

# History Center News

Newsletter of the Anoka County Historical Society

Vol. 39 No. 4

July — August 2009

SERVING:

Andover

Anoka

Bethel

Blaine

Centerville

Circle Pines

Columbia Heights

Columbus

Coon Rapids

East Bethel

Fridley

Ham Lake

Hilltop

Lexington

Lino Lakes

Linwood

Nowthen

Oak Grove

Ramsey

St. Francis

Spring Lake Park

## *Historic Swedetown—2009 Anoka Home & Garden Tour!*



### **1850 6th Avenue**

In 1927, George Green purchased half of the lots on this block. He and his father, Clarence, owned a real estate and construction business. Green sold portions of lots 17 and 18 to Emil Anderson in 1929 and 1931. Emil, a general contractor and developer, built at least three homes on this block, including this home, constructed about 1930.

In 1931, Frank and Emma Townsend purchased the property for \$6,000. They apparently rented out the property, as the Townsends are not listed in any local residential records. Phoebe LeRicheaux purchased the home in 1947 and lived here with her husband, Charles, an attorney. DeWayne and Sharon Johnson purchased the home in 1979 and remodeled the second story. (DeWayne was the Anoka High School football coach and 1987 Conference Coach of the Year.) An interesting fact about this home is that the last four owners, representing over 60 years of ownership, were all schoolteachers. Notice the shingled siding, lovely curved door, and decorative exterior tile work in the brick fireplace on this Cape Cod-style home.

### **427 Van Buren Street**

The Washburn Mill Company originally owned this land, as well as the lot on the adjacent corner. In 1909, Alexander and Elizabeth Allison purchased the two lots from William and Lizzie Washburn. A.J. Allison, a part owner of the Rum River Lumber Company, likely built this home from his company's lumber between 1911 and 1915. Here, the Allisons raised sons, James and Leonard. Leonard "Stub" Allison went on to become a famous college football coach, leading the University of California at Berkeley to their last Rose Bowl win in 1938. Alexander Allison died in 1928 at the age of 65 from complications of a stroke he had two years earlier. He was survived by his wife, Elizabeth, who continued to live in the house until her death in 1950.



Alvin and Lois Johnson bought the home in 1952 from the Allisons' sons. Alvin was a chemist for Federal Cartridge Corporation and the manager of its powder mix area. The Johnsons lived in this home until he passed away on Valentine's Day, 1990. Subsequent owners Peter and Molly Borchert remodeled portions of the home and the current homeowners are remodeling the kitchen. They also painted the home its current colors to highlight the Arts & Crafts-style details such as the exposed roof rafters and tapered porch columns.

### **432 Van Buren Street**



Joseph Bradeen constructed this home about 1870 after purchasing the land from Charlotte B. Stockwell for \$100. Born in Maine, Bradeen was a carpenter and likely built the home himself. Joseph lived here with his wife, Amanda, and their two children until October of 1873 when the house was sold to George and Sarah Geddes.

George Geddes ran a grocery store in Anoka until 1877 and later became a constable, chief of police, and the county auditor in March, 1881.

In the early 1930s, Charles Schmodt began living in this house and later purchased it in 1947 with his wife, Elsie. Many Anoka residents remember Elsie running a candy store out of the side porch during the 1950s and 60s. Kids from St. Anne's Covenant school (now St. Stephen's) would stop by after school with their saved up coins.

The house is built in the Folk Victorian style with a simple, rectangular plan and gingerbread detailing in the front gable end. By 1870, the railroad could ship affordable, mass-produced architectural materials, like gingerbread details, to any area of the country, making style affordable for any family. The current owners have lived here for seventeen years. In that time, they have refinished floors, replaced the first floors doors and trim, and replaced newer fixtures with ones more appropriate to the age and style of the home. Be sure to check out the fireplace mantle and painted floors upstairs.

*See page 7 for all the details of the tours in this historic neighborhood!*

*History Center News* is published by the Anoka County Historical Society six times yearly as a member benefit.

## **Anoka County History Center & Library**

2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303

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Fax (763) 323-0218

E-mail: [achs@ac-hs.org](mailto:achs@ac-hs.org)

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)

### **History Center Hours:**

**Tuesday 10-8**

**Wednesday-Friday 10-5**

**Saturday 10-4**

### **Board of Directors**

President—Paul Pierce, III (At-Large F)

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(District #4)

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### **Staff**

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The Anoka County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to ACHS are tax-deductible within the allowable limits of the law.

## **From the Director's Desk...**

By Todd Mahon

### **Generous Donors in Uncertain Times**

I know I'm not breaking any news here, but you've probably seen (and felt) the tough economy. We, here at the Anoka County Historical Society (ACHS), are no different. We, too, have felt the tightening of the economy.

With this backdrop, I am pleased to report that ACHS is still receiving strong support from our business and corporate partners in the community. On May 14, we held a recognition dinner for former Anoka County Commissioner Al Kordiak. The proceeds for the event were put towards our endowment fund. Northeast Bank; Barna, Guzy & Steffen; Ehlers; Kennedy and Graven; Richardson, Richter & Associates; Faegre and Benson; Springsted; Buetow & Associates; Forest Lake Contracting; ABC Newspapers; and Hollis Cavner all joined us as sponsors.

Given these hard economic times, we are even more pleased by this strong showing of support from the business community. Resources are fewer and further between than they have been in recent memory and the decisions to donate to a charitable organization are more scrutinized than ever. We are grateful to these businesses for finding ACHS to be a worthy investment of their funds.

The same can be said for the sponsors for this year's Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour. This issue of *History Center News* has lots of information on the July 12 tour (see pages 1 & 7). This event couldn't be profitable without its sponsors. We give special thanks to the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce, The Artique, Patrick J. Walker, The Christian Hill Neighborhood, Ticknor Hill Bed & Breakfast, NaturaLawn of America, Truffles & Tortes, Main Floral, Avant Garden, Edward Jones (Tom Conneran), BOB 106, Counselor Realty (Rick Theisen), Plants & Things, Brook Park Realty, Devon's Gardens, The French Flea, and the Weaver Family.

We are currently seeking sponsors for the Harvest Time Barn Dance on October 3. Sponsors will be promoted at the event and in pre-event posters. They also get free tickets to the event and a tax deduction. Still, the most important element is your support of ACHS and making possible the preservation of our local history.

If you are interested in joining us as a sponsor, please call us (763) 421-0600.

## **From the President...**

By Paul Pierce

Anoka County has a rich and colorful history in music and arts. My favorite characters of our local history are all associated with music. Thaddeus Giddings, who said, "it takes a big man to bring real disagreement to a group of mature adults," is my favorite. It would require more space than this article just to scratch the surface of his many exploits.

My involvement with protecting the Amphitheater in Anoka has given me an appreciation for the impressive interest and talent in our county. The historical society has a new exhibit opening on July 11th, *Sounds of Anoka County: How Can I Keep From Singing?*, that covers some of the notable vocal talent in our county.

Thanks to the Music and Arts Committee: Jan Anderson, Tom Ward, Chuck Olson, Tom Sherohman, Sonja Chamberlain, Tom Fischer, Lin Schmitt, Joyce Paul, Pete Dahlstrom, and my father, Paul Pierce Jr., we have some great stories and artifacts!

You will want to arrive at the History Center by 11am on July 11th to enjoy the selections from *Meet me in Saint Louis* performed by singers from the Lyric Arts Main Street Stage on our lawn during Riverfest.

One notable artifact to look for when you visit the exhibit is a vest made for Roe Chase's role in *A History Agriculture*, the extravaganza first play specially written for and performed in the Anoka Amphitheater in 1916. Thanks to Roe's descendant (an Anoka artist with his own significant contributions to our music & artistic history), Peter Jablonski, the vest went on to appear in many other productions. The most famous performer to wear the vest so far was Michail Baryshnikov. Peter has graciously loaned this precious family memento to our exhibit.

Musical theater productions are a daunting task with so many details required to make the story work that costumes, props, and stage settings are often reused. In 1971, our theater class needed a horse for a play, so I made a quick chicken wire and papermâché horse head to do the job. Fifteen years later, I saw it with a new paint job at a high school pep fest! Waste not, want not!

I hope to see you at the exhibit opening on July 11th!



# Story of an Artifact

## Josiah F. Clark, A War Music Story

By Holly Broden, Contributing Writer

Touching the past is an amazing thing. It's a treasure hunt, of sorts, that often yields gems.

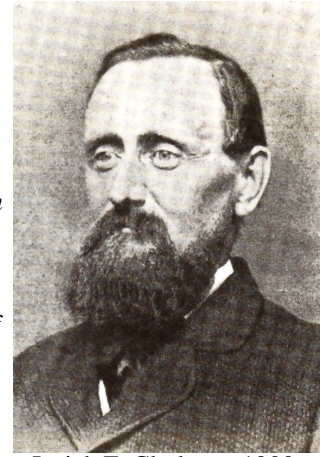
This treasure hunt started after reading the list "Some First Things" taken from the book, *History of Anoka County*. Next to number 24 on the list was entered, "First singing school-Taught by Josiah F. Clark in the winter of 1855-56."

There were a number of firsts in Clark's life including serving as the first probate judge in Anoka County after the State of Minnesota was organized. This was in the year 1858. He was elected County Treasurer in 1866, and continued in this job for four years. He was also a Justice of the Peace and the clerk of the school board.

Prior to that, Clark first arrived in Anoka County in 1854 and worked as a carpenter until he returned to farming. This really could be anyone of the first settlers' story, but it is during his farming stint when a different sort of Josiah Clark began to emerge. This difference came in the form of music.

Not only did Clark serve as the first vocal teacher in Anoka County, he also served as the principal musician during the Civil War. In 1862, he enlisted in Company A, Eighth Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers. His duty, as listed on the roster of field and staff officers, was "principal musician, age 39, mustered in Oct. 14, '63 and mustered out July 11, '65." In total, the Eighth Minnesota had 520 enlisted men with 20 commissioned officers. Nearly all of Company A were Anoka County men.

According to the book, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865, Vol. I*, the Minnesota regiment was battle tested and tough.



Josiah F. Clark, ca. 1900



Bill Crowder with Clark's music book.

*On September 15th, the regiment (except the Fisk detail) started for Fort Snelling, where it arrived October 15th, and where orders for the South awaited it. The Eight had been in almost constant motion for five months. With reveille from 1 to 3 a.m., starting at sunrise, riding all the long summer days in the blazing sun, over monotonous plains, and later in the season cold days and nights with nothing green to eat and much of the time only bad water to drink and buffalo chips for fuel, the service was in many respects more trying than in the South; but it was an excellent preparation for the South....no healthier or tougher regiment of men went into Southern service during the war than the Eighth Minnesota.*

What exactly would the chief musician do in a regiment of hardened soldiers? The answer came from local Civil War reenactor bugler, Bill Crowder.

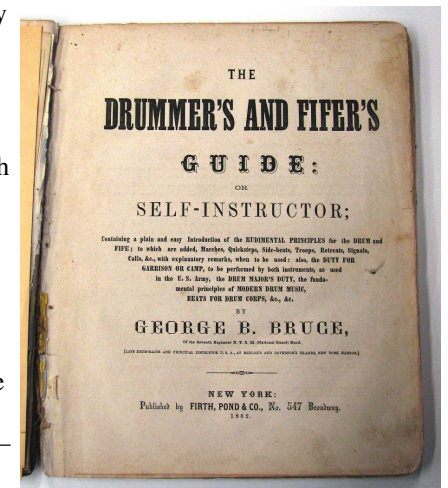
Crowder has spent the past nine years reenacting as a chief musician playing the bugle. He first played with the 4th U.S. Infantry out of Stillwater, and then with both the 2nd Minnesota Light Artillery and the Battery I, First U.S. Artillery. He says it is easy to underestimate the importance of a chief musician. "You really wanted a chief musician in camp for organization," he said. Each song played had a meaning and all of the soldiers

would know what that song signified. For example, *Tattoo* is played to signify return to camp or remain in camp. According to Crowder, fifteen minutes later, the drummer of the guard gave three distinct taps as a signal for putting out lights. Similar musical melodies, like *Roast Beef* were played for meal times or songs such as *Reveille* got the troops up in the morning. Other campo duties included playing songs to boost the morale of the men.

On the battlefield, the chief musician, typically a bugler, a fifer, or a drummer, would signal different maneuvers. "Whatever the Colonel called, the bugler would play," said Crowder. He went on to explain that a verbal call of "forward march" or "change of direction" would be difficult to hear for a thousand men. An instrument that could be heard clearly by all was crucial for carrying out commands. This is substantiated by sources that talked about using the fife in battle. They suggested a band of fife and drums could be heard up to three miles away over artillery fire. Such qualities made it useful for signaling on the battlefield. The musician also gave the call, when the battles were over, to come and get your dead. "A signal that was respected by both sides in the war," said Crowder.

When Clark's Civil War duty ended in 1866, he returned to Anoka and with him came his musician's book *Drummer's and Fifer's Guide: Self Instruction* by George B. Bruce and Dan D. Emmett. It was donated years later to the Anoka County Historical Society, notations and original music by Clark remain tucked in its pages. That book and the story of Josiah F. Clark are the gems that were found after following a simple statement that said, "First singing school—Taught by Josiah F. Clark in the winter of 1855-56."

Material from ACHS archives and others as referenced.



Title page (above) and worn cover (left) of Clark's music book.

# Contributions & New Members — Thank you

All lists are current to June 15, 2009

## GENERAL DONATIONS

June Bendix  
Edward B. Cutter Post #102 Inc.  
S. M. Dilcher  
John Gallovich  
Janet "Pat" Douglass Johnson  
Janice Joyce  
James and Jane Knoll  
Tom and Linda Sullivan

## EMPLOYEE MATCH

Ameriprise Financial for Dan Frank

## HOME & GARDEN TOUR SPONSOR

Avant Garden  
Furniture and Things  
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Patrick and Sharon Walker  
The Weaver Brothers Co.

## SPECIAL DONATIONS FOR THE VIETNAM TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Vietnam Veterans of America, Anoka Chapter 470  
Vietnam Veterans of America, Coon Rapids Chapter 375

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Anoka High School  
James Bauer  
Colleen Bell  
Robert & Lois Blewett  
Gary Erickson  
John Hawkins  
Peter Jablonski  
Clifford G. Johnson  
Stephanie Johnson  
Clare Mikesh  
Northstar Development Authority  
Patricia Sprague  
Charles Strike

## MEMORIALS

### **In Memory of Carol Houser**

*In loving memory of our Aunt Carol Houser.  
She was a special woman who we didn't  
see nearly enough.*

Given by Kent A. Smith  
& Craig R. Smith

### **In Memory of Carol Houser**

*In loving memory of Carol Houser...  
the best typist we ever had.*

Given by Maxine A. Larson

## KORDIAK EVENT SPONSOR

Northeast Bank  
Faegre Benson/Ehlers and Associates  
Forest Lake Contracting, Inc.  
H.C. Management, Inc.  
Kennedy and Graven

## DONATIONS AT THE KORDIAK EVENT

Lee Carlson/Main Motors  
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Sally Cleveland  
Chalisse Eldridge  
Judge Jim and Mary Gibbs  
Gerry and Mary Ann Herringer  
Tyler Hoch  
Laura Jamieson-Kordiak  
Robert and Frances Jensen  
Terry Johnson Family  
Mike and Maria King  
Robert and Linea Kirchner  
Al and Millie Kordiak  
Lisa Kordiak  
Paul and Lois McCarron  
Patrick McFarland  
Ralph McGinley  
Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO  
Jon Olson  
Jeanette Ostergard  
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Dirk and Tammy Schmitz  
Natalie A. Steffen  
Anne Stokowski  
Tim and Rose Talbot  
Lael Theis  
Sandy Thorsen  
Ed and Jean Thurston  
Merle and Kathy Tingelstad  
Malcolm O. Watson  
Ron and Vickie Wendel  
Robyn L. West

## Welcome New Members!

Mel and Kathy Aanerud – Ham Lake  
Sally Cleveland – Andover  
Karen and Milton Dale – Linwood  
Jim and Mary Gibbs – Coon Rapids  
Judy Harig – Sioux Falls, SD  
Edna Hoium – Ham Lake  
Pauline James – Elk River  
Pat Montgomery – Ham Lake  
Ken and Cheryl Orttel – Andover  
Larry and Myrna Podany – Andover  
Tim and Rose Talbot - Anoka

***The Anoka County Historical Society  
extends our sincere sympathy to  
the family of:  
Robert "Butch" Flint  
who died June 9, 2009  
Butch was a long time member of ACHS.***

## Up To Date

- ◆ The Board of Directors meeting for July will be held at the History Center at 6:00 on July 9, 2009. The August meeting will be on the 13th. The public is welcome to attend board meetings at any time.
- ◆ The Albert Kordiak Recognition Dinner was a wonderful success. We collected some great history, had a lot of fun, and added over \$9,000 to the ACHS Endowment Fund. Funds are still coming in for this event and it is not too late to add your donation to the list. Be sure to clearly mark your donation KORDIAK.
- ◆ Sign up to be our fan and join the fun on Facebook! It's a quick way to see what's happening anytime. Click the link from our webpage:

[www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org)



## 75 Years Ago at ACHS

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Anoka County Historical Society, this column will look back at the formation, founders, and first activities of ACHS. Watch for more of these stories of our own history in the coming months.

*Theodore Blegen, superintendent of the State Historical Society, in a talk before a group of Anoka people interested in the forming of an Anoka County Historical Society at Library Hall last Thursday evening, gave some practical reasons for having such an organization.*

*He stressed the value of history to the community, the knowledge which helps in the development of the present. It is like the synopsis of a story and helps us to enjoy the unfolding of the tale. Mr. Blegen further stated that live, unlike the motion pictures, is not run off a second time. History is our second sight and reveals a very important story for the present generation and the following generations...*

*Mr. Blegen spoke of the history of our fine library, which stands as an achievement of the past, adding to the culture of the future. He said that history gives a balancing standard so necessary to the present. He urged the preservation of the records of today including the newspapers which are the mirrors of the times.*

This report of a meeting about the importance of keeping local history could have been written yesterday instead of the summer of 1934. Though the words are copied from an undated newspaper clipping in the ACHS files, we know the meeting was held on June 28, 1934.

The conclusion of the article listed off several names of people who were charged by Mr. Blegen to beginning planning for an organization to keep Anoka County's history.

One of the things this committee did was to reach out to county residents to get people involved in gathering their own history. The enclosed "survey" with this newsletter contains a copy of their 1934 survey and a survey of today—the one we'd like you to fill out and return! See the colored insert and take a step to preserve your history today!

## Summertime Fun With History!

Summer is a busy time here at the Anoka County Historical Society. We have several annual events that are very important and very effective as outreach efforts. They are also heavily dependent on our volunteers. Please check your calendar and see if you could possibly give us a few hours.

All of the following are really fun! Some require only an hour or two, some involve a longer shift. Please e-mail or call me and I will find a spot for you! It's also a great time for new volunteers or for those who might be considering becoming volunteers. Suggest the idea to family, friends, and total strangers at cocktail parties!

See something you can help with? Please call Maria at 763-421-0600 or email at [maria@ac-hs.org](mailto:maria@ac-hs.org)

**Saturday, July 11** Sell Home and Garden Tour tickets at the Riverfest ticket booth, 9- noon, noon to 3 pm, 3-5pm plus take down.

**Sunday, July 12** Annual Heritage Home and Garden Tour, 1-5pm. There is an optional tour in the morning so volunteers can visit each house on the tour, so you won't miss a thing! A light lunch is provided.

**The Anoka County Fair, July 21-26** We need people to demonstrate historic crafts and skills. Volunteers staff the farmhouse to talk with visitors about our programs and local history. ACHS provides your ticket into the fair. Can you carve? Spin? Knead bread dough? Embroider? Knit? Basket-weave? Darn a sock? Use the treadle sewing machine? Weave straw? Make corn cob dolls? Make a kite? Quilt? Something else?

**Tuesday, July 21** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm.

**Wednesday, July 22** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm. This is senior day, so there will be higher traffic in the morning!

**Thursday, July 23** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm.

**Friday, July 24** Three people from 10am-3pm, and four from 3pm to 8pm. This evening always sees higher crowds.

**Saturday, July 25** Three people from 10am-3pm, and three from 3pm to 8pm. This evening always sees higher crowds.

**Sunday, July 26** Need two volunteers 11am to 3pm and two more from 3 until the crowd dies down, usually about 6pm.





# Fire Safety Fair at Riverfest!

See antique and modern fire equipment and talk with fire fighters from across Anoka County at the History Center on Saturday, July 11, from 9-5! There will be demonstrations, photo opportunities, safety tips, and tons of fun! The *Law and Ladders* exhibit, featuring the history of county fire and law enforcement agencies, is free on the day of Riverfest!

**Bring the Kids—and your camera!**



RIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVERFESTRIVER

## Sounds of Anoka County:

### How Can I Keep From Singing?

See and hear the second phase of our musical history with this new exhibit highlighting the choirs and musical theater history in Anoka County. We have costumes, stage props, lots of music, and photos that will surely set your heart to song! To celebrate the opening day of this new exhibit on July 11th, members from the cast of *Meet Me in St. Louis*, the current production of Lyric Arts Main Street Stage, will perform at 11:00am!



**JUL 10-JUL 26, 2009**

Songs by Hugh Martin & Ralph Blaine, Book by Hugh Wheeler. Based on The Kensington Stories by Sally Benson and the MGM motion picture Meet Me in St. Louis



# Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour



Sunday,  
 July 12, 2009  
 1:00pm to 5:00pm

A highlight of the summer, the Anoka Heritage Home and Garden Tour features open house tours of some of the city's most beautiful and historic homes and some of its most well-tended gardens. Raffle prizes will be given away by local businesses on the tour. For more information on the tour and the homes participating, visit [www.ac-hs.org](http://www.ac-hs.org) or call us at 763-421-0600.

**Hosted by:**

Anoka County Historical Society



Win a FREE one-night stay at Ticknor Hill Bed and Breakfast in Anoka!!  
 All ticket buyers are entered in a drawing to win.  
 Call 763-421-0600 for details.

Tour all sites for only \$13

**Proudly Sponsored by:**

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The Weaver Family

The French Flair

# Coming Events

## July 11, 9am to 5pm

### Anoka Riverfest

(History Center lawn and parking lot) We're hosting a Fire Safety Fair to compliment the Law and Ladders exhibit! Fire departments from across Anoka County are bringing new and antique fire equipment to display, the Safe Escape House, demonstrations, and hands-on activities about fire fighting and fire safety will keep everyone busy! When you finish the Fire Safety Fair outside, come inside to tour the exhibit—NO ADMISSION for the ACHS Exhibit Gallery on Riverfest!

## July 11, 10am to 4pm

### Sounds of Anoka County: How Can I Keep From Singing?

(History Center Exhibit Hall) Come see and hear the second phase of our musical history with this new exhibit that looks at the choirs and musical theater history in Anoka County. We have costumes, stage props, lots of music, and photos that will set your heart to song! To compliment the exhibit, we invited cast members from Lyric Arts to sing at 11:00am.

## July 12, 1 to 5 pm

### Anoka Heritage Home & Garden Tour

(Anoka's Swedetown neighborhood) Get your tickets NOW for this fantastic tour of homes and gardens in the Swedetown area of Anoka. Several businesses are included in the tour where special displays and activities are happening. Stop by Ticknor Hill B & B to see if you are the lucky winner of a night's stay! Visit with "Doctor Flora" at the Artique! See page 7 for all the details.

## July 2, 4, 11, 16, & 18, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

(Meet at the History Center) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and of unexplained things. Advanced tickets are highly recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you guarantee your place on the tour.

## July 21-26

### Anoka County Fair

(Anoka County Fairgrounds Farmhouse) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and unexplained things. Advanced tickets are always recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you guarantee your place on the tour.

## August 1, 6, 15, & 20, 7:30 pm.

### Ghosts of Anoka Tours

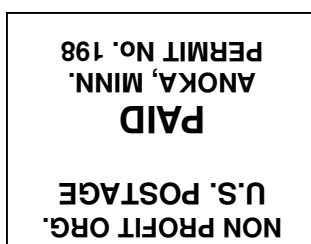
(Meet at the History Center) Take a walk on downtown Anoka's spookier side and hear stories of things that go bump in the night! These tours are filled with stories of history and unexplained things. Advanced tickets are highly recommended as these popular tours sell out very fast. Reserve your place by calling 763-421-0600 and use your Master or Visa card to be sure you get your place on the tour.

## August 21-23

### Nowthen Threshing Show

(7415 Old Viking Blvd., Nowthen) Join in the fun as ACHS staffs the General Store at the Threshing show—but remember, when you walk through those doors, the year is 1920! The store is open for "business" from 10 to 7 on Friday and Saturday and 10 to 5 on Sunday.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Anoka County Historical Society  
2135 Third Avenue North  
Anoka, MN 55303  
(763) 421-0600