



# The Little White Paper

The Monthly Newsletter of the Golden Valley Historical Society  
Mailing Address: 7800 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, Minnesota 55427  
Historic Church and Museum: 6731 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley  
May 2012

Don Anderson, Editor

763-588-8578

e-mail: maryanddon3030@aol.com



Opening day action at Minnegasco Park in the mid 1970's pitted the Suns against the Flames.

## May 10 meeting ...

### Diamonds are a girl's best friend

Bob Mattison will show and tell members and guests about the history of the Golden Valley girls softball program.

Mattison is a life-long resident of Golden Valley. He coached Golden Valley Girls Softball for 13 years, from 1997 to 2009 – six years as a junior coach and seven years as a senior coach. His daughters, Katherine and Claire, both played in the league. Mattison has served on the GVGS Board of Directors, including three years as sponsorship director, and has been an umpire since 2009. He is a member of the Golden Valley Open Spaces and Recreation Commission and the author of “The Game Is For The Girls, The Story of Golden Valley Girls

Softball”, copyright 2011, Robert M. Mattison publisher.

The meeting will be held at the Society's historic church and museum at 6731 Golden Valley Road on Thursday, May 10, at 7:00 p.m. Refreshments will follow.

### April program review

The April 12 general membership program was given by Aaron Isaacs of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. Isaacs shared many excellent photos of the history of streetcars in the Twin Cities and streetcar boats on Lake Minnetonka, and many very interesting anecdotes from the time. Thirty-five members and guests attended.

### Loomis to serve as GVHS treasurer

At the April Society board of director's meeting, former Golden Valley Mayor, Linda Loomis, was elected treasurer of the Society with the effective date of her office being the start of the Society's fiscal year on September 1, 2012. Loomis is highly qualified to hold the office of treasurer and will be a welcome addition to the Society's board of directors. She will join the ranks of the many treasurers of the Society over the years – Jack Ewald, Doris McGregor, Rosalyn Shovlin, Joanie Clausen and Don Anderson. Anderson will continue in the dual position of secretary/treasurer through the end of the current fiscal year.

### Volunteers needed to staff GVHS booth

The Golden Valley Days event will take place on Saturday, May 19 at Brookview Park. The day will begin with a parade including Society member, Don Minor, driving his restored pickup truck.

The Society will have two booth spaces adjoining the small picnic shelter for displays and many kids antique riding toys of President Ken Huber's. Volunteers are needed to host in shifts from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Call Don Anderson for details: 763-588-8578.

**Don't forget Cleanup Day at the Historic Church, Saturday, May 5, 9:00 to noon. We need your help!**

# Valley Field was once the "Best in Suburban Area"

by Tim Perry

On June 30, 1956 there was a Grand Opening and Dedication of Valley Field in Golden Valley, MN, marking the beginnings of what continues to this day. I know, I was in fact there in attendance. Although the truth be known, I mostly remember a hot dog and cold Coca-Cola on an overcast summer's day. Please do excuse me; I was after all only six years of age. I was there because my older brother Mike was a member of the Jensen's Super Valu Yankees, one of four teams that made up the league the inaugural season. The others teams were the Reese-Thompson-Scroggins, Inc. Giants, Schweigert (Meat Company) Tigers and the Superior Dairies Braves. It was a double-header that day so all teams were in play with the dedication ceremony at 1:00 pm and the games to follow. The field was soggy from earlier rains that Saturday but by early afternoon it had ceased. It was a day of pomp and ceremony. The opening was attended by over 300 people (as well as the 80 players) with a sprinkling of notables and local officials.

The program for the day indicated that among notables in attendance were Dick Siebert (U of MN baseball coach) and Johnny Mariucci (local resident and U of M hockey coach). The master of ceremonies was Bob DeHaven from WCCO. The players from all four teams assembled down the first and third baselines and repeated the Little League Pledge: "I trust in God; I love my Country and will respect its laws; I will play fair and strive to win, but win or lose, I will always do my best". The pledge was written by Peter J. McGovern president of the Little League in 1954.

After the pledge a local Boy Scout troop conducted the flag-raising with the playing of The Star Spangled Banner. The Suburban Press of Golden Valley newspaper in describing the dedication- also noted that among

those present were representatives of three of the four industries which 'dug deeply into their corporate pockets for most of the money needed to build Valley field".

As an aside, the Golden Valley Little League, Inc. at the time was one of over 5,300 such leagues operating in the United States that year. The leagues consisted of generally four and sometimes six teams per 15,000 population base. In 1956 there were about 320,000 boys playing on Little League Teams. Our local league began operation in 1955 when Al C. Blasing organized the first team in the Northeast Section of Golden Valley in the Noble School area. Mr. Blasing was the first Chairman of the league and one can say- the Founder of Golden Valley Little League. Several years later, he was also instrumental in the formation of Benilde (now Benilde-St. Margaret's) High School. To this day, the school's Male Athlete of the Year is presented with an award in his name and honor. I know this first-hand because the aforementioned brother, I was there to watch play on this opening day was the first recipient of that award in 1964.

The original field property was an arrangement between league officials (Fred A. Seed, Al C. Blasing, Gordon Rosholt and Bruce McNeil) and the adjacent Chester Bird Post of the American Legion- to donate the lease on the property. The ballpark itself had metal bleachers and an overlooking the playing field press box window in front- with a lower concessions sales window in the back, dugouts and outfield fences- that were all wooden. It was an impressive site to the young and old alike. It appeared that the footage down both foul lines was the recommended 180 feet. The distance between the bases was 60 feet and the measurement from home plate to the pitcher's mound was 46 feet. A home run over the wooden fence would set

the younger non-playing boys off on a run to retrieve the ball. In my memory this proved a very difficult task and often did not bear fruit or a—ball for that matter. There were areas past the wooden outfield fence- of thick woods and trees that abutted the fence that made passage on foot difficult and the ball would become embedded in the gnarly grasses.

For the record on that opening day the Tigers beat the Braves 9-8 and the Giants beat the team, I was there to see, the Yankees, 5-3. Yes, there once was a ballpark named Valley Field. The local newspaper headline from the dedication read "Best in Suburban Area". It was a major league caliber ballpark for the times- but on a Little League scale. Games were played at that ballpark for a number of years. The league play was moved at some juncture in time to Minnegasco Park on the southwest corner of Douglas Drive and Golden Valley Road. There is a baseball diamond currently near the original site of Valley Field although not to the exact lay-out or configuration- that belongs to nearby Breck School (off Glenwood Avenue- and down to the very west end of Ottawa Avenue North pass the Lower School building).it clearly lacks though the wooden fences, dugouts and press box that exulted the real "character" of the original ballpark.

I was very fortunate to be able to relate this story to you by a little recall on my part and a whole lot of information derived from my brother's childhood scrap book (which our late mother at the time kept meticulously up-to-date). It seems though that I forgot to mention in here that I threw a no-hitter in Golden Valley Little League almost three years to the day after this home opener Well, maybe that gives me a story for another day. In the meantime- I say to the Golden Valley Little Leaguers starting their 57th season this year---play ball!!