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

ROCHESTER AIRWAYS-ROCHESTER'S SECOND AIRPORT

By Lee Hilgendorf

plane should need to "ditch."

It was the day after Thanksgiving 1927 in the ballroom of the Kahler Hotel. Henry Postier and Lester Fiegel, along with the other members of the Rochester Businessman Club, listened intently. Col. Louis Brittin, CEO of Northwest Airways and his chief pilot Charles "Speed" Holman were making the case for wanting to put Rochester on the aviation map. Northwest Airways' new Chicago to Minneapolis air mail route turned at La Crosse, Wisconsin, and followed the Mississippi River valley to Minneapolis and St. Paul. If the route turned at Rochester, it would put the flights over dry, flat land and would be much safer if a

The catch was that Rochester needed to build an air mail specification runway, a 3000-foot-long, 300-foot-wide runway.



Jefferson Airways' delegation arrives from Minneapolis to inspect the air field on July 9, 1928.



 On the afternoon of June 13, 1928, a squadron of 21 Army planes arrive at Rochester Airways field ready for the next day's airport dedication.

Postier, a local car dealer, and Fiegel, president of the First National Bank, were more than just successful businessmen; they were also aviation enthusiasts. To them the idea of building an airfield larger than the current field at the fairgrounds and bringing air mail to Rochester was a win-win. They would be joined by Dr. T.J. Moore, a local dentist, George Steinke and Jess Herron. The group soon began planning for their own airport.

Rochester Airways was incorporated that winter with a \$3000 investment from each of the men. In March of 1928, Rochester Airways announced it had rented 40 acres of the Peter Siem farm, about a mile and a half west of Saint Marys Hospital where Second Street SW became Highway 14 West. Work began on the regulation airmail runway and two buildings. One of the buildings was a 120×28 -foot hanger, and the other would be used as an office and a classroom for their new flight school.

Adding to the anticipation of the new airport was an announcement in March by Edgar Zelle, CEO of the Jefferson Highway Transportation Co. They were purchasing a new Ford Tri-Motor airplane at a cost of \$45,000 with the intention of starting scheduled passenger service between Rochester and Minneapolis and St. Paul. With an airmail service and twice-a-day passenger service in their future, Rochester Airways was certain to be a success.

Dedication of the new airfield was set for Flag Day, June 14, 1928. The day would be a spectacle like Minnesota had never seen before. Late in the afternoon of the 13th, an Army squadron of 21 planes arrived from Selfridge Field in Michigan. The 18 fighter planes and 3 bombers had been arranged by Congressman Allen Furlow of Rochester, himself a veteran pilot of the Great War.

The next morning, 25 planes from a Wisconsin group promoting aerial tourism landed on the grassy field along with more than two dozen planes from the Twin Cities and locally to enjoy the festivities.

Congressman Furlow gave a speech dedicating the new airfield. Mayor Fred W. Haase thanked Rochester Airways for creating the new facility and proclaimed it as the city's municipal airport.

After the speeches, the army pilots climbed aboard their planes and took to the air with a demonstration of aerial dogfighting and simulated bombing runs that left the spectators looking up until their necks were sore. The Olmsted County Sheriff reported cars parked on all roads within a three-mile radius of the field. Rochester police reported a crowd of onlookers standing on the roof of the Kahler Hotel. In all, it was estimated that between 20,000 and 23,000 people witnessed the afternoon's entertainment.

After the dedication's aviation-fueled hangover, the next major event for Rochester Airways would be the arrival of Jefferson Airways and the beginning of flights between Rochester and the Twin Cities. At least that was the plan. Around noon on July 9, the giant craft appeared over the airfield and touched



down on the grassy strip. While company CEO Zelle and officials from Minneapolis and St. Paul were greeted by officials from Rochester and Rochester Airways, Jefferson's chief pilot Pat Gallup inspected the field. Gallup, who had worked for the Ford Motor Company on the Tri-Motor project, had 3000 hours flying time in it as well as many other planes. As Gallup looked around, he became concerned that the hill, just off the southwest corner of the runway, was too close and too high and would be a danger for southbound take-offs. Pat Gallop would ultimately choose Graham Field at the fairgrounds for their base. Without Jefferson's business. Rochester Airways would mortgage three of their airplanes to keep up with expenses.

As Jefferson's new passenger began on July 13, Mayo Properties announced the formation of the Rochester Airport Company and their plan for a permanent airport to be built southeast of Rochester. In November, when Rochester Airport opened, an invitation was sent out to Rochester Airways to move their assets to the new field.

In March of 1929, when their lease on the 40-acre field ended, Rochester Airways dismantled their buildings and moved to southeast Rochester.

Airmail would not arrive in Rochester until March of 1930.

THE HISTORY CENTER:

MOVING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE **AND A NOBLE MISSION**

By Mark Warner President

Thank you on behalf of the History Center's Board of Directors and our staff for being members of our growing History Center "family."

At the History Center, we are moving forward. Our noble mission is to leave a legacy for Olmsted County fellow citizens, visitors from outside of the county, and indeed, from outside Minnesota or even the United States. We will continue with our excellent archives and collections. As part of our master plan, we will improve existing physical structures, expand and refresh our current History Center, and even host new buildings. These physical structures are important components of a strategic objective to help us enhance and fully embrace our complete campus. Concomitantly, our education programs will receive a significant portion of our attention and resources in the coming years. It is these crucially important programs that will pass along the lessons we have learned to the next generation and leave a legacy far into the future.

I am very proud of each member of the Board and enthused about the quality, passion, and dedication of our staff members. That same pride exists for the support, expertise, and experiences that our members and remarkable volunteers provide to the History Center.

I look forward to getting to know you better in the coming years and learning how you believe we can best achieve that overarching goal of leaving a legacy.



PRESIDENT'S **LETTER**

By Mark Warner President

By way of introduction, I am a

relative newcomer to the History Center, now entering my third year on the HCOC Board of Directors. That said, history has been a large part of life for my wife, Mary Ellen, and me. It is an honor to serve the Olmsted Country Historical Society.

Mary Ellen and I are both anesthesiologists and still honored to take care of our patients at Mayo Clinic. We are extraordinarily fortunate to be physicians at a wonderful institution such as Mayo Clinic.

Regarding history, Mary Ellen comes from Chillicothe, Ohio, a town of 22,000 citizens about an hour south of Columbus. Chillicothe holds the distinction of being the first and third capital of Ohio and, along with Marrietta, Ohio, was at the center of the settlement of Revolutionary War veterans who received compensation for their service in the form of 160-acre land grants in the Ohio River Valley. It also is the home of the Hopewell Native Americans, mound builders (e.g., Serpent Mound).

Her interests in history extend from her hometown to anesthesiology. For example, she is a long-serving past president of the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, the world's foremost anesthesia history repository and library (woodlibrarymuseum.org).

I'm from Greenville, Ohio, a town of 13,000 citizens about a 25 minute-drive northwest of Dayton. It is known for its central role in the signing of the 1795 Treaty of Greenville that led to the opening of the Northwest Territory (now ranging from Ohio to Minnesota). Annie Oakley, Norman Vincent Peale, and Lowell Thomas hailed from my hometown. I was fortunate to live on my family's 4th generation Jersey dairy and Angus beef farm. Naturally, my interest in history and the roles of immigration and its impact on Native Americans, the environment, and agriculture have led me to appreciate the wonderful opportunities within the History Center to bridge cultures and communities.

I look forward to getting to know you better in the coming years!



If these old walls could talk...

Not many of us can decipher the story of a historic building just by looking at it. Unless you're a building whisperer, chances are the basic facts of the History Center's historic buildings will remain a true history mystery.

How can we get these cherished structures to speak to us? Behold, the interpretive sign.

Picture each sign as a window into the lives and legacies that built, used, and saved these buildings.

A mysterious anonymous donor is challenging us to raise \$10,000 to match their donation.

Help these old walls talk!

Your support will bring our building's stories to life.

To make a tax-deductible donation, stop by the History Center or visit:

www.olmstedhistory.com/HistoryMystery

History Mystery BUILDING WHISPERER



TAKING THE LONG VIEW:

DEVELOPING A MASTER PLAN TO TAKE HCOC INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY

By Wayne Gannaway Executive Director

Members who attended HCOC's 83rd annual meeting had a front row seat to big news. Yes, the food was tasty and the "Collections Game" was a lot of fun and educational, but it was presentations on the master plan and the Stoppel Farmstead capital campaign that got attention. Between these transformational initiatives. and an appearance of our new Director of Education/ Associate Director (see page 11), re-imagining HCOC as an education destination was the theme.

Most folks who have spent any amount of time at the History Center know that our buildings and grounds are due for renovation and re-thinking. Our museum needs more collections storage and an over-all improved visitor experience. For one, we want teachers and school kids to have an eye-opening arrival, but also more space for engaging content, eating lunch, and playing. For visitors who want to explore our historic buildings or grounds, finding their way to the Dee Cabin, School House, or gardens can be confusing. Although our grounds are buzzing with gardeners tending flower or vegetable plots and MHRT guys shocking oats with vintage farm equipment, few visitors get to interact with these cultivators. The way that our campus roads and infrastructure have evolved doesn't encourage structured exploration by visitors or collaboration among campus users.

In January, a working group of the board of directors began thinking about what a long-range plan for HCOC's entire 54-acre campus would look like. The committee is chaired by Kerry Olsen, joined by Dan Penz, Josefina Pozas, Christine Rule, and for the HCOC staff, Krista Lewis and me. Among several objectives, the committee identified a need to increase community engagement, grow educational offerings to attract more school groups, increase revenue, and better integrate and connect the campus. The group was building on past efforts, including the George Stoppel

Interpretive Plan, a planning session that considered Spark Children's Museum moving to our property, and a 2007 master plan.

As the map on the following page shows, the group came up with a concept plan of how the 54-acre HCOC property might be developed in the next 10 to 15 years. The early concept, anchored by restoration and activation of the George Stoppel Farmstead, includes a significant expansion of the History Center museum and offices, creation of an historic town square or village (1860-1920), crop demonstration plots, community gardens, and multi-purpose outdoor spaces with nature trails and playgrounds. The vision is to create an integrated and interconnected campus that will serve educational, recreational, agricultural, and communitybuilding purposes.

This summer, the committee will begin a more intensive phase of planning. Funded by a \$65,000 Heritage Partnership Program grant awarded by the Minnesota Historical Society, HCOC is embarking on an interdisciplinary master planning process to reinvigorate its entire campus for the benefit of Olmsted County residents and visitors. The grant will help pay for planning work related to architectural, engineering, and landscape design, interpretive planning, and research trips to other sites to learn from other organizations.

To craft the master plan, HCOC will work closely with long-time partner and campus tenant the Mechanical History Roundtable, as well as the Roosters vintage base ball club, community gardeners, the Village Agricultural Cooperative, and Native American community representatives.

Stay tuned for more updates later this summer!



History Center of Olmsted County

RECEIVES JEFFRIS FAMILY FOUNDATION CHALLENGE GRANT

Launches \$3 Million Campaign to Restore the Historic George **Stoppel Farmstead.**

By Wayne Gannaway | Executive Director

The History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC) announces a \$3 million capital campaign to restore the George Stoppel Farmstead, a rare, intact mid-1800s farmstead in Rochester built by German immigrant brothers. HCOC received a challenge grant of \$833,000 from the Jeffris Family Foundation to spur on the campaign.

The George Stoppel Farmstead is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its statewide significance in the areas of architecture, immigration, settlement, and agricultural history. The capital project focuses on four authentic structures in close proximity on the HCOC campus: the Barn, Stone House, Smokehouse, and hand-dug caves. Post-restoration, these will all come to life in a next phase that includes interactive exhibits, activities, and recreation spaces as outlined in HCOC's award-winning interpretive plan. Educational themes will center on farming and farm life, immigration, and Indigenous culture.

"The George Stoppel Farmstead is a Midwestern jewel," said Thomas M. Jeffris, president of the Jeffris Family Foundation, which funds projects committed to high historic preservation standards for sites of national or statewide significance. "Historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations."



The buildings on the farmstead date back approximately 160 years. If we do not act now, an important example of Olmsted County's agricultural history will be lost forever.

- Bernie Nigon, HCOC donor

Utilizing a \$500,000 state-funded Legacy Grant and \$58,000 in other early donations, HCOC has nearly completed restoration of the Smokehouse and begun work on the Barn. Under the guidance of Miller Dunwiddie Architects, the project follows historic preservation best practices and entails meticulous restoration of the Stoppels' old-world stonemasonry.

The History Center is seeking to raise an additional \$1.6 million by June 30, 2026 to meet the Jeffris Foundation's 2:1 challenge **grant** and plans to complete the restoration work by 2028.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER: NEW COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITS

By Dan Nowakowski | Collections Manager

Have you heard of the Rochester Area Foundation? Do you know what they do?

Why is there scaffolding around the water tower on Pill Hill? What's going on at the Plummer House?

To celebrate Rochester Area Foundation's 80 years of philanthropy and the Plummer House's 100th anniversary, we have collaborated on exhibits with both institutions. Answers to these questions and more can be found on the interpretive exhibit panels, now on display!

The Rochester Area Foundation exhibit highlights four initiatives the foundation does to help the community of Rochester: philanthropy in action, non-profit support, students and education, and affordable housing. Since starting in 1944, the Rochester Area Foundation has grown substantially and has been a place where generous people of diverse backgrounds have come together. With their philanthropic leadership, the foundation has solved complicated community problems and continues problem-solving the changing issues at hand within the community.

One hundred years ago, Dr. Plummer and his wife Daisy purchased a hill in Rochester known as "Quarry Hill" to build their new home. Instead of starting construction, Dr. Plummer and Daisy camped on their new property. The Plummers decided on this because they wanted to know the land before building. Once they knew the area, they started designing their iconic home.

Today, the home reflects the lives of both Dr. Plummer and Daisy. The exhibit highlights the unique features of the Plummer House and provides a glimpse into the lifestyle of these noteworthy people.

Be sure to see these exhibits while they're here!

RAF: now through September, 2024

PLUMMER HOUSE: now through June 2024





Events, you say? We certainly have many events at the History Center, more than many people are probably aware. Programs, too!

Now, you may ask what the difference is, and it is certainly a wavy line as there is a lot of overlap. Generally, we define programs as being education based and, while they often revolve around the youth, our programs are for everyone. Special events tend to be the larger items on our yearly calendar – think Creepy Dolls or Hootenanny – but that is not always the case when our Fall Fest also sees hundreds of happy faces. Special events are also educational, too. It can certainly get confusing, but as long as people are having fun and learning, we don't pay too much attention to the semantics.

Speaking of fun: in the last few weeks, we have had 4 different lectures, our Annual Meeting, and the 2nd Annual President's Event. Each event and program was a great time, and I sincerely thank those who did attend and hope to see those who didn't at events in the future. There are plenty of events and activities at HCOC throughout the summer, so I recommend checking out our event calendar and website often for information. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention one event by name: Walk Around the World.

June 22nd (Rain Date: June 23rd) from 12pm to 4pm will see this event on the George Stoppel Farmstead in collaboration with the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA). Now, the event is not exactly new as IMAA has been hosting it on their own for many years, but we have been working

hard to expand, explore, and further integrate history, interpretation, and stories into this event. But, what is the event? Walk Around the World celebrates the multicultural diversity that represents Olmsted County and celebrates the contributions that refugees and immigrants bring to the community. The event also recognizes World Refugee Day that occurs on June 20th. We want you to join us for cultural performances, ethnic food, vendors, cultural and community agency booths, and a tapestry project. There will also be children's activities for kids to stay active and entertained – not to mention the historic buildings being open.

There is so much to do, and I have far too few words to explain it. This event is also completely free and a safe space for people to learn and celebrate.

So, don your dashiki, kilt, lederhosen, sari, hanbok, áo dài, poncho, gho, or whatever represents you and makes you feel comfortable, and join us for this very special event.



HCOC NEW DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Hello Olmsted County. My name is Valerie Wassmer and I am excited to be the Director of Education at the History Center beginning June 10th! I have been teaching American History for over 20 years in the Rochester Public School System and am thrilled to be starting a new and challenging position that continues my work in education and connecting with the wider community.

I am originally from Canby, a small town in southwestern Minnesota where I stay connected to my community as the vice president of our local museum. I hold degrees in History and Secondary Social Studies Education from St. Cloud State University; I enjoyed my first year of teaching in St. Cloud until I made the decision to move to Rochester in 2000. My husband and I enjoy traveling, cheering on all Minnesota sports teams, and anything Seinfeld related.

I am sincerely looking forward to working with the wonderful team at the History Center of Olmsted County.

My passion for history and for education make this an ideal job for me; I am honored to be given the opportunity to expand our educational programming and partnerships throughout the county.



MEMBERSHIP & GIFT SHOP UPDATES

By Darla Buss | Member Services Coordinator

Hello HCOC members, get ready to be amazed! We have some exciting news to share that will pique your interest!

The History Center is now a proud participant of the Time Travelers program! Time Travelers is a free reciprocal membership network for historical museums, sites, and societies throughout the United States that offer free and discounted admissions and merchandise by just showing your **HCOC** membership card!

Currently, the Time Travelers program includes over 400 organizations in more than 45 states across the country. Members of these organizations can receive a variety of exclusive benefits and privileges, such as free admission, gift shop discounts, and much, much more.

A list of participating sites can be found at timetravelers.mohistory.org so be sure to check it out soon.

Your new yearly membership card will now have the Time Travelers logo and can be shown to receive benefits during your visit to participating sites. Your current card will still work at these areas as well.

If you have any question just give me a call at 507-282-9447.

Next, I would like to invite you all to check out the new items in our gift shop. It has been a long time coming and you surely will not be disappointed. We offer items related to our awesome exhibits, our state, and our community that inspire and amuse! Members receive 10% off.



FINDING AIDS:

A RESEARCHER'S BEST FRIEND

By Krista Lewis | Archivist, CA

It's hard to move through the world today and not notice all the signs (actual signs, that is, not vague messages from the universe). After all, they are designed to grab our attention, so I guess that's the point. Signs are abundant in the History Center, particularly in the exhibit gallery where they are a critical part of how we educate visitors about the historical objects we have on display. When it comes to the library and archives, though, signs are less obvious. This is partly because everything in the library is meant to be opened, and thumbed through, and used for research. The information people want is in the thing itself. But archivists do use signs of a sort to locate material or let researchers know what is available

and where. We call these signs (documents, really) finding aids, and they come in a variety of formats. They can be a simple list or index, or a more complicated document that briefly describes a collection and provides an outline of box and folder contents, or something in between. These assuredly are not as interesting as the exhibit panels, but they are just as informative. And they're also a means of wayfinding, but in an intellectual way rather than the traditional sense of navigating physical space. These are essential tools, and without them we would be hard pressed to serve our researchers as effectively as we can.

SUMMER SEASON AT MAYOWOOD

By Molli Funk

Interim Mayowood Historic Site Manager

Summer is upon us and Mayowood Historic Home is once again a kaleidoscope of colors. Visitors to the home this summer can see a wide range of flowers in shades of yellow, orange, and red, as well as the perennials that grace the home each year. As delightful an experience as the gardens of Mayowood are for visitors, the most impactful experience this season will be The Women of Mayowood: Mothers, Daughters, and Staff specialty tour and exhibit that will be held on July 13th and July 14th, 2024. A dedicated team of guides have spent the past year gathering information on 19 women who lived or worked at Mayowood to create a more inclusive look of the home for visitors. The team has also designed an exhibit using artifacts from the History Center's collection, artifacts on loan from the Mayo Clinic archives, and the private collection of the Mayo family, including Edith Mayo's wedding dress and Alice Mayo's Fortuny gown. The Fortuny gown is worn by Alice in the portrait that hangs in the living room of Mayowood.

The traditional Mayowood tour that guests take during the regular season interprets the lives of Dr. Charles H. Mayo (Dr. Charlie) and his wife Edith, and Dr. Charles William Mayo (Dr. Chuck) and his wife Alice during the years they lived at Mayowood; the decades (1910-1960) are considered the founding years of the Mayo Clinic. But if we want to look deeper into the story of Mayowood, we need to ask ourselves who the women who lived and worked at Mayowood really were. What were their triumphs in life? What were their tragedies? What were their hopes and dreams for the future? And like their husbands and brothers, how did they influence society? Whose story at Mayowood has been hidden by history? I invite guests to Mayowood on July 13th and 14th to answer these questions and more.



Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased by

calling the History Center at 507-282-9447,

or emailing services@olmstedhistory.com.



STAFF

Wayne Gannaway **Executive Director** execdirector@olmstedhistory.com

Brian Boettcher Buildings and Grounds Manager maintenance@olmstedhistory.com

Darla Buss

Member Services Coordinator services@olmstedhistory.com

Ashley Evans **Events Coordinator** events@olmstedhistory.com

Molli Funk

Interim Mayowood Historic Site Manager

mayowood@olmstedhistory.com

Patrick Gannaway Facilities and Grounds

Coordinator

Krista Lewis Archivist

archivist@olmstedhistory.com

Dan Nowakowski

Collections Manager collections@olmstedhistory.com

Valerie Wassmer

Education Coordinator

education@olmstedhistory.com

Barb Whipple

Accountant

accounting@olmstedhistory.com

Mayowood Guides:

Jean Joyce Williams Assistant Site Manager

Carolyn Barsness

Grace Curry

Patrick Dean

Marcia Goodmanson

Nancy Hedger

Joan Hunziker-Dean

Dana Knaak

Kathy Lamb

Megan Magnuson

Claudia Meier

Elizabeth Schmidt

Judy Smithson

John Wiater

BOARD MEMBERS

Mark Warner

President

warner@olmstedhistory.com

Ben King

Vice President

king@olmstedhistory.com

Paul Scanlon

Past President

scanlon@olmstedhistory.com

Linda Willihnganz

Secretary

willihnganz@olmstedhistory.com

Katherine Lutzke

Treasurer

lutzke@olmstedhistory.com

Dave Senjem

Olmsted County Board of

Commissioners Representative senjem@olmstedhistory.com

Kyle Benish

benish@olmstedhistory.com

Jordan Cepress

cepress@olmstedhistory.com

Jean Marvin

marvin@olmstedhistory.com

Kerry Olsen

olsen@olmstedhistory.com

Amanda Mikhail

mikhail@olmstedhistory.com

Dan Penz

penz@olmstedhistory.com

Josefina Pozas

pozas@olmstedhistory.com

Christine Rule

rule@olmstedhistory.com

Jim Suk

suk@olmstedhistory.com

Samuel Wick

wick@olmstedhistory.com



2024 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Please check our website and Facebook regularly as the schedule is subject to change, olmstedhistory.com/events

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June 7, 14, 21, 28 > Story Time Fridays at the History Center
June 22 Walk Around the World (June 23 rain date)
June 29 HCOC in the RochesterFest Parade
June 30 ▶ Rooster's Base Ball Game
July 5, 12, 19, 26 > Story Time Fridays at the History Center
July 13, 14 > Specialty Tour & Exhibit: Women of Mayowood: Mothers, Daughters, and Staff
July 27 ▶ Member's Only Event at the Plummer House
August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ▶ Story Time Fridays at the History Center
August 10, 11 ▶ MHRT Presents – Days of YesterYear
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Fall Sneak Peak

- **September 21** ▶ Oakwood Cemetery Walk
 - October 17 > Fall Fest
- October 19 ▶ The Creepy Dolls Party



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