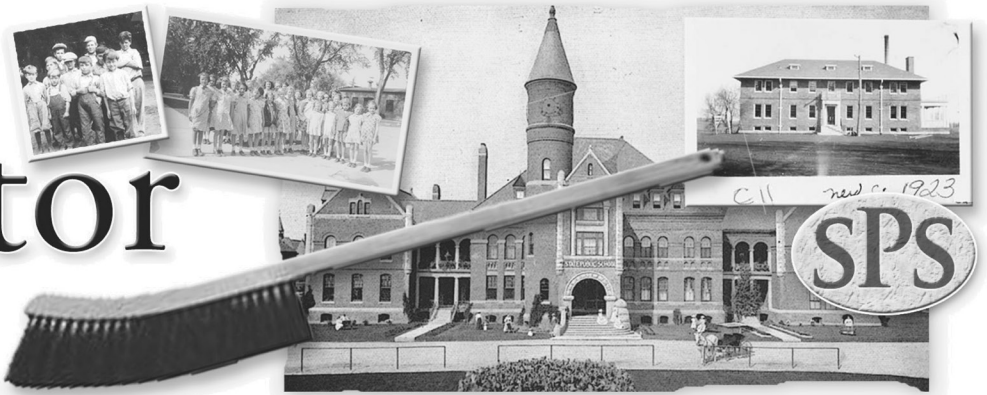


The Radiator Brush



Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum & Historic Cottage 11 Boys' Dormitory
~ Fall 2020 Newsletter Edition ~

COVID-19 RESPONSE

We hope you are all coping with the current situation in the United States due to COVID-19. Adaptation and flexibility have affected everyone, including the Orphanage Museum. What promised to be a stellar tourism year with many big bus groups, came to a screeching halt on March 18, 2020, when the museum closed in an effort to stem the tide of the pandemic. Now, more than seven months later, we are still trying to adjust.

Since the main museum is located within Owatonna's City Hall, we are complying with their request to keep the museum closed to visitors to protect their employees. **However, there is some good news now. The museum will be open on Saturdays and Sundays, if prior arrangements are made for a group is 10 or less. Masks and social distancing will be required.**

If you would like to schedule a guided tour on a weekend, call 507-774-7369 or send an email to museum@ci.owatonna.mn.us and we will try to make arrangements.

The Influenza Pandemic in Steele County - 1918

It's said that history repeats itself. We thought it would be interesting to our readers to compare what happened at the State School more than 100 years ago, during the "Spanish Flu" pandemic.

The Influenza Pandemic in Steele County - 1918

Influenza, not war, was the biggest killer in 1918. About twenty-five percent of Americans contracted the flu in 1918 and 1919. More than 500,000 died. Globally, the death toll was over 21 million and some have estimated it was as high as 100 million. By contrast, about 8 million soldiers died in combat during the Great War, including 53,402 Americans. Another 63,114 American servicemen died of other causes, chiefly diseases like influenza. In that sense, the flu was almost as deadly as the German army.

Whatever its origins, the virus's effects are well known. Highly infectious and airborne, the virus targeted the respiratory system, proliferating in the lungs. Patients usually died of complications, with pneumonia being the

most common cause of death. The very young and old were vulnerable, but people between the ages of 20 and 40 were hardest hit during the 1918-1919 pandemic.

The first case in the US, and perhaps the world, appeared in early 1918 at Fort Riley, a military camp in Kansas. By March 11, more than 100 men were infected. In August, the first certain cases were reported at Fort Devens near Boston and from there the disease spread west. In Minnesota, the flu arrived in late September. Fort Snelling and the University of Minnesota were particularly hard hit.

In an effort to stem the epidemic, officials took precautions. Commanders in St. Paul deferred a draft call scheduled for September 27 in Owatonna, fearing that the movement of men would only spread the disease. Soldiers were often the first to contract influenza since military encampments were incubators of the disease.

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At that time, Owatonna still had no reported cases of the flu. But on October 11, the *People's Press* reported that the disease had finally made its way to Steele County. Five cases, all mild, appeared in Owatonna and Dr. F. M. Smersh of the Board of Health encouraged the city to take "precautionary measures." In response, the Owatonna City Council closed all dance halls and theaters on October 15. The Blooming Prairie Village Council went a step further closing the local school, theater, and churches indefinitely, and banning all public gatherings.

According to the "State Public School Manager's Report," there were 176 cases at the school in the general influenza epidemic in the fall of 1918. That resulted in the deaths of three children and one teacher. The children actually died of complications of the flu: pneumonia, meningitis, and nephritis. Considering the close proximity of the children's living conditions, the State School was fortunate that the death total was so low. By the end of the 1919 flu season, officials reported that 3,957 Minnesotans had died of influenza and pneumonia.

Other Communicable Diseases Took Their Toll

Influenza was not the only peril faced in an institution. The nurses and doctor were on guard for signs of other diseases, such as whooping cough, diphtheria, and measles that could sweep through the school, especially before vaccines were developed.

Terrible Time with Measles

"The state school authorities have been having a serious time with the outbreak of measles, reported in these columns a short time ago. Last week there were over fifty cases among the children and employees, and the hospitals were taxed to the utmost. Many of the cases run into more serious ailments and there have been three deaths in consequence."
May 26, 1905 *Chronicle*

The paragraph below appeared in a 2011 article in *The Radiator Brush* written by Barry Adams about the State School Cemetery.

"As we know, the state of medical knowledge is ever-changing evolving, improving. It wasn't until 1963 that a vaccine for measles was licensed in the United States. Prior to 1963, measles was an expected part of life. So, back in 1905, when a first case of measles was reported at the State School, a newspaper article showed little concern. 'Not-to-worry, it is a common thing.' But, if you walk along the first two rows of tombstones in the State School Children's Cemetery, you will find eight youngsters who died of this highly contagious disease. Eight children, not one of whom had grown older than age three. Sisters Lovie and Jessie Jackson of Winona died of measles three days apart in May, 1905."



Goldie, Lovie, and Jessie Jackson (l to r), originally from Winona County

The other children who died in 1904 and are buried in the Children's Cemetery are Harold Berg, John Dugan, Clarence Chapman, Dwight Auer, and Adolph Asplund. Little Nina Woogen's mother came for her remains and she was buried at Worthington, Minnesota.

Harvey Ronglien - Christmas Address

Like so many in assisted living, 93-year-old Harvey Ronglien has been kept inside his facility with limited outside contact. We know he would appreciate receiving a note or Christmas card, which can be mailed to:

334 Timberdale Ave SE, #11
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060



2020 50/50 Raffle

Your raffle ticket has arrived! It's your chance to contribute to the Orphanage Museum and, if you're lucky, share in 50% of the money raised! The more tickets sold, the larger the pot to split. This year's tickets are \$20 each.

2016 Winner: \$1,987.50

2017 Winner: \$1,300.00

2018 Winner: \$1,430.00

2019 Winner: \$1,240.00

2020 Winner: *Could it be you?*

Send a \$20 check (made out to the Orphanage Museum), your ticket with contact information, and a contact phone number in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by Thursday, December 31, 2020. The drawing will be held at 5:00 pm that day.

Though donations to the Museum are tax deductible, the raffle ticket purchases are not.

OLD HORSE AND YOUNG BOY HAVE BIG ADVENTURE

Play Wild West Days Together But Fun Don't Last Long

The old horse, who pulls the Public School wagon about the city, had a real adventure Tuesday night and so did a ten-year-old boy inmate of the state public school.

The lad, who is said to recently have arrived at school, decided to pretend that he was a Wild West horse thief. He chose the gentle old fellow on his first raid and rode him to the home of George McGrady, where he attempted to sell him. He had poor luck. Then he quit playing Wild West and left the horse and returned to town.

Patrolman Frank Connell found the little fellow Wednesday and turned him over to the State Public School authorities. The horse is back to his own quarters ready to be just a wagon worker again.



July 18, 1919 People's Press

MAXINE RONGLIEN MEMORIAL GARDEN

A Fitting Memorial

When Maxine Ronglien passed away in June 2017, more than one person mentioned that a garden on the grounds in her name would be a wonderful tribute, because she was such an avid gardener. The family also requested that the some type of memorial be created that was uniquely hers, so a garden was a perfect fit. Thanks to memorials from her friends and family, especially, Harvey, the garden became a reality.



Juli Miller from Ditch Creek Landscaping, a great-niece of Maxine's, patiently worked with us—the Board, Silvan Durben, and Aaron Fitzloff and Jesse Wilker—to create the design. The City Building & Grounds crew and Parks & Rec crew provided manpower that moved the project along quickly when it needed to. We are so grateful for their help. We are lucky that the City has such skilled craftsmen and we are so grateful for their help.



Steve Stoykovich designed the fountain's plumbing system, to make Silvan Durben's drawing functional. Scott McFayden was the cement and brick person. The sidewalk cement is tinted to match the original building. He used old bricks from original State School buildings to give the fountain an authentic look.



Dedication Ceremony Held September 16, 2019

The showers stopped and the skies cleared just in time for the dedication of the Maxine Ronglien Memorial Garden. We felt that was Maxine's intervention. Harvey Ronglien and his family were in attendance, as well as former State Schoolers, Museum Board members, and community members.

"This Garden is dedicated in loving memory of Maxine Ronglien, wife, mother, co-founder of the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum, and avid gardener. As the wife of State Schooler Harvey Ronglien, she understood the effects of institutional living and was inspired to help preserve this unique piece of Minnesota history. Because of Maxine's leadership, the State School children will always be remembered."



Harvey Ronglien thanks attendees.
Cheri, Harvey, Rob & Deb Ronglien



Shelby Zempel, former Board Chair
and close friend, shared some memories
about working with Maxine.



Harvey greets fellow State Schooler Erwin Varns,
who traveled from Tennessee for the event.

Aerial View of West Hills

Over the past 17 months, several major projects were completed on the West Hills campus by the City of Owatonna. A new roof was installed on the old Administration Building (now City Hall), tuck pointing was done on damaged areas, landscaping was cleared up, and the building received a thorough pressure washing. We certainly appreciate the fact that the City is maintaining the historic buildings of the former Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children.

Aerial photos courtesy of Schwickert's Tecta America LLC.



DONATIONS

MEMORIALS

Cory Peters - *in memory of Arlene Nelson*

Anne Peterson - *in memory of Steve Jessop*

Dan Gorman - *in memory of Kenneth Carroll*

GENERAL FUND

DeLoyce Anderson

Kathy & Ray Lindberg

Timothy Hansen

Julie Rethemeier

Werner Knuth

Shelby Zempel

LEGACY TRUST

Don & Vivian Manthe

WORD OF DECEASED STATE SCHOOLERS

Don "Ike" Mendelson

Russell Nansen

Arlend "Buzz" Wilson

Donna Iacono Heil

Bernice (Brown) DesMarais

Arlene Nelson, author of *"Crackers & Milk"*

Did you know we keep an Obituary Book?

If you are aware of a State Schooler's passing, please let our office know so we can share the news. We also maintain an obituary book with as many people associated with the State School as we can to preserve the history. Our contact information is listed below.



Total \$62,502.30 in Legacy Trust.

Happy THANKSGIVING

The Museum Board is grateful for the support we've received during these trying times. We wish you all a blessed Thanksgiving.

Stay Safe



Nonprofit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid

Permit No. 7

Owatonna, MN 55060

Return Service Requested

If you plan to change your address please let us know as each returned newsletter costs the museum \$0.55 plus \$0.55 to re-send. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and helps us to save money.

Interested in purchasing "The Children Remember" or brick on the School Plaza? How about purchasing an "apple" for the Apple Giving Tree displayed in C-11? Please fill in and mail to our address the form below. Your support is greatly appreciated! Checks should be written out to: MN State School Orphanage Museum. Donations are tax-deductible.

Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____

☐ I'd like to order a copy of "A Real Treasure" 1930 historic film DVD at \$25.00 plus \$7.00 for shipping/handling.

☐ I'd like to order a copy of "The Children Remember" documentary DVD at \$25.00 plus \$7.00 for shipping/handling.

☐ I'd like to purchase _____ brick(s) at \$100.00 each. Fill out inscription below.

☐ I'd like to pledge an "apple." (☐ Red (\$1,000+), ☐ Gold (\$500-\$999), ☐ Green (\$250-\$499) ☐ Silver (\$100-\$249)

☐ I'd like to make a tax-deductible donation of _____. (☐ Donation for C-11 ☐ Legacy Trust ☐ Non-specified)

If you wish to purchase a brick, please print clearly the words you wish to have inscribed.
