

The Radiator Brush



Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum & Historic Cottage 11 Boys' Cottage
~ Summer | Fall 2015 Newsletter Edition ~



Third Annual Lighting the Path Event

Saturday, September 12, 2015

6 PM: Purchase luminaries and candles, listen to special harp music, enjoy treats.

7 PM: Historic Luminary Walk, concluding at Children's Cemetery with a special presentation by local historian Barry Adams and closing memorial ceremony.

You are invited to attend this year's "Lighting the Path" fundraiser for The Children Remembered – Orphanage Legacy Trust being held on the former State School Orphanage grounds on Saturday, September 12. This special event will include music once sung by the children, a Luminary Walk along History Stops, a peek into the restored Root Cellar, a presentation at the Children's Cemetery by Barry Adams, and a final lighting ceremony. Cottage 11 will be open for tours before the walk.

Why Do We Need A Legacy Fund?

For more than 20 years, Museum founders Harvey and Maxine Ronglien volunteered countless hours to

not only start the museum, but to manage it on a day-to-day basis. The Rongliens' involvement has greatly diminished and we find we do not have the long-term funds to sustain staff to continue their work. We rely heavily on donations and cannot responsibly operate on hope for donations throughout the year.

Once fully funded, the interest earned on the Trust can provide the money needed each year to make the Museum self-sustaining. The Trust will also help preserve historic records and provide touring and educational opportunities for the community, for the thousands of visitors each year, and for the family members of those who are remembered at this facility.

How Do I Purchase Luminaries?

If you wish to have a luminary (\$25 each) at this year's event in memory or honor of someone, mail a check to the State School Orphanage Museum at 540 West Hills Circle Owatonna, MN 55060, or they will be available one hour prior to the event on September 12. Make checks payable to The State School Orphanage Museum – Legacy Trust. Donations are tax-deductible.



Rongliens Receive State & International Recognition

In August 2012, an Australian woman named Leonie Sheedy made a pilgrimage to Owatonna to learn more about our Orphanage Museum. She is a co-founder of Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN), which is a support, advocacy, research and training group for the half a million children in Australia who were raised as state wards, foster children, or in orphanages. The organization was established in 2000, along with a mini orphanage museum in Sydney, Australia.

During her 2012 visit, Leonie spent hours touring the West Hills campus with Harvey Ronglien, learning how the museum grew and taking notes for an eventual national orphanage museum in Australia. CLAN continues to lobby the Australian federal government to make it happen.

At the 15-year CLAN anniversary ceremony on July 4, Leonie showed a presentation about the Orphanage Museum and acknowledged the Rongliens' work with a presentation of certificates that were mailed to the U.S. And, on July 9, Gov. Mark Dayton signed a Certificate of Recognition acknowledging Harvey's "years of service and commitment to the Owatonna State School Orphanage Museum." The Rongliens were surprised to receive these awards and learn that their Australian visitor from nearly three years ago was responsible for talking to the governor's office.

"The reason I feel people should know of Harvey and Maxine's work is that this orphanage museum is the only established one in the world," said Leonie. "Minnesota and the U.S. should be so proud of its citizens. I am so glad that Gov. Dayton has recognized the Rongliens, which is long overdue."

For more information on CLAN, visit their Web site at <http://www.clan.org.au/>.

May Sets Record Number of Field Trips

May 2015 was a very busy month, especially for school-age visitors. Of our eleven group tours, eight came from schools, bringing a total of 558 students to the West Hills campus! Several groups brought more than 100 young people at one time. That's quite a jump from 2014 when we had 215 group tour visitors altogether. Our total for 2015 was 605!

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School Visit

Probably the most unique school visit we had was with a group of eighth-graders from the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School in Cloquet, Minnesota. They were hosted by Peter Razor, former State Schooler and author of "While the Locust Slept."

His book is what brought Anna Clark's class nearly 200 miles to Owatonna.

Peter's father was a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe (Peter has enrolled himself) and Clark's students read the book in reading class. The teacher and students all felt the highlight was actually visiting the State School and meeting with the author. Peter led the group around the campus and shared stories of his experiences in different locations.

James Friedman, a Fond du Lac eighth-grader, that it was inspiring meeting Razor said, "Knowing he grew up in this environment and was able to make something of himself and he's an old member of our tribe that's a huge inspiration." The eighth-graders surprised Razor with gifts, including a handmade blanket and necklace.



Can't See the Trees for the Forest

By Anne Peterson, Museum Director

When I first looked at the large 1938 photograph of the State School students and staff, I was struck by the sheer size of the institution. I think that's probably the common reaction most visitors have. It's easy to question how they fed that many children, how they clothed that many children, and how they housed that many children.

Now, after meeting some of the State Schoolers who are captured in this snapshot of time, my reaction has changed. Helen Hoover Bowers, Peter Razor, and Harvey Ronglien are in that photo and they have documented their experiences in print and we are so fortunate to have those books. But those are only three stories from the 500 children pictured. We see the large number of smiling, squinting, or stoic faces looking back at us. I'd like to know why each of them was placed at the State School, how they fared here, and how their time here affected their adult lives. I have started to see the vast humanity that came together on that one day.

Maybe it's a little reverse of the saying, "can't see the forest for the trees." When you are too close to a situation you need to step back and get a little perspective. I think I was seeing the forest, but not the individual trees.





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The Superintendent's Daughter

Maud Merrill James (1888-1978) grew up at the State School, but not as one of the wards, as the daughter of Superintendent Galen Merrill. She is considered a pioneer in the science of psychological testing.



After receiving a bachelor's degree at Oberlin College in 1911, Miss Merrill worked for the Minnesota Bureau of Research until 1919. She went to Stanford for graduate work, earning a Ph.D. in Psychology in 1923.

Besides being a member of the Stanford faculty, she established a small psychological clinic for children, and became a regular consultant to the Juvenile Court in San Jose. Both services provided an opportunity for Stanford graduate students to gain first-hand experience with disturbed or delinquent children. She continued her association with Stanford as a faculty member until her retirement in 1954. She married Judge William James in 1933.

One wonders what her thoughts were on the atmosphere in which the children at the State School were raised...or if she was even aware of it.

Legacy Trust Balance: \$38,029

DONATIONS

Legacy Trust

Bob Charnell

General Donations

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Memorials

Harvey & Maxine Ronglien – In memory of Glen Anderson
 Darlene Sutherland – In memory of Bruce Sutherland
 Duane & Lorraine Yule – In memory of Delbert Knuth

WORD OF DECEASED STATE SCHOOLERS

Leila Dahms Stenbakken
 Donald Willard Olson (Perrault)
 Mary Jane Turnmire Kyseth
 John Williams