



The Little White Paper

The Monthly Newsletter of the Golden Valley Historical Society

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April 2012

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The only streetcar service into Golden Valley was the Glenwood Avenue line, which ended at Wirth Park. At Xerxes Avenue the tracks shifted onto private right of way that paralleled the south side of Glenwood for a long city block. Streetcars terminated at an open-sided wood shelter which remains in place to this day. This photo was taken about 1953, shortly before the end of service.

April 12 meeting ...

Metro transit began with streetcars

As Minnesota's cities developed, they quickly outgrew walking as the all-purpose means of urban transportation. Most people didn't own horses or buggies, so horse-drawn omnibuses appeared. However, most streets were unpaved, which turned them into mud when it rained, or cobblestone, causing a jolting ride. The solution was to lay iron railroad tracks in the street. They made for a smoother ride and much lower rolling resistance. The first horse cars, as they were called, appeared in Minneapolis in 1869.

Horses were slow, got sick and left piles of manure in the streets. Victorian inventors were keen to replace them with mechanical power. Steam locomotives were readily available and were used on two lines in the Twin Cities, but their

smoke and soot made them unsuitable for urban service. Between 1905 and 1920, electric streetcars were unchallenged as the primary means of urban transportation.

Aaron Isaacs, Photo Archivist of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum, will present the history of Minnesota's streetcars at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 12, at the Society's historic church and museum, 6731 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley. The meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served following the program.

New member

Our newest member is Nancy Kochenderfer, 2210 Aquila Ave. No., Golden Valley. Welcome, Nancy.

March review

The March 8 general membership program featured Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Paul Anderson in the person and costume of Civil War Justice Loren W. Collins (August 7, 1838 – September 27, 1912). Thirty-four members and guests enjoyed a very interesting presentation.

Two antique appraisal shows were co-hosted by the Society in March. The March 10 co-host was the Woodbury Senior Living residence in Woodbury where 56 items were appraised. The March 24 co-host was the Calvary Center Co-operative in Golden Valley where 66 items were appraised. Bonnie Lindberg and James Marrinan, professional appraisers from St. Louis Park, made an always-entertaining oral appraisal of each item. A \$5 donation to the Society's museum restoration fund was collected for each item, raising over \$600.

Upcoming programs

May 5, from 9 a.m. to noon: Historic Church yard clean up. Bring a rake or leaf blower and work gloves. Your help is greatly needed and appreciated.

May 10: The history of Golden Valley's girls' slow-pitch softball league.

May 19: Golden Valley Days at Brookview Park. The Society will have a tent near the small picnic shelter.

Tornado reveals Wirth Park history

by Tim Perry

The May 2011 tornado that swept through Golden Valley and North Minneapolis destroyed and unearthed many things. One thing that was unearthed in Theodore Wirth Park was a reminder to some of another time and era in the park's history. With the trees now gone from the northwest corner of Glenwood Avenue and Theodore Wirth Parkway there were now more visible signs of what appear to be artificial rocks. For maybe a few like me, they remember as a kid playing behind and almost inside these hollowed out rocks. But why were they there in the first place? The question lingered in my mind for some time.

The curiosity finally got the better of me. For the answer, I found out that one had to go all the way back to the year 1918. At that time the first president of the infant Minneapolis Park Board, Charles M. Loring employed a French artisan by the name of M.F. Scotti to construct the Loring Cascade in then Glenwood Park (now Wirth Park). The project was completed a year later at a cost of \$13,692. That probably was a tidy sum in the day. Several historical photographs from the era show workmen mixing cement, building wooden shoring, armed with picks and shovels plugging away at the project. What they were constructing was an artificial two-tiered waterfall (30 to 40 feet high) with the apparent appearance of water-worn granite but in actuality it was made of sand, gravel and iron wire cemented together in a most ingenious fashion. One would think for the times- it was a completely novel construction process. That is what I remembered, crawling behind the remnants of those at the base and peering at the cemented wire mesh

inside. At the time it was an absolute puzzle and wonderment to me.

The water source for the cascade was supplied via an adjacent well pump house and drained from the cascade pool under the parkway road via a stream easterly into Glenwood (Wirth) Lake. One can envision that it was a day-trip destination and a tourist attraction. Twin City residents could take the Glenwood Avenue streetcar line to the eastern edge of the park and picnic area and walk the remaining way to get a view of the falls. I venture a most enjoyable summer Sunday afternoon for many, a streetcar ride, a swim in the lake, a picnic and by the way there is also a-- waterfall. It was though a seasonal phenomenon, only open from May until October and turned off at night. There are period postcards of the cascade that indicate its location as Minneapolis but it was actually in Golden Valley. Theodore Wirth Park is administered and maintained by the Minneapolis Park Board.

One very curious item of note that I learned during this process was that a taxonomic (study of organisms) field study by a couple different specialists in 1922 (in fact a nun) and 1927 discovered an extremely rare floral algae in the waters of the cascade pool and surrounds that had previously only been found in England. No further documentation or explanation could I find in that regard. The trail went cold. I would classify it as one of those anomalies of nature.

The cascade had a good run and vast multiples over some forty years enjoyed the vista. But at last, the park board for some unknown reason had the cascade demolished during the 1950's. Apparently it had used up its shelf life. The constant rush of falling waters and Father Time had combined to take a

toll. I would surmise a likely victim of erosion and decomposition of the materials that were used in the construction process. It was perhaps appropriate that the final demise paralleled that of the streetcar which had transported many a visitor to see it. By the time, I was there at the site as an adventurous and exploring young man it was just a pile of a few remaining solitary fake rocks. A slightly older friend of mine from South Minneapolis recently told me when I mentioned the cascade that it brought back some childhood memories for him as well. As a kid it was part of their "Sunday drive". They would drive around the city lakes on the parkways to the cascade, then precede past the Wirth Chalet clubhouse up to the Ewald Bros. cows' billboard on Golden Valley Road and Xerxes Avenue and then good old Dad would make a U-turn and head back home over the same route.

All that remains for the present is a commemorative marker on a rock at the once cascade site next to the walking path on the west-side. There are also a few nearby crumbling artificial rocks-some with the exposed wire mesh. To view it first-hand one can park at the Wirth Beach or Quaking Bog parking lots and walk the path to the location.

The cascade named Loring is now just a thing of imagination and old photographs- at least for me anyway. In the day, with the docile sounds of falling waters must have left one with a sense of serenity and peacefulness. Yes, there once was a cascade. It is now unfortunately just another part of the lost history of Golden Valley (and the Minneapolis Park Board). Little did I know that a mere drive-by and seeing some ninety year old artificial rocks on a roadside hillside would jar an old childhood memory - and sent me on a quest to find out the answer. My lingering lifetime mystery has been solved. This open case file for me was finally closed.