVE—GUIDE SINCE 2016

Weirdest tour: the 25 "baseball moms" who pre-toured at Billy's. Puts so much energy into his tours, he sometimes needs a nap.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS All lists are current to August 24, 2022

General Donations

Anna Aragon
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Gloria Given
Michelle Heidenreich
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Hubbard
Craig Johnson
John Jost
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T.J. Malaskee
Scott Nolan
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Jean Seaborg
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ACHS Business Members

Anoka Knights of
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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:

- Oct 21—Halloween parades with Liz McFarland
- Oct 7—Mary Jo Pehl: From Circle Pines to Mystery Science Theater 3000
- Sept 16—Anoka State Hospital with Karen Siewert
- Sept 2—Ghost stories with Ambi and the BWH

History Center Hours—WINTER HOURS

Closed Sunday, Monday and 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.

COMING SOON!

Keep your eyes open for more information about our Community Education programs in Anoka and Elk River. Topics will include:

—**Journeys We Take.** We'll share three stories of life-changing journeys with ties to Anoka County: a French Catholic priest who came to a new land and lived through some harrowing events; a Civil War soldier who roamed far afield but was able to come home; and a young man determined to see how far he could get in a home-made kayak.

—A preview of the new **Cemetery Tours**

—**Grandma's Sweeties: How Food Traditions Make the Memories**

Take a break in your day and have lunch with the director. This is a great opportunity to share your ideas as members on strategic planning goals, what types of programs you would love to attend, or ask that niggling question your curious about.

When: November 15 at noon

Where: Zoom (a link will be emailed to the membership prior to the event and posted on our calendar at AnokaCountyHistory.org)

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



Anoka County
Historical Society



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Anoka County
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