

The Radiator Brush



Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum & Historic Cottage 11 Boys' Cottage
~ Summer/Fall 2013 Newsletter Edition ~

First Annual Lighting the Path Event

Saturday, September 21, 2013

REMEMBERING THE PAST, LIGHTING A PATH FOR THE FUTURE

**6:00 - 6:45 PM: Purchase luminaries and candles, listen to sPs songs, enjoy treats | 7:00 PM Historic Luminary Walk begins
8:00 PM Honorary Silent Candle Walk followed by C11 Evening Tours**

There were 10,635 of them between 1886 and 1945—children orphaned or abandoned or abused and sent to Owatonna, home of the Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children. For some it was a circle of hell; for others, a safe haven. The reason the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum was founded was to remember these children.

While much has been accomplished over the past 20 years, the Museum Board has taken steps to help ensure that our museum (the only known orphanage museum in the nation) will continue into the future. “The Children Remembered – Orphanage Legacy Trust” was established to provide funding and to serve as a foundation for the future operation of the Orphanage Museum and Cottage 11. The trust will help preserve historic records and provide touring and educational opportunities for the community, for visitors, and for family members of those who are remembered at this facility.

On Saturday evening, September 21, 2013, at 6:00 PM, the public is invited to attend the first annual “Lighting the Path” fundraiser for The Children Remembered – Orphanage Legacy Trust on the State School Orphanage grounds. This special event will include songs once sung by the children, a

luminary walk along history stops, a memorial candle walk and lighting ceremony, and will conclude with an evening tour of Cottage 11 featuring past State Schooler Harvey Ronglien.

Join us and walk together as the children did—two by two—along a lit path to honor and reflect upon their lives. At the same time, it will offer an opportunity to raise funds to continue the work of the State School Orphanage Museum.

If you would like to participate by having a luminary at this event, donations are \$25 each and are available for purchase the following ways:

- By mail to the State School Orphanage Museum at 540 West Hills Circle Owatonna, MN 55060
- At Cottage 11 between 1-3 PM Tuesday - Sunday
- On September 21, one hour prior to the event.

Checks can be made payable to The State School Orphanage Museum – Legacy Trust and the donations are tax-deductible. Candles for the memorial candle walk will be available for purchase on site for \$5 each.

**Rain date: If the weather is inclement, the event will be held on Saturday, September 28.*

First Annual Lighting the Path Event

Saturday, September 21, 2013

We would like to acknowledge the generous support from local businesses who have stepped up to help grow the Legacy fund by helping sponsor the event.

hAdvanced Coil Technology
 Alexander Lumber Company
 Bev's Friends & Family Tours (Jim & Bev Lysne)
 Bosch Automotive Services Solutions
 Daniel Boeke - Harland's Tire & Auto
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 Oak View Nursery, LLC
 Owatonna Motor Company
 Owatonna Shoe Company
 Southern Minnesota Initiative Fund (Tim Penny)
 The Dentists of Owatonna Family Dentistry
 Truth Hardware
 Wayne & Doris Klinkhammer

Thank you!

Interim Museum Director

You may see or hear a new name around the Museum—Anne Peterson has stepped in as our interim Museum Director. She is doing a *fabulous* job - thank you, Anne!

A special “thank you” to Dan Moeckly for the time, talents, and dedication he shared with us.



Congratulations, Carol Raetz!

One of our long-time volunteers and Board members, Carol Raetz, was recently honored with the Outstanding Senior Volunteer Award at the Steele County Free Fair. Carol was instrumental in obtaining funding for the Guardian Angel Statue that looks over the orphanage cemetery. She is also involved in many activities at her church and works with Grandparents for Education and the Christian Women's Club. We're so proud of you, Carol, and happy for the well-deserved recognition!

Happy Retirement, Corky Kolander!

Gloria “Corky” Kolander retired from her position at the Owatonna Parks & Recreations Department at the end of August. Corky has been involved with the Orphanage Museum since its infancy, serving in many capacities, including as a Board Member. Along with other Park & Rec employees, Corky has played a frontline role helping answer questions posed by Museum visitors over the years. We look forward to her involvement in the future during her “free time.”



History Matters

In the summer 2013 issue of History Matters magazine, Steven Elliott, Director and CEO of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), stated:

“Preserving historic places is more than simply saving old bridges, buildings, and landmarks from demolition. It’s also about finding new purposes for them, connecting the past to the present. Part of our mission at MHS is to partner with history and heritage organizations to preserve Minnesota’s historic sites and the stories they tell for Minnesotans today and tomorrow.”

We here in Owatonna couldn’t agree more! Twenty-one years ago, in 1992, Harvey Ronglien, an Owatonna resident and an 11-year Ward of the State at the Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children, took the first step in preserving the history of this one-of-a-kind State institution, today known as “West Hills.” Receiving permission from the Owatonna City Council, Harvey took on the task of erecting a “State School Kids Memorial” in front of the Main Administration Building of the former State School. This step led to the opening of a small museum inside the main building, as well as restoration of the State School Cemetery.

Since 1992, THANKS TO MANY, the Museum has been enlarged in the corridors of the Main Building, the Cemetery has received a second upgrade, Cottage 11 has been restored, a memorial Boardwalk leads to the Cemetery, a six-station outdoor audio tour takes you through the grounds, including the newest memorial of the first school site. New grounds signage and flowers enhance the entire campus. In addition, the Rock Garden has been restored, other projects completed: a new Flag Pole Plaza honoring the 25 known State School boys killed in WWI, a documentary “The Children Remember,” premiered at the Minnesota Historical Society, and restoration of a 1930s video found in a Waseca, Minnesota, attic in 1995.

Very importantly, over the past 21 years, Harvey has shared the history of the State School with thousands who have come



*Oscar and Harvey Ronglien
while Wards of the State*

Ground breaking ceremony for the Boardwalk





*Washington Elementary
students taking a tour*



in group tours and thousands who have visited the grounds from all points of the nation...and even the world. Often the comment in the Guest Register reads, "THANKS FOR PRESERVING THIS HISTORY!"

It is also rewarding that often visitors are the children and grandchildren of former State Schoolers. They comment that rarely would their State School relative share their experiences at the State School. Many simply blocked it out of their minds because it was too painful to remember. What a blessing for these relatives to be able to "connect the dots" today.

It is also interesting to note how few people in Minnesota ever knew an orphanage existed in Owatonna for 60 years (1886-1945). They are amazed to learn 10,635 orphaned, neglected, and abused children were placed in this institution over the years



*Museum display
and audio tour
station*



Yes, the Owatonna community has learned that HISTORY MATTERS. The State School history has not only touched the hearts of many, it has also educated many on the importance of family, rather than putting children in an institution. As Harvey concludes in his tour presentation, "Home is the cradle of the human race. Here is where our character is formed, either for good or for evil." Today, the history of the State School has become one of the top tourist attractions in Owatonna.



Greg Thomas and the Rock Garden crew



We're quick to add, however, that none of the State School restoration would have been possible without the support of so many...namely individuals, the business community, the Owatonna Foundation, State School families, and the City of Owatonna. We were recently reminded of the City's generous contributions when Greg Thomas, Buildings and Grounds Superintendent, found two large files from the 1970s and 1980s. These files show how the City took up the huge task of modernizing the buildings of the West Hills campus that were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many dollars were invested and, today, West Hills is a role model through the State for converting an antiquated state institution into a unique city center with a historic past.



Documentary past State Schooler cast and editing team



*Harvey and Maxine
Ronglien, Museum
founders*



*Sesquicentennial
celebration and parade*



Flagpole plaza



As Stephen Elliott concluded in his article:

“Successful preservation of Minnesota’s historic sites is a collective and collaborative effort.”

We who have worked with the State School preservation effort the past 21 years heartily agree. Our heartfelt “THANKS” to all who have helped preserve this unique Minnesota story, “connecting the past to the present.”

If you have not visited the State School grounds to learn about its history, we invite you to come and spend an hour or two exploring the site and learning how the State cared for less fortunate children in days gone by. You’ll leave with a deep sense of gratitude for how we care for such children today.

Maxine Ronglien, Board Member & former Chairperson of the Orphanage Museum Board of Directors



Orphanage Legacy Trust *Update:*

Balance as of August 2013: **\$20,159.00.**

2013 goal: **\$100,000** | goal by end of 2015: **\$300,000**

Prophecy Fulfilled

An undated feasibility study of the West Hills Campus contained this statement:

“We believe the long-range development of West Hills Campus hold dramatic social and economic benefits for the City of Owatonna. There is also great potential for national recognition for the process whereby a community undertakes the adaptive reuse of a group of buildings which have outlived their original functions, yet through creative conservation can meet its present-day needs.”

In 2013, we can look back and say that, through the efforts of many, this statement has been realized.

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APPLE GIVING TREE

Strickler Family in Memory of Wayne Strickler
Sharon West



WORD OF DECEASED

Oscar Ronglien
Ernest (Ernie) Mattson
Ike Gross



State School Orphanage Museum

540 West Hills Circle
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060



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Return Service Requested

If you plan to change your address please let us know as each returned newsletter costs the museum \$0.41 plus \$0.41 to re-send. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and helps us to save \$\$\$.

Interested in purchasing "The Children Remember" or a board on the Memorial Boardwalk? 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 _____

Yes, I'd like to order a copy of The Children Remember documentary VHS at \$10.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping/handling.

Yes, I'd like to order a copy of The Children Remember documentary DVD at \$25.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping/handling.

Yes, I'd like to order plush State School afghans at \$49.95 each plus \$7.95 shipping/handling.

Yes, I'd like to purchase board(s) at \$50.00 each. (*We are now using new materials for extended life of the boardwalk.)

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

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

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

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Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum & Historic Cottage 11 | 540 West Hills Circle, Owatonna, Minnesota 55060

Important: To ensure receiving future Newsletters, please inform us of any address change.

You may e-mail us at: museum@ci.owatonna.mn.us if you would rather receive our electronic newsletter.