

# ORPHANAGE MUSEUM

## **Reiff Sisters of St. Paul Adopted 9 Girls Majority from the State Public School**

Are you ready for a feel-good story? Etta and Minna Reiff were two remarkable ladies who opened their large home to the girls in the photo below. Many of the girls came from the State Public School in Owatonna.



A January 17, 1925, article in the St. Paul Journal said: "St. Paul lays claim to the most remarkable family in the world, consisting of all girls—sisters and two guardians. Fifteen years ago, the Reiff Sisters—Misses Minna and Henrietta—had a spacious home that was too large for them. They adopted a little German girl and found the experience so interesting they have since adopted three Scottish girls, French twins, and a Finnish, Bohemian, and Canadian girl. Top row, left to right: Emma and Muriel of Scotland; Dorothea of Germany; Amy of Scotland. In the front row: Ernesta of Bohemia; Margaret of France; Miss Henrietta Reiff, Amelia of Canada, Miss Minna Reiff, Elizabeth of France, and Martha of Finland."

The Reiff sisters came from a wealthy family. They said they would never marry, but did want to provide a good home for children in need. Dorothea was the first adopted. She must have been an agreeable child because they soon wanted another. They then adopted Stephanie and named her Frnesta, but realized two toddlers were a handful. Solution: Adopt an older girl to help! That's when Muriel left Owatonna, along with a white-haired baby name Martha. Muriel then negotiated to have her two sisters, Amy and Emma, join the family, making a family of six girls.

The Reiff sisters' reputation was well known, so they were asked to consider adopting premature twin girls whose mother died. Margaret and Elizabeth then joined the family. However, they were called "Pinkie" and "Bluie" because of the outfits worn when they arrived. The last baby was born in Montana, and named—Montana, but called "Tana." Nicknames were very common! Martha was called "Phinney" due to her Finnish heritage and white hair! All nine girls had the chance for a good education and comfortable life thanks to the sisters' care.

We became aware of the Reiff saga when Martha's family contacted the Museum. That led us to find out about the other girls. Check the Museum's Facebook page or YouTube for the video "From Strangers to Sisters: The Legacy of Etta & Minna Reiff" for more info.

## **Children's Cemetery Event**

On December 23, a group again gathered at the Children's Cemetery to place votives on all the graves. Seeing the lights twinkle at night was a beautiful remembrance.

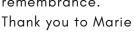




Photo: Josh LaFollette Owatonna People's Press

& Mike Mischovich for funding again this year and to all our willing helpers.

## 2025 Fall Celebration - Sept. 13

Add the Orphanage Museum's Fall Celebration to your new 2025 calendar! On the afternoon of September 13, we'll be having our annual event. More info will be in upcoming publications and in Facebook posts. State Schooler families are especially welcome. We love making the connections!

# MEMORIALS/LEGACY FUNDS/DONATIONS

Given by	In Memory of	Given by	In Memory of	Given by	In Memory of
Patty Jessop Barbara Schmidt Mike & Gloria Bang Pat & William Hoverston James & Cindy Fisher Darwin & Barb Kasper Gene & Kaye Fransen Wayne & Mary Bjoraker Wayne & Mary Bjoraker Jim & Jo Hartle Lyle & Gloria Meschke Barbara Schmidt	Keith Bangs  Delores Bishman  Charles & Emily Herrmann  Dr. Melvin Kirchhoff  Derek Larson  Judith A. Olson Peterson  Deuel & Delores Potter  Vern Ptacek	Gerald Lewison Dennis & Becca Ringhofe Mary Ann Rysavy Harvey & Jill Degen Anna Homuth Kathy & John Ihlenfeldt Dwight & Angie Jensen Arlene Johnson Curtis & Judith Johnson Melissa Johnson Mary Larson Robert & Carol Prokopec	Jerry Rysavy r Darlene Schmidt	Dennis & Becca Ringhofer Ardella Schmidt Barbara Schmidt Craig & Kelly Schmidt Dale Spindler Michael J. Trom Joan Vaith Jim & Jo Hartle Mary Larson Jerry & Janet Besser Barbara Schmidt	Darlene Schmidt  Marian Spindler  Curt Stendel Roy Wilmott
Given by	In Honor of	Given by	In Honor of	Given by	In Honor of
Dawn Ebeling	Reuben & LaDonna Ebeling	Ernie O'Toole-Tomczik	Michele (Kuntz) Freeman	Todd & Laura Resler	Dede Zamboni
		Memorials as of December 23, 2024			

#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Donald & Vivian Manthe Claudia Beaty Jean Bendt Gloria Stock Mickelson Ida Brocle Pat Moon Janis Casey Greg Norman Jim Cole Jodi Richards Richard & Paula Rollins Michael & Martha Erickson Shirley Fulmer Susan Sawyer-Evans Lance & Kay Grevious Loretta Simonet David Small Russ Gross John Stadler Nancy Hunt Derek & Tanya Jensen Lynette Stauff Jessica Tuttle Mark Livingston B. J. London Loel Wessel Julie Tenhoff Lyons

#### **LEGACY FUNDS**

Funds as of this printing:

SCHS

\$1,363,550

CHILDREN REMEMBERED

\$185,627

**SERVICE BAY** 

\$116,022



#### **DONATIONS**

#### **SCHS Legacy Fund**

Patricia & Mark Arnesen MD
Tim & Julie Blazek
Jeff & Sandra Boss
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#### The Children Remembered Legacy Fund

Beth & Ron Gilthvedt

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Vantum Julie Tenhoff Lyons

Janet Mealey

Kathy Linder

Richard & Paula Rollins

B. J. London

#### **Orphanage Museum Donations**

Gary & Kathleen Hadley

Anonymous - Cottage 11 Volunteer Luncheon
Norma & Richard Le Clerc - in memory of Bob Ryan
Sherry Wendt - in honor of Conrad Heusinkveld
Kat Vann - in memory of the Children
Greg & Darlene Thomas - in memory of Gary J. Johnson
Linda Allen - in memory of the Children
Mike & Marie Mischovich - State School Cemetery
Tom & Stephanie Shea
Lana Reich