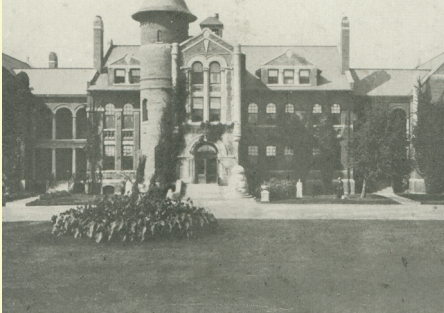




# STEELE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2022 • Volume 73 Issue 3

## THE RADIATOR BRUSH STATE SCHOOL MEMORIES



*The Radiator Brush*  
-5-

## CONTENTS

*Model T donated to  
the History Center*  
-1-

*Messages from the SCHS*  
-2-

*Volunteer Spotlight*  
-3-

*What's New at the SCHS*  
-3-

*Collections Corner*  
-4-

*Village Spotlight*  
-4-

*Additional Article*  
-7-

*In Memoriam*  
-7-

## LOCAL AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY ROLLS INTO THE MUSEUM

### The SCHS receives a 1926 Model T Sedan for our collection

Walking into the History Center these days, you are not greeted by our furry friend Nickel, but rather by our newest acquisition: a 1926 Ford Model T Sedan! This beautifully restored Model T was donated to the Steele County Historical Society by Pamela and Brian Raichle this May. Pamela was the daughter of Dale Springer, a local mechanic and automotive electrician who worked at Owatonna Ford for many years. One of his passions was working on antique cars, and his purchase of this Model T in 1976 would become his greatest project.

Dale acquired this Model T in the mid-1970s and would continue to work on it for nearly 20 years. A perfectionist in his work, he would end up fully taking the car apart, cleaning and restoring the parts before putting it back together piece by piece. This level of patience and dedication to craftsmanship led to the nearly pristine Model T that is on display today. We are incredibly grateful for the work that Dale put into this project, as well as to his daughter Pam and her husband Brian for their generous donation.



*Dale Springer  
with the  
Model T  
at his  
daughter's  
wedding  
c. 1988  
Photo  
courtesy of  
Pam & Brian  
Raichle*

You may be asking yourself why a Model T is such a special automobile and what historic importance it has. Well, in many ways, the Model T is the reason why the automobile took off in this country and around the world. Over the span of the 1910s-1920s, more than 15 million of these cars were built and sold, many of which went to the growing middle classes. This was a car that revolutionized our society in ways beyond what Henry Ford could have imagined. Known as the “car that put the world on wheels,” the Model T made travel more accessible and affordable, and even impacted how we worked and manufactured. The creation of the assembly line using interchangeable parts would revolutionize manufacturing the world over, and Ford's introduction of a five-day work week and a minimum wage for his workers would influence laws and standards in labor relations for decades to come.

Come out for yourself and see this modern marvel on display in our atrium. It will be here through September, when it will be moved to a temporary off-site location for display.

## ***UPCOMING EVENTS*** ***JULY***

9th - Summer Storytellers  
7 pm - Rendezvous Campfire Stories  
10th - Extravaganza!  
Noon - 4 pm  
12th & 24th - Memory Cafe  
10 am  
16th - Gus' Station Car Show  
8 am - Noon  
18th - History Detectives  
10 am  
23rd - History Detectives  
1 pm

## ***AUGUST***

9th & 23rd - Memory Cafe  
10 am  
13th - Summer Storytellers  
1 pm - Dan Deml and the SCFF  
16th-21st - Steele County Free Fair

## ***SEPTEMBER***

8th - Onward & Upward Luncheon  
11:30 am  
10th - State School Fall Celebration  
Noon - 5 pm  
13th & 27th - Memory Cafe  
10 am  
17th - The Barefoot Winos Concert  
7 - 9 pm  
22nd - A Day Away Bus Tour  
St. Paul, MN

# NEWS FROM THE SCHS

## ***VOLUNTEERISM:***

### ***THE POWER BEHIND THE SCHS***

By MaryAnne Higgins

The Steele County Historical Society's volunteer program is the power behind our mission to preserve and share history today for tomorrow. Our volunteers truly are the heartbeat of this organization. Volunteers provide countless hours to support the Society and our mission of historic preservation. Our volunteers share their warm, friendly welcomes with visitors while sharing their time and talents. These gifts do not go unnoticed! They make a difference each and every day through work in gardening, painting,



*Guests learn about volunteer opportunities at our first Volunteer Fair.*

answering phones, guiding visitors in the Village, data entry, and so much more. Every volunteer contributes to our success at the SCHS!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Steele County Historical Society, please call me at 451-1420. We are currently looking for building hosts to assist our guests in the Village of Yesteryear during the Steele County Free Fair.

## ***NEW MEMBERS***

**TOM & ROXY BIESTERFELD**

**NEAL & KARIN STEFFENSON**

**CATHERINE FISCHER**

**GAIL THOMPSON**

**BERYL HOFF**

**SHIRLEY YOCOPIZ**

**NANCY LUNDBERG**

**DUANE & CYNDY SILKWORTH**

**AARON & KELSEY QUAST**

**LINDA GERARDY**

**GREG CARLSON**

## ***FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***



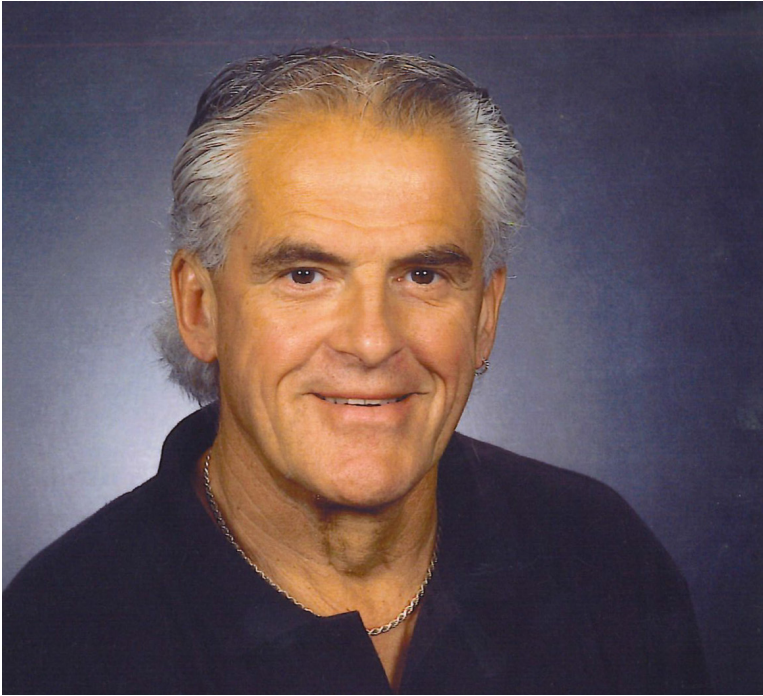
For those of you who have met me, you know that museums are (obviously) very important to me. I have enjoyed visiting them since I was a young child and make sure to do so as much as I can with my family now. At the end of each email that I send, I have a quote relating to museums that I thoroughly enjoy. It states "A visit to a museum is a search for beauty, truth, and meaning in our lives. Go to museums as often as you can," and was written by Maira Kalman. I love this quote and use it as encouragement. As the summer moves on and we all get out of the house more and travel, I encourage you to follow that mantra of "go to museums as often as you can." We are lucky to live in an area that is rich in history and that is host to numerous museums and historical societies, both large and small. These are gems to visit and allow

you to become more deeply connected with the region.

If you ever would like to talk about how you can be more connected to local history, learn about what we do here at the Steele County Historical Society, or even just get ideas for fun and interesting historic sites around the area, feel free to contact me. I welcome the opportunity to speak with community members and my door is always open.

Thank you for the continued opportunity to serve this community!

- Kellen Hinrichsen  
*Executive Director,*  
*Steele County Historical Society*



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Let's get to know a volunteer that helps keep the SCHS running!

- › **Name:**
- › Tom Bonacci
- › **How long have you been a volunteer?**
- › Since Cottage 11 opened in 2006
- › **What do you do as a volunteer?**
- › I care for Cottage 11 and make sure that it is ready for tours, arrange the volunteer schedule, and stock merchandise for the gift shop.
- › **Favorite thing about volunteering?**
- › It gives me the opportunity to tell the story of Cottage 11 and the Orphanage so that it is not forgotten in years to come.
- › **Best memory from the SCHS?**
- › Spending time with Harvey and Maxine Ronglien.
- › **Why should others volunteer too?**
- › It helps to satisfy the need for socialization and to be a part of telling this important story to our visitors!

# CATCHING UP WITH THE SCHS

What's been happening at the SCHS for the past three months? Read and see for yourself

We have been quite busy here at the Steele County Historical Society since our last newsletter went out!



As always, we are busy preparing for some of our largest events of the year: Extravaganza, Gus' Station Car Show, and the Steele County Free Fair.

We welcome thousands of visitors from throughout Minnesota and the surrounding states during these events and our teams of staff and volunteers have been hard at work preparing the best for them! We are excited to share with you and hope that you will be able to come out and see, learn, and experience what we have to offer at these unique historic events.



After a long hiatus due to the pandemic, we are excited to welcome back bus tours to the Steele County Historical Society! We hosted our first bus tour in nearly two years this May, coming from La Crosse on a day-trip to explore Owatonna and its rich history. Nearly 50 guests came to the History Center, Village of Yesteryear, and Orphanage Museum, while also stopping downtown to visit the National Farmers Bank. It was so good to see groups coming back to us and we are excited to host several more of these tours in the coming months!

Lastly, we have also been working on a new project that will be debuting

at our July events. The Steele County Historical Society will be collecting local residents' special recipes and their associated stories to compile into a historic cookbook entitled "A Taste of History". This communally sourced book will combine the recipes that we hold so dear, alongside the stories that make them special to us, and make them available to the public in our gift shops. If you have a recipe that is special to you and that has a special story or memory attached to it, please contact us to receive a submission form. We will be collecting submissions until December 31st, 2022!



## COLLECTIONS CORNER

By Dan Moeckly

### Roller Derby Deluxe Skateboard #20

Roller Derby

c. 1960s

Wood, metal, clay composite, paint

Donated by: Jim Anderson

School's out and summer has arrived. Children fill parks, yards, and streets of our neighborhoods as the annual cycle begins again.

Those of us who remain young only on the inside remember the freedom transportation brought us as children. For many, it was a trusty Schwinn that carried us to the park or secret neighborhood clubhouse. Some kids enjoyed other forms of transportation.

Roller Derby was the first company to mass produce skateboards, the #20 was their second mass-produced

model. Far from today's skateboard, this unit is a simple wood plank with a roller skate truck and wheel assembly. With its small size, flat unformed shape, lack of grip tape, and unpredictably slippery clay wheels, the #20 required more bravery than a Schwinn, and certainly brought more skinned knees.

Regardless, the sport grew in popularity, and in 2020 the activity once known as "sidewalk surfing" debuted as an Olympic sport.

This Roller Derby Deluxe #20 was owned and used by Lawrence Anderson Jr. of Owatonna through the early 1960s.



## VILLAGE SPOTLIGHT



If you have driven past or walked through the Village lately, you may have seen some big changes. Not only is the Village in its full natural glory as Summer is in full swing, but we have been working hard to maintain and

preserve its history and beauty. The Dunnell House has been fully painted, a much-needed makeover that not only adds to its beauty but helps to preserve the building itself. The storm windows have also been set in place and the building is once again whole!

Similar to the Dunnell House, the Farm Machinery Building was in need of some TLC. Last year, we welcomed volunteers from Federated Insurance to apply stain to the building's exterior. This year, we once again welcomed back Federated volunteers to finish the job and apply another coat to three of the sides of the building. Now back to its original deep lustrous brown, the building once again shines as a major part of our Village!

And let us not forget the beautiful flowers in our gardens that are popping with color. The lovely flower beds behind the Saco Church in particular are looking beautiful these days and provide great accent to the Village. A special thanks to our volunteers who take such lovely care of the Village's landscaping!

# The Radiator Brush



By Anne Peterson

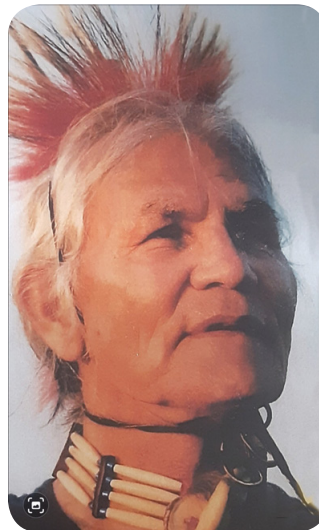
## WHY THE RADIATOR BRUSH?

For SCHS members who are reading *The Radiator Brush* for the first time, welcome! You may wonder how it got its name. Unfortunately, radiator brushes weren't always used to clean the steam radiators in the State School cottages. According to Harvey Ronglien, "I never saw them used for cleaning, but I felt one on my back a couple of times." It was apparently a common enough means of "discipline" that it seemed like an appropriate name when the newsletter was created. State Schoolers apparently possessed a gallows sense of humor. We hope you enjoy this issue and learn more about the State School kids.

## HOW'S IT GOING?

From my perspective, the first six months of the merger between the Orphanage Museum and SCHS have gone very smoothly. I appreciate the team atmosphere we're building. We've also seen the return of bus tours with 25-40 guests. If the second half of 2022 goes as well as the first, we're looking at a busy year.

## MIIGWECH, PETER



*Peter Razor*  
1928 – 2022

On Memorial Day, we lost another State Schooler and one of our authors when James Peter Razor passed away at 93. Traditional services were conducted at the Fond du Lac Cultural Language & Learning Center in Cloquet. Peter is survived by his wife and three children, as well as thousands of readers who knew him through his book "While the Locust Slept."

If you were one of the 150 people who came to hear Peter speak at SCHS last August, I'm sure you are glad you were there. The big turnout meant a lot to him. That night someone asked him if he thought the former State School was haunted. After a

long pause he replied, "Haunted, no; haunting, yes." He made many insightful comments over the years that help us better understand the State School experience.

"While the Locust Slept" is for sale at the SCHS and Cottage 11 Gift Shops. Or you can request a copy from your local library. It's a compelling read.

## STATE SCHOOL FALL CELEBRATION SEPTEMBER 10TH

After a two-year break, we're excited to be planning another fall celebration this September 10th. Former State Schoolers, their families, and the Owatonna community are invited to celebrate and remember the 10,635 children who were part of the State School system between 1886-1946. We hope you can join us.

Planned for this year will be roundtable discussions with former State Schoolers as well as children of past State Schoolers, a screening of a 1930s narrated film, horse-drawn wagon rides around the West Hills Complex, lawn games, and much more. This is truly an event for the whole family, so plan ahead and we hope to see you here on September 10 from noon until 5 pm.

## INFORMATION ON OUR NEW NEWSLETTER FORMAT

As the Steele County Historical Society has joined with the Orphanage Museum, we are also joining our newsletters in a way to better communicate with our community and partners. Each quarter, this newsletter will be sent out, highlighting what is being done at the Steele County Historical Society and Orphanage Museum news.

The SCHS newsletter is a work that we put a great deal of time and expense into and one that we are proud of. Each print run of our newsletter requires dozens of work hours and costs nearly \$2,000 to print and ship. This is why the quarterly newsletter has long been one of the key benefits of membership at the Steele County Historical Society. As we take on our new role relating to the Orphanage Museum, we understand that the Radiator Brush (now part of the SCHS newsletter) is an important part of that community. We want to make it available to you into the future, but need to be mindful of our ability to produce it. As such, this and the following quarterly newsletter will be mailed to the entirety of our membership base as well as the mailing list of the Orphanage Museum. However, beginning in January of 2023, if you wish to continue receiving the SCHS newsletter (including the Radiator Brush), you will need to sign up for an SCHS membership or a special Newsletter Membership at \$10 per year to cover our cost of producing, printing, and mailing. If you have any questions, please contact us at 507-451-1420 or email [Kellen@SteeleHistoryMuseum.org](mailto:Kellen@SteeleHistoryMuseum.org).



*Members of the Brager Family*

## ORPHAN OR HALF ORPHAN?

By Anne Peterson

It's always special when State School families return. The Brager siblings visited in May. Their grandfather, Albert Strand, and several brothers came to Owatonna after their father's death on Lake Superior. Below is a recounting of the accident:

“On September 18, 1910, four people anchored their launch and rowed their dinghy to shore. A storm came up and the four men rowed back to the launch. Three of the four men had made it back on to the launch. The launch capsized and the three men aboard it all drowned. The only survivor was the man still in the rowboat, who barely made it back to shore himself.”

The widowed mother managed to keep her children for more than a year, but it proved impossible to earn a living and take care of her children. On November 13,

1911, five boys—Jorgen, Abraham, Isak, William, and Albert- arrived from Lake County as Half-Orphans (one parent is deceased). There was a status box to check as Orphan or Half-Orphan when children were admitted to the State School. In a short time, their status would change to Full Orphan.

Young Albert was eventually placed out with a family near Lake City and was a kind, caring man, who didn't talk about his childhood. Think of the dreams this young family had when they left Norway for America, and then everything changed in an instant.



*Members of the Strand Family*

**SCHS Staff****Kellen Hinrichsen** -

Executive Director

**Daniel Moeckly** -

Archives, Exhibits, &amp; Technology

**MaryAnne Higgins**-

Volunteer, Tours, Events, &amp; Rentals

**Anne Peterson**

Orphanage Museum Manager

**Becky & Dennis Kelm**

Custodial Staff

**Board of Directors**

Elizabeth Anselmo

Dave Effertz

Jerry Ganfield

Dan Gorman

Samona Grubish

James Gunderson

Anne Harman

Ken Henricksen

Keith Holman

Jerry Lewison

Deb Lustig

Andrew McGuire

Jane Middlestadt

Deanna Nelson

Char Ost

Rick Gnemi - County Board Liaison

# OUTDOOR BENCHES DONATED TO THE SCHS



By MaryAnne Higgins

Dylan Meiners has made a lasting impact to the residents of Steele County through the 15 benches that he constructed for his Eagle Scout project this spring. Dylan wanted to complete a project that would leave a lasting legacy to the community and be used by others throughout the year.

This Eagle Scout project taught him many things, ranging from project design and management, to budgeting, and new wood working skills. Dylan persevered and was determined to deliver a product for the residents of Steele County to be used at events here in the Village of Yesteryear. Materials for the project were donated by Alexander Lumber, Owatonna Lowes, IFACS, and Brent & Michelle Meiners.

Congratulations to Dylan for his success in this project! We are grateful for your generosity and to those who donated to this project. Best of luck to Dylan as he moves on to the United States Air Force Academy!

## IN MEMORIAM

<u>In Memory Of</u>	<u>Given By</u>	<u>In Memory Of</u>	<u>Given By</u>	<u>In Memory Of</u>	<u>Given By</u>
Ahrens, Bill	Johnson, Curtis & Judith Ganfield, Jerry	Hale, Mary	Ebeling, Terry & Tammy Hosfield, Grace & Roger	Schember, Carole Springer, Dale	Lerberg, Josephine Hartle, Jim & Jo
The Orphanage Children	Mosher, Charles & Joan	Hansen, Margaret	Dinneen, Margo	Springer, Ed	Ringhofer Insurance
Arndt, Steve	Mindy McFarren	Kenney, Dorry	Kaplan, Lloyd & Jackie		Ebeling, Terry & Tammy
	Lewison, Jerry	Kopp, Paul	Ganfield, Jerry		Kasper, Darwin & Barb
	Hartle, Bill & Jody	Mahlman, Darrold	Ebeling, Terry & Tammy	Staska, Brenda	Ptacek, Florence
	Hartle, Jim & Jo	Miller, David	Kaplan, Lloyd & Jackie		Ptacek, Vern & Pat
	Rysavy, Brian & Michelle		Ganfield, Jerry		Hommedahl, Erling & Karen
Berge, Marian Schley	Hartle, Jim & Jo		Schmidt, Barbara & Ron		Sabin, David & Gloria
Bungum, Joan	M&Z Partnership		Higgins, MaryAnne & Matt		Schley, Shirley
	Schulz, Robert & Corrine	Perhay, John	Perhay, Denise	Swenson, Paul J.	Henricksen, Ken & Rosie
	Bungum, Donald		Ebeling, Terry & Tammy	Tande, Larry	Kasper, Darwin & Barb
	Johnson, Roger & June	Rassman, Eugene	McGregor, Jean		Schroht, Berniece
DeVrient, Lorainne	Hanson, Glenda	Razor, Peter	Durben, Silvan		Hosfield, Grace & Roger
Dietz, Rita	Sorenson, Arlene	Rund, Ann	Ebeling, Terry & Tammy	Tellijohn, Neil	Schroht, Bradley & Susan
	Hartle, Bill & Jody	Schember, Carole	Sable, Pat		Wanous, Jeffrey & Julie
Gainey, Kevin	Ganfield, Jerry		Sorenson, Caroline		Hartle, Jim & Jo
Grubish, Rosemarie	Wanous, Jeffrey & Julie		Gaul, Donna J.	Thamert, Dick	Ganfield, Jerry
	Ringhofer, Dennis & Becca		Paulson, Daryl & Kathy		Lewison, Jerry
	Hartle, Bill & Jody		Tollefson, Kay		Ebeling, Terry & Tammy
	Coulter, Robert & Gloria		Pichner, Jim & Joyce		Kasper, Darwin & Barb
Hale, Mary	Hartle, Jim & Jo		Anderson, Carl & Nancy	Zetah, Jerome	Ganfield, Jerry

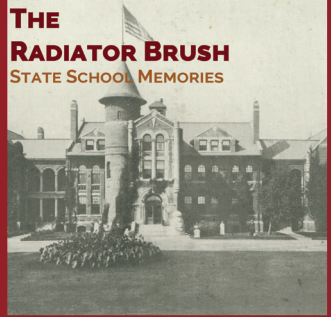


1700 Austin Road Owatonna, MN 55060

(507) 451-1420

[SCHSMN.org](http://SCHSMN.org)

Return Service Requested



*The Radiator Brush now included!*

*VISIT THE STEELE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AND MAKE YOUR DAY HISTORIC!*



SEE ALL THAT YOU CAN  
DO AT THE SCHS!

THANK YOU!

NEWSLETTER  
SPONSORS

**ENDRES** WINDOW CLEANING  
Quality that is guaranteed to shine through  
265 22ND STREET SE  
OWATONNA, MN 55060  
The Quality Shines Through

Serving all of Southern Minnesota.

[endreswc.com](http://endreswc.com)  
507-WE-CLEAN  
507-932-5326

**Tri M Graphics**  
WE THINK BEYOND INK.<sup>™</sup>

P 507.451.3920 | TF 800.491.3922 [trimgraphics.com](http://trimgraphics.com)

**R&K ELECTRIC**  
"Power to the People"

3445 Hoffman Drive NW • 507-451-6409

**alzheimer's association**

2021 Owatonna Walk to End Alzheimer's  
Sunday September 19th, 2021  
Owatonna Fairgrounds, Foundation Building | Owatonna, MN

LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS

**Auto-Owners INSURANCE**

**Heinz Insurance Agency**

Your local independent agent will be there.  
507-451-9252  
[www.heinzinsurance.net](http://www.heinzinsurance.net)

Dave Otterson

**Johnson, Doerhoefer & Miner P.A.**  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

507-583-7528 | [johndoerpcpa.com](http://johndoerpcpa.com)

"We understand small business because we are a small business"

*People, Purpose, Passion.*

Enhanced Assisted Living Specializing in Memory Care with Locations in Mankato and Owatonna.

**Birchwood Cottages**

[www.BirchwoodCottagesMN.com](http://www.BirchwoodCottagesMN.com)  
Phone: (507) 413-6800

*Visiting Angels Home Care*

We can help you or your loved one stay safely at home for as long as possible.

507-451-1124