

The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

SPRING 2022 Newsletter



HISTORY CENTER
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

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REMINDER: Please make sure we have the most up-to-date email and mailing address for you. Thanks!

SILVER LAKE: FROM VISION TO REALITY

By Sean Kettelkamp, Researcher

Minnesota is known as the Land of 10,000 Lakes, yet there are four counties in the state – Mower, Pipestone, Rock, and Olmsted – that have no natural lake. With the construction of dams, each one has been able to realize what other Minnesota counties take for granted: a marvelous body of water for boating, canoeing, fishing, and swimming. Olmsted County is now home to several lakes, one of them being Silver Lake. Fed by Silver Creek and the Zumbro River, it is located in northeast Rochester, just north of Oakwood Cemetery and bounded by West Silver Lake Drive and East Silver Lake Drive. How it came to be is a story of speculators, desire, and necessity.

Long before settlers found their way to Rochester, local Native Americans often set up camp east of the Zumbro River on the north side of Silver Creek as they traveled through the area [an area now crossed by 7th St NE]. After settlement, the area was known more for its commercial enterprises.

View of area that would become Silver Lake, 1930



SILVER LAKE - continued on page 4



Christine Rule
President

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In October 2019, 35 representatives from our many constituencies worked together to create a practical vision for the HCOG's next five years of service to our community. They envisioned the following objectives:

- Employees, volunteers, and partners are valued
- Welcoming space providing programs relevant to the whole community
- Sustainable, restored, and safe buildings of historical significance to Olmsted County
- Experiential, educational programming for all
- Technology to enhance and encourage user experience
- Increase site use and accessibility
- Diversified funding sources

Now at the halfway mark, these aims continue to be our north star. Thanks to the significant efforts of our HCOG community, we have made substantial progress. Whether technology upgrades, policy, benefit, and financial management improvements, or committee structures, partner relations, etc.,

much of the effort has been behind the scenes. Other efforts have been more visible: branding, marketing, pop-up exhibits, online presence, new educational programming, and events. The visible improvements are particularly gratifying as they are continuous reminders of accomplishments thus far, and motivation to continue striving toward our goals.

This summer we eagerly anticipate the rehabilitation of the Stoppel Smokehouse, the largest accomplishment yet to come out of the planning and hard work of our HCOG community. Thanks to each of our volunteers, donors, HCOG members, staff, and board members, for your help and encouragement.

In 1988, the American Association of Museums Museum Assessment Program concluded that “Because of the work of OCHS [Olmsted County Historical Society], Olmsted County is blessed with historic resources without parallel in Southeastern Minnesota, perhaps in the Midwest.” We are honored to continue collecting and preserving the incredible artifacts, documents, and buildings in our care that tell the story of our Olmsted County community.

OUR ARCHITECTURAL GEM: SMOKEHOUSE RESTORATION

By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director

If you're like me, when you heard that the History Center had a historic smokehouse, you probably envisioned a strictly utilitarian structure—more like a shed with a firebox and smokestack than any type of house. A fancy one might be built of brick but usually they were of log construction or clad in clapboards. But a two-story smokehouse with a bell tower perched on a spire? With a living space and integral privy? Straddling a 65 foot deep manmade cave? Yes, that is our smokehouse and architectural historians have described it as a “remarkable building that has few, if any, precedents or peers within its type or region.”

This architectural gem is about to get some serious attention and care. By April we expect to have carpenters and stonemasons working to stabilize and restore the smokehouse. A major part of the work will be restoring the stone masonry walls, which are buckling after 150 years of holding back the hill it is built into. In fact, workers will have to rebuild the entire north portion of the west wall. If all goes well, the smokehouse will be entirely restored by Thanksgiving. (Sorry, we won't be ready to start smoking turkeys.)

I hope you will be eager to see the smokehouse restoration as it progresses. Through our social media, our blog, and special members-only tours and programs, we plan on documenting and sharing this remarkable journey. Be on the lookout for opportunities to participate and help support this important project.

MAYOWOOD: A NEW SEASON OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

By Dan Nowakowski, Historic Site Manager

This year at Mayowood we have added specialty tours to the schedule. There will be one specialty tour every month during the regular season. Some of these tours are ones we conducted last year, but will feature some new pieces of artwork and furniture that have been conserved. There will also be two additional tours: the Women of Mayo Specialty Tour and Influential Friends at Mayowood. The Women of Mayo tour will talk about a number of women featured in the book *Women of Mayo Clinic: The Founding Generation* by Ginny Wright-Peterson, but is different from past events with the same name as this is a guided tour. The newest tour is the Influential Friends at Mayowood. The tour is guided and will talk about the variety of celebrities, both local and national, who signed the Mayowood Guestbook when they came and visited the house.

Conservation of Mayowood

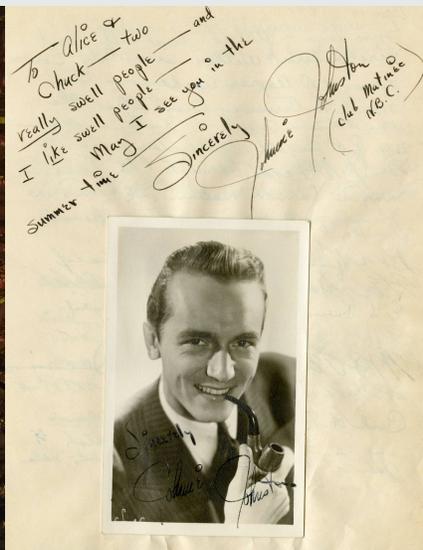
Part of what the collections staff does at the History Center is evaluate artifacts in the collection to see if they need conservation work. Back in 2018, we had a conservation report done by Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC) for pieces in the Mayowood Collection. This evaluation report is a common procedure that curators, archivists, and collection managers use to identify pieces that are in need of conservation work. A majority of these pieces from the report went to MACC for conservation work. Many of them will soon be finished and back at Mayowood on display for people to see them the way Dr. Charlie and Dr. Chuck originally had them inside the house.

Visit our website for more information & get your tickets before they're gone!

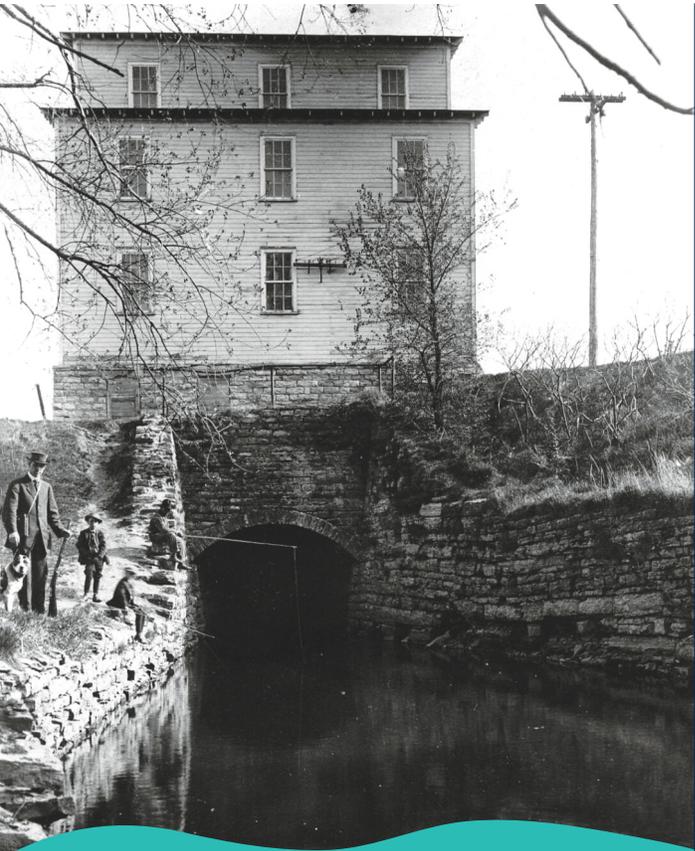
olmstedhistory.com/mayowood

2022 MAYOWOOD EVENTS & PROGRAMS

March 26	Women of Mayo Specialty Tour
April 30	Influential Friends at Mayowood
May 28	Beautiful Inside and Out: Mayowood Arts & Garden Tour
June 25	Women of Mayo Specialty Tour
July 30	Conserving Mayowood Tour: Past, Present, & Future
August 27	Beautiful Inside and Out: Mayowood Arts & Garden Tour
September 24	Conserving Mayowood Tour: Past, Present, & Future
October 22	Influential Friends at Mayowood



SILVER LAKE - continued



▲ Cole's Mill with kids fishing in the tail race, 1890-1910.



▲ Kahler Hotel under construction, 1921

A group of speculators from Boston named the Boston Company, working through a local agent named Charles H. Lindsley, purchased property in this northern part of the city in 1855 and began “building upon and improving” it, including the construction of a mill, hotel, and courthouse. [1] This section of Rochester became known as Lower Town, and the Boston Company intended that the Zumbro Mill would become the business center of Rochester.[2] The *Rochester Post* on June 20, 1868, in an article remembering those days said of the late 1850s, “there were two Rochesters then, the upper and lower town.” People in Lower Town were said to be “sensitive as to any intimations that the lower mill was not the center of Rochester... The feelings between Upper and Lower Town was then as bitter as the ancient feuds of the Scotch Highland and Lowlands.” Regardless of intentions, before the hotel could be completed, as noted in the 1883 *History of Olmsted County*, “the financial revolution [depression] of 1857 included in its list of victims, the original Boston Company.”

Though the market forced the speculators to pull up stakes and Lower Town never became a commercial hub, the area remained home to various businesses for many years to come. Under ownership of John M. Cole, from Boston, the mill continued to be a profitable business, the courthouse became the Broadway House Hotel [today the site of the Avalon Hotel] when the county built a new courthouse in 1866, and the area was even the site of a junkyard, a gravel pit, and a sand quarry, which was the source of fine, clean sand used in the construction of such noteworthy buildings as the Kahler Hotel.[3]

Around the turn of the 20th century the desire for a new place of recreation in Rochester took hold. The Silver Lake dedication program mentions that around 1897 “Dr. W.W. Mayo drove around these grounds...for the purposes of promoting it as a lake.” Other evidence, however, indicates that Dr. W.W. Mayo did not want a lake in that area. Indeed, when meetings were convened to talk about a lake project, the *Rochester Post* reported in an article entitled “Lake Mayo” on July 23, 1897, that W.W. Mayo said the idea for a lake had been spoken of for 20 years. Dr. Mayo made clear that if a dam was to be erected it should be next to the College Street Bridge on Bear Creek. He imagined a “pleasant resort” on the “brushy land [that was] now an eyesore.” Dr. Mayo went on to claim that in the city archives there were plans, surveys, and maps of a lake proposed for there. What was unsaid was that a lake flooding the area south and east from the College Street Bridge would put the Mayo farm [Homestead Addition] on the lake front.

When the city hired engineer George Cooley to take into consideration various dam sites, three options came to the fore: one at College Street across the Zumbro River [flooding Soldier's Field], another across Bear Creek at College Street [flooding Homestead Addition and Slatterly Park], and lastly, one across the Zumbro at Broadway [Silver Lake]. Cooley recommended the last.[4] The *Rochester Post* ran an article on August 27, 1897, entitled "Dr. Mayo's Meeting," which said that W.W. Mayo was the "sole speaker of the evening." With "colors flying," he let it be known that he didn't like any other site than the one he had proposed. He claimed that Silver Lake wouldn't have sufficient water, and that "such a pond, while large, would be a pestilential breeder of all kinds of diseases," and that "worms and bugs would be the [lake's] only inhabitants." His thinking was that sewage from the State Hospital might accumulate there via Silver Creek. After two months of arguing at various meetings, all reported in the newspapers, it seems that the city decided to wait, and the idea of a lake was not revived until after W.W. Mayo's death in 1911.

The *Rochester Daily Bulletin*, on November 14, 1914, in an article entitled "Lake for North Rochester," wrote that the people in North Rochester were keen to make it a "garden spot of Rochester," with the "construction of a beautiful lake." On March 19, 1915, the *Post and Record* showed a line art drawing with the headline "Artificial Body of Water as Planned by Committee." The Silver Lake dedication program also states that in 1916 the North Rochester Civic Association began pressing for the Silver Lake project, and that Paul Priebe and William Lenz had "hired a survey and had a contour map of Silver Lake drawn." But it would still be many years before further action took place.

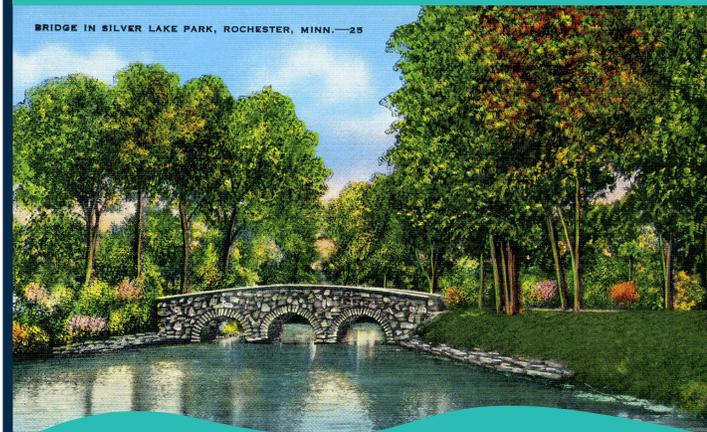
An April 24, 1925, *Post-Bulletin* article noted that in 1923 "the city entered into a contract for deed with Mrs. Pauline Kuehn" for land north of the mill pond, which the city intended to use for the site of a new tourist park. After completing the sale for the entire property in 1925, it amounted to 20 acres of land and nearly the entire west side of what would become the new Silver Lake. For the next several years, various interested parties worked to promote the creation of Silver Lake.[5] In the spring of 1930 in a proposal concerning a dam for Silver Lake, Dr. Sven A. Norling of Minneapolis commented that, "There is no question in my mind that if this dam went in and impounded the water thus creating Silver Lake, which should be surrounded by public parks, picnic grounds, bathing beaches, boating places, etc., that the City for no money in the world would then later do away with same



▲ Digging out and grading of Silver Lake, ca. 1931.



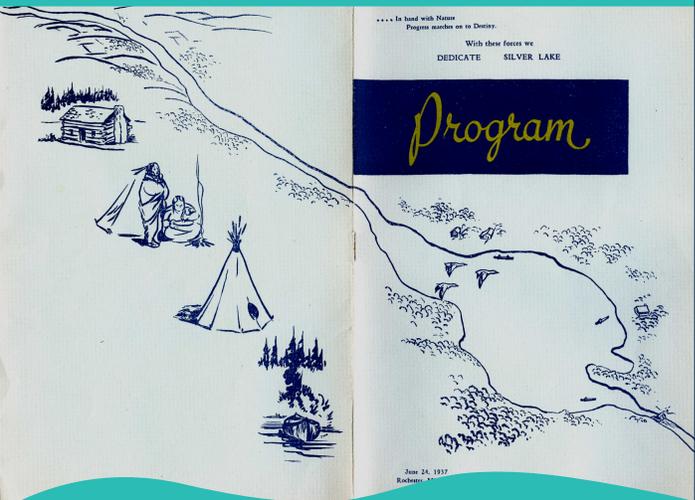
▲ Silver Lake dam construction, 1936.



▲ Stone bridge built by WPA workers, 1936.



▲ CWA worker cabins, 1934.



▲ Silver Lake dedication program, 1937.

Sources:

1. *History of Olmsted County*, 1883, p. 637-638, p. 773-774.
2. Joseph A. Leonard, *History of Olmsted County*, 1910, p. 193-194.
3. *Rochester Post Bulletin*, November 7, 1935; "Dam Site", Silver Lake Park file, HCOC Archives.
4. *Rochester Post*, August 20, 1897.
5. Silver Lake dedication program, Silver Lake Park file, HCOC Archives.
6. *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, February 21, 1931.
7. Silver Lake dedication program and untitled document, Silver Lake Park file, HCOC Archives.
8. *Rochester Post-Bulletin*, September 20, 1935.
9. Untitled document, Silver Lake Park file, HCOC Archives.

and go back to the old river bottom..." In his summary he wrote, "Silver Lake is a feasible and very desirable park development, and should be started as soon as the financial situation is properly taken care of."

In October 1930 more meetings were convened and the October 14, 1930, *Post-Bulletin* reported that the feelings for "Silver Lake [were] Crystalized," and that "100 Express Approval of Plan." At the meeting, several notable citizens shared their opinions about the plan, including Albert J. Lobb, Julius J. Reiter, and Burt W. Eaton. Dr. R.K. Dixon made brief remarks on behalf of the Izaak Walton League, and, this being nearly one year after the stock market crash, spoke of the "business depression." The park began as a desire, but soon became a necessity as its construction opened up much needed employment opportunities.

With property in hand, including the quarries on the east side of the Zumbro [now the Lagoon section of Silver Lake with arched bridges],[6] work began under the direction of landscape architect Hugh Vincent Feehan. In 1932, the Rochester Common Council turned \$5,000 over to the Park Board to provide work for the unemployed. "When it became evident that the depression was going to be severe," Feehan applied for and received funds through the Civilian Works Administration [CWA] for the same purpose in 1933. The small crews labored slowly by hand on the lake bed, digging out dirt, removing stumps, and grading according to the landscape plan. Cabins for the workers were built and a sign brought attention to the New Deal program noting it was the *CWA Improvement City Park Area*. In 1934, the State Emergency Relief Administration also provided work for the unemployed on this project.[7] In 1935, the Works Progress Administration [WPA] took over and worked to complete it, each worker receiving approximately \$22.00 a month.[8] That same year, work on the dam that would flood the lake bed finally commenced, all of it done by WPA workers.[9]

After years of work, Silver Lake was finally dedicated on June 24, 1937. The program handed out at the event had a line art drawing with an aerial outline of the lake along with a depiction of Native Americans who had once camped in the area [see second image at left]. The cover read, ". . . In hand with Nature, Progress marches on to Destiny. With these forces we Dedicate Silver Lake." The daylong event was well attended, featuring games for children, picnics, sing-a-longs, and fireworks as a finale. Since then Silver Lake has remained a desirable recreation area, and a much needed peaceful backdrop in an increasingly stressful urban environment.

BUILDING ROCHESTER: THE KRUSE LUMBER COMPANY

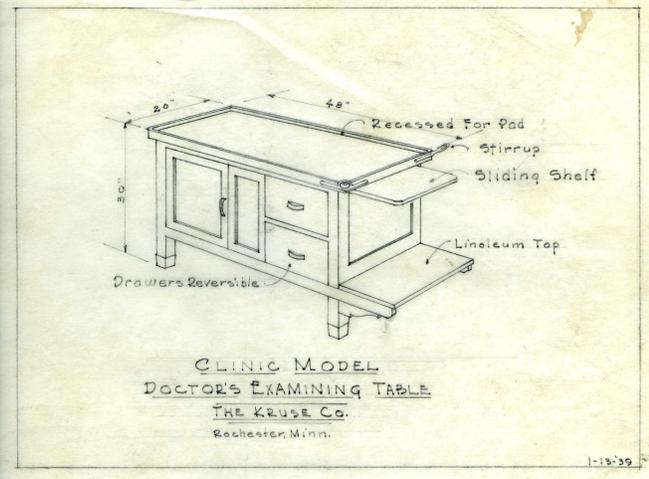
By Krista Lewis, Archivist, CA

Since the arrival of white settlers in the 1850s, Rochester's landscape and built environment has been under near constant transformation. For more than a hundred years now, Kruse Lumber has been a big part of this transformation. The Archives had a modest amount of information about Kruse Lumber, but a recent donation has expanded this significantly and helps fill in and illustrate the company's story. A few of the gems include letters written by its founder, Henry J. Kruse, explaining in his own words how he came to set up shop here as well as a series of photographs documenting the construction of the company itself in 1915, and even a few sketches of medical exam tables that the company designed for Mayo Clinic in the 1930s [pictured at right].

The crown jewel, though, would be a collection of hundreds of drawings of various construction projects completed throughout the area, a good many of them homes. The Archives has a lot of Harold Crawford's drawings, most of which are also homes, but homes that are almost exclusively limited to the Pill Hill neighborhood. Kruse designed homes, however, can be found in several areas of Rochester, and were designed for developments and middle-class incomes. Such drawings would offer some new and interesting research opportunities for those who are curious about Rochester's growth. It must be noted that these drawings are not part of the recent donation, but we are hopeful they will be a future donation once the new owners of Kruse Lumber take stock of them.

Lamella Legacy ▶

Another truly unique part of this donation is a wooden model of a Lamella roofing system. Kruse salespeople carried the model in a wooden box with them on visits to prospective clients. Volunteer Lee Hilgendorf [spotlighted on page 10] ran across photos of these roofs in our Cutshall Photography Collection, which sent him on a quest for more information. He discovered that Henry Kruse had long been interested in barns and finding better methods for building them. In 1929, he found the Lamella truss-less roof system. Developed in Germany in 1908, it eliminated the need for post and beam construction. An early project Kruse took on using this system is the Olmsted County Fair Livestock Pavilion, which still stands. Kruse Lumber became the exclusive dealer for the five state region and was granted a license for all agricultural building manufacturing applications in the U.S. So, if you are driving around the area and you spot one of these roofs, you can be sure that Kruse Lumber was involved in its creation.



HCOC ON THE ROAD: EXPLORING THE COUNTY THIS SPRING

By Abby Currier, Community Engagement & Events Coordinator

The History Center of Olmsted County is blessed to have over 40 acres of property to play with. However, we also know that there is a lot more to Olmsted County than our two farmsteads, and we are excited to be exploring more of the county this spring.

Recently, we hosted *Dearest Anna* at the Rochester Repertory Theatre. This was our third time doing the program and we wanted to shake it up a little bit. For this year, we chose to host the event at a theater to give it a different feeling. The story this year was filled with humor and tragedy and we had excellent actors who did a wonderful job portraying the stories of this young couple.



▲ Kami Sim and Andy Arndt as Anna and Roy



▲ Stoppel smokehouse survey, winter 2021

In June we will be partnering with LTS Brewing company to supplement their annual Frühling Fest. This event, which will include German beer and sausage samples, live music, and dance lessons, will be a celebration of the work starting on the preservation of the Stoppel smokehouse.

We are also excited to be restarting our township tours, this year with a focus on Kalmar and Byron. After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, we cannot wait to get out of Rochester and learn all about what Kalmar and Byron have to offer. This will be a two-phase tour; there will be a guided walking tour of downtown Byron and a self-guided tour of other areas of interest in Kalmar Township.

▼ Main Street, Byron, 1907



To stay up to date on all of these and our other events, be sure to follow us on Facebook and watch our website to get your tickets. You won't want to miss a minute of any of this!

A TRAVEL COMPANION: GEORGE STOPPEL'S TRUNK

By Kevin Whaley, Collections Manager

The History Center collection storage area has a row of trunks. Some are quite large, others quite small, and while all of them have a story to tell, quite a few of the stories have been lost. Some stories never reach the History Center and sometimes the History Center will lose the story, but either way they become just another trunk in the collection destined for a life in storage or as a prop in a display. For one trunk in particular, losing its story is only one little part of its amazing journey.



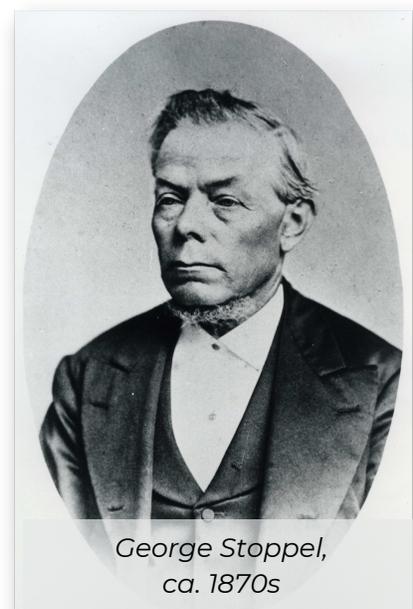
▲ *George Stoppel's trunk*

Let's start with what we do know - its physical characteristics. Unlike most trunks in the collection that are covered in leather or wood, this one is covered in hide with the hair still attached. There are two advantages for covering a trunk this way; hair provides more waterproofing and the shorter treatment time for hides lowers the cost. The trunk is a standard dome-top trunk with iron handles and hardware and is just 34"x14"x14". The story of how the History Center came to have it in its collection begins on August 30, 1848, as George Stoppel, a cooper originally from the Kingdom of Württemberg, left France for the New World.

Although George's exact situation is unknown, we do know that he spent a year in Rochester, New York, working as a farmhand before moving to Cincinnati, Ohio. Many immigrants needed help to pay for even the most basic ticket. Since George was not a wealthy noble or merchant, this year in New York makes sense if he had arranged for a farmer in America to pay for his passage in exchange for George working as a farmhand. For George, moving to America was a huge undertaking and he did not have the money needed to bring more than one or two trunks with him. It is likely that everything he brought fit into this one trunk. We do not know what George took with him to America. What do you think he had with him in his trunk?

George and his brother, Franz Joseph, lived in Cincinnati for about five years. Both brothers got married during this time and were practicing the trades they learned in Europe. In 1856, the families once again moved, this time to start a farmstead on the outskirts of a small Minnesota town called Rochester. George again took his trunk with him on the journey. The families had a bit more space than George did moving from Europe, using one wagon for the two families. Again, we do not know exactly what the families had with them. What do you think George might have used his trunk for this time?

Although George spent the rest of his life in Rochester, the trunk's journey was not yet finished. It passed to George's son Fred, who moved to Minneapolis, where it stayed with the family until 1977 when Angeline Stoppel donated it to the Olmsted County Historical Society, located on the very land George once owned. The trunk's story, however, does not end there. The original donation record indicated that the trunk was George Stoppel's, but eventually this information could only be found in two places. As it happened, neither of these two places were used when the museum adopted a computer-based collection management system, causing the trunk to be just another trunk in the collection, albeit one with an interesting covering. In early 2022, with a new collections management system and a bit of luck, the trunk's story was rediscovered.



*George Stoppel,
ca. 1870s*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: LEE HILGENDORF

Lee Hilgendorf is a long time HCOC volunteer who can be frequently spotted working in the archives. When he is not pursuing his own research, Lee is steadily working away on scanning our massive photographic collection. This work is one step of many that leads to an object becoming digitized and is an important part of making our collection both more accessible and easier to search. Our archives are home to thousands of images and by scanning our images, we are creating a digital copy that can be used as a backup to the original and can be used by researchers for a variety of projects.

Lee also does miscellaneous research for us and contributes to the Lens on History column in the Post Bulletin, often using research that he has conducted here at HCOC. We are so grateful for all of the work that Lee does here, not only to make our collections more accessible, but also to get some of the stories out to the wider public. Next time you are in HCOC, stop by the archives and see what he is working on!



▲
Lee leading a Cemetery Walk, 2021

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

HCOC needs YOU to help with a variety of projects and programs.

We cannot operate without YOUR support.

We have work for all kinds of people and can find a job that will best fit YOU!

Areas where you can volunteer:

- Outdoor Work
- Storytelling
- Indoor Work
- Archives and Library
- Exhibits
- Collections
- Ambassador

To learn more, check out
olmstedhistory.com/volunteer
and fill out an application!
We cannot wait to see you!



2022 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

All **orange** events and programs are virtual. All **teal** events and programs are hybrid. More details can be found on our website. Please check our website and Facebook regularly as the schedule is subject to change, olmstedhistory.com/events.

- March 17 ○○ **Baseball in Rural America**
- March 22 ○○ Quarter 1 Members Meeting
- April 21 ○○ **Minnesota's Acid Rain Story**
- April 23 ○○ Kalmar Tour
- April 30 ○○ Members only Nuss Trucking Museum Tour
- May 12 ○○ **Mayowood Historic Landscape**
- May 26 ○○ **Annual Members Meeting**
- June 11 ○○ Beer and Brats
- June 15 ○○ Volunteer Appreciation Day
- June 16 ○○ **CCC in Minnesota**
- July 9 ○○ Drifters Car Show
- July 23 ○○ FlavorFest
- August 13 & 14 ○○ Days of Yesteryear
- August 20 ○○ Cemetery Walk
- September 17 ○○ Hootenanny/Car Show
- September 27 ○○ Quarter 3 Members Meeting
- October 20 ○○ Fall Fest
- October 29 ○○ Creepy Doll Cocktail Party
- December 6 ○○ Quarter 4 Members Meeting

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