

# The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## WINTER 2023 Newsletter



**HISTORY CENTER**  
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

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**REMINDER:** Please make sure we have the most up-to-date email and mailing address for you. Thanks!

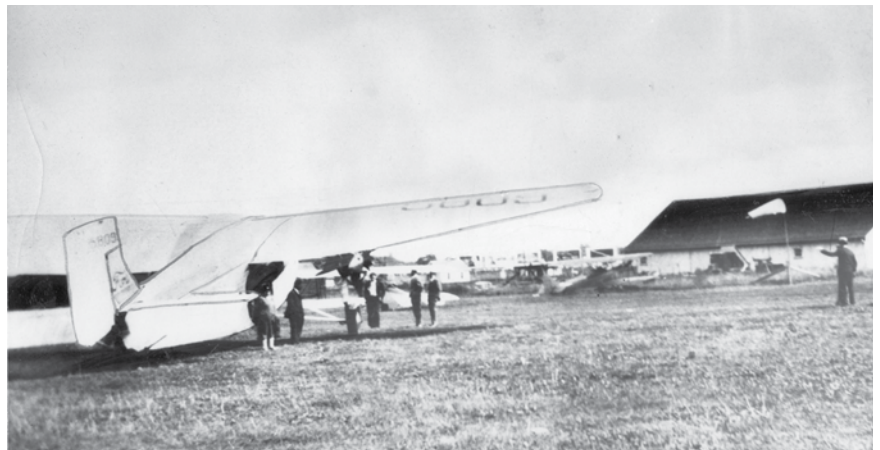
## GRAHAM FIELD — ROCHESTER'S FIRST AIRPORT

By Lee Hilgendorf | Volunteer

In the fall of 1919, Dr. Christopher and Mrs. Blanche Graham gifted 70 acres of land to Olmsted County to be used as a permanent home for the Olmsted County Fair. A portion of that land, located south of the racetrack, had been used for years as a place for airplanes to land and hop-off, especially during exhibitions at the fair. Perhaps influenced by his long-time chauffeur, friend and fellow aviation enthusiast Arthur Ellis, Dr. Graham now designated that area to be used as an aviation field.

On November 5, 1919, Olmsted County Commissioners officially named this area Graham Field (*pictured below*).

The following spring, neither the City of Rochester nor Olmsted County showed interest in repairs or even simple maintenance of the flying field. Ultimately, the members of Rochester's American Legion Post 92, many of them veteran pilots of the Great War, got the field into shape for the season. They were also responsible for registering the field with the United States Air Service as the Rochester airport.



## STRANGE AIRMAN SAILS OVER CITY LAST NIGHT; SCENE CAUSES PANG IN THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE

Somehow, They Declared, This  
Air Section Belonged  
to Riebe.

Last Night's Aviator Seemed to  
be Trespassing on Sacred  
Ground.

**A**N AIR MAN sailing up from the east last evening, circled over Rochester a little while and then continued on his winged way. The sight of him caused a pang in the hearts of many when they recalled how but a few brief weeks

ago, Herbert Riebe, Rochester air pilot, flew about in just the same manner, touching the high waves of the atmosphere above, cresting the air billows in style so smooth, and then gradually floating downward again to terra firma.

When the aviator last night was sighted, it seemed almost a case of trespassing on his part, for singularly enough, the space above the city seemed the possession of Herbert Riebe. To others it seemed like the ghost of the Roches-

ter air man come back in the shades of eventide to visit the scenes so familiar to him during the past two years.

### Little Girl is Struck By Auto, Not Seriously Hurt

The little daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Ryan, living on the east side, was struck a glancing blow by a passing automobile last night. She was knocked down and it was thought at first that she might perhaps be seriously injured, but examination showed that aside from a few painful bruises and the fright she had received, she was unscathed.

Use the Bulletin wami column.

Also, in the spring of 1920, R.E. Pease, manager of a local car agency, announced the organization of the Rochester Aircraft Company. The company's new Curtis bi-plane was piloted by war veteran Herbert Riebe (*pictured at right*) and maintained by William Yunker.

After spending the summer giving rides and promoting aviation in many of the surrounding towns, Pilot Riebe, as he was known, became a celebrity in Southern Minnesota. Riebe even flew 16-year-old female daredevil Lottie Schermerhorn (*pictured at right with back to camera*) as she became the first woman in Minnesota and one of the first in the nation to parachute from an airplane.

The highlight of the 1922 flying season was the flying circus held on October 15 to benefit the hanger fund. The event featured motorcycle races on the fairground's half mile track, airplanes racing overhead along with aerobatics and an auto polo match.

Over the next few years Graham Field became more than a safe port for the occasional barnstormer, it served as a base for several flying schools. On Sunday afternoons Rochester citizens would come out to the airport to watch the airplanes. The more daring types could take a ride with any number of pilots. One of the favorites was Fred Toogood. Toogood was a veteran of World War I and was a trained flying instructor. His specialty was demonstrating a "dead-stick" landing. After lining up his airplane for a landing he would cut power to the motor.

The silence of the gliding aircraft was occasionally broken by screaming passengers.

On April 30, 1925, Willard Furlow, Rochester's own World War I ace, announced that Rochester would have a permanent aviation field listed on all Federal aviation corps maps. Two Army air corps officers that visited Rochester said that Graham Field, because of its unobstructed approach from all directions, was an ideal landing field provided it was made smoother. Again, the William McCoy American Legion Post 92 took the lead in leveling and smoothing Graham Field. This time however Rochester and Olmsted County both contributed machines and manpower to the project.

By 1927, the country was touting the virtues of air mail. In Rochester, the service had been unsuccessfully experimented with for nearly ten years. On the day after Thanksgiving in 1927, Col. Lewis Britton, CEO of Northwest Airways, a major airmail carrier, and his chief pilot Charles Holman arrived in Rochester.

The pair spoke to a noon luncheon of the city's business leaders urging them to make Rochester a link in their airmail route between Chicago and the Twin Cities. What was needed was an airport with a 3000-foot runway that was 300 feet wide to meet the government specifications.

Again, the city of Rochester shrugged its shoulders and again the American Legion came to the rescue. With



permission from Dr. Christopher Graham, the legion was able to extend the once small flying field south to the necessary 3000 feet before the end of 1927.

To be fair, two other organizations were inspired that same day in November to build airports in Rochester with wildly different results. Another story for another time.

During the winter of 1927-28, perhaps inspired by Graham Field's new runway, the Jefferson Transportation Company ordered a new Ford Tri-motor airplane to provide air service between Rochester and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

On July 13, 1928, pilot Pat Gallup landed Jefferson Airways' tri-motored aircraft at Graham Field ushering in a new era of travel with the first scheduled passenger service in Rochester. Pilot Gallup said that Graham Field was usable until a more suitable airport could be built. One day earlier Mayo Property Association had announced their plan for a new, larger airport to be built across the road from the fairgrounds and Graham Field.

During the last week of September 1928, the Rochester Airport Company, a division of Mayo Properties, opened their new airport for service. On October 1, 1928, Jefferson Airways moved their operation across the road to the new airport and all activities at Graham Field ceased.

Today, as you stand along 16th St. SE, between the two fairground entrances, it's hard to imagine that you are standing in the middle of Rochester's first airport, Graham Field.

## ROCHESTER'S "BIRDMAN"

**Herbert F. Riebe was a veteran of the Great War, serving as a pilot and trainer in the skies over Europe.**

How he landed in Rochester was a mystery. As the pilot for the Rochester Aircraft Co., Riebe became a celebrity as he spent the summer of 1920 giving flying demonstrations and rides at many communities in southern Minnesota. At the end of the season, he returned to his parents' home in Pingree, North Dakota, where, it was said, he promised his mother he would give up flying that fall.

On August 19, 1921, in a field outside of Preston, Minnesota, Lieutenant Herbert F. Riebe and his passenger, R.C. Bright, died. It was speculated that Bright, the local theatre owner, became frightened and grabbed at the airplane's dual controls and that Pilot Riebe was unable to recover the aircraft.

**Riebe was 29 years old.**



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Paul Scanloni | President

### The History Center is busy as we approach the holiday season!

Decorations for the Holidays were completed November 3rd. Special tours to view the decorations are available now through December 17th. Tours can sell out early, so order tickets soon if interested or hosting guests who may be interested.

Creepy Dolls just marked its 5th year with a new twist, a murder mystery. Interest levels reached an all-time high with greater participation than ever and greater attendance at the party held October 13 at the historic Chateau. Once again, the media frenzy over this event included coverage in *Smithsonian Magazine*.

Mayo Clinic researcher Dr. Earl Wood is best known for his ground-breaking work developing the G-suit and the M-1 maneuver during World War II. These innovations helped allied pilots prevent loss of consciousness during acceleration maneuvers. Both are still used, virtually unchanged, more than 80 years later. Dr. Wood became one of Mayo Clinic's most prominent researchers, playing a pivotal role in the creation of several innovative medical technologies including cardiac catheterization, the oximeter, and computer-based X-ray techniques. Dr. Wood's son, Andrew Wood, has written

*Life at High G-Force: The Quest of Mayo Clinic Researcher Dr. Earl H. Wood*. He delivered a fascinating lecture on October 26th with extensive photography and video illustrations. The book is available for sale at the History Center.

Progress on restoration of the George Stoppel farm continues. We have completed restoration of the smokehouse (including a functional ringer for the bell!). We anticipate continuing work on the barn in the spring. Completion of barn work and the house will proceed as funding becomes available from government sources (mainly state funds, beginning with a \$500,000 grant from the state legislature), as well as local businesses, private foundations and individual contributors.

The county is developing its budget for next year, considering a significant reduction in support for the History Center. Wayne has prepared talking points for discussions with the commissioners, emphasizing value to the residents and communities of Olmsted County and the fact that we are already far below the funding level of comparable counties of St. Louis (Duluth) and Stearns (St. Cloud).

# THE OLMSTED COUNTY BOARD PROPOSES ANOTHER ROUND OF CUTS TO THE HISTORY CENTER

Since 2022, the County Board has cut the History Center's annual allocation by nearly

31%

\$289,515 to \$239,515 in 2022, and a further reduction to \$200,000 in 2024 if the county administrator's recommendations are enacted. Cumulatively, that would be a 15% cut in our total operating revenue.

Meanwhile, compensation rates (labor) alone increased by more than 9% in 2022 and 2023, putting increased pressure on the History Center's operating budget. Even with these raises, HCOC staff compensation lags behind our peers, according to the 2022 MN Council on Nonprofits Survey.



**HISTORY CENTER**  
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

Olmsted County is falling far behind its Greater Minnesota peers

In 2022, **St. Louis County (Duluth) increased its allocation** to the St. Louis County Historical Society from \$533,352 to \$544,998. Between 2019 and 2022, **Stearns County (St. Cloud) increased its allocation** from \$600,000 to \$638,600.

Meanwhile, Olmsted County, which is larger in population than Stearns County and projected to outgrow St. Louis County in the coming years, cut the History Center's allocation from \$289,515 in 2020 to \$200,000 in 2024.

## You understand the History Center's positive impact in Olmsted County.

- **Shared past, better future.** History educates Olmsted County's children and adults, adds value to our tourism economy, preserves our heritage for present and future generations, and helps long-time and new residents make connections to our shared past.
- **There is only one History Center for Olmsted County.** Through our collections, archives, exhibits, and programs, the History Center reaches every corner of the county.
- **The History Center supports Olmsted County's economy.** In August 2022, the University of Minnesota Extension Service: Center for Community Vitality conducted an economic impact study of the History Center's Stoppel Farmstead Historic Rehabilitation Project. Based on the study, and after updating cost estimates (particularly due to inflation), we expect the total project to have a total economic impact of \$4.5 million, creating 24 jobs.
  - The History Center has already invested nearly \$350,000 in restoring the historic George Stoppel smokehouse, using state and private funding.
  - In 2024, the History Center will begin at least \$500,000 in improvements to the historic George Stoppel barn.

Contact your elected County Board representative and share your personal connection to Olmsted History.

Find yours here: [olmstedcounty.gov/government/county-boards-commissions/board-of-commissioners](https://olmstedcounty.gov/government/county-boards-commissions/board-of-commissioners)



Need help locating your elected county board representative? Call us at 507-282-9447 or email us at [services@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:services@olmstedhistory.com).

# 2023 IN REVIEW: LECTURES AND VOLUNTEERING AT THE HISTORY CENTER

By **Madeleine Lawler** | Education Coordinator

We started 2023 off strong with John Hildebrand and Pat O’Neil presenting on Mapping the Farm and the history of the O’Neil family farm. Hildebrand and O’Neil gave a lively presentation and hosted a fascinating conversation. This local and agricultural-themed lecture was funded by the Alan Calavano Lecture Fund.

In mid-November Phil Wheeler and the Rochester chapter of the NAACP gave a presentation on their research about redlining in Rochester. We hosted several local authors this year: Paul Scanlon, Andrew Pruett, Susan Waughtal, and Don Borcharding—and the regionally local Steve Gardiner (he’ll be coming back next year for a talk on Historic Bridges in Southeastern Minnesota!). Speaking of next year, we have some exciting lectures in the works. Staff will be contributing to the lecture series with their own research, a Minnesota agricultural historian will be presenting on the history of the grange movement, and so much more!

**If you missed any of the lectures, they are recorded and stored on our YouTube page.**

One of my favorite parts of my first year at HCOC has been getting to know the volunteers. They are an incredibly active and enthusiastic community with great ideas and a passion for making things happen. From our archival volunteers who digitize, catalog, research, and so much more to our event volunteers who help give tours, manage crowds, lend a hand with field trips, read at Story Time, and are a public-facing side of HCOC. The Build Crew volunteers have helped us tremendously with some much-needed



▲ *MHRT giving wagon rides during Fall Fest*

building maintenance and facelifts. There is a strong team of gardeners who keep the grounds looking top-notch. MHRT has lit up kids’ (and adults’) eyes with tractor rides and Days of Yesteryear. The History Center of Olmsted County would not be nearly what it is without every single one of them.

**Here’s to a great first year  
and an even better second!**

# LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD: ARCHIVES ACTIVITIES 2023 AND BEYOND

By **Krista Lewis** | Archivist, CA

At this time of year I always marvel at the fact that it's this time of year already. Every year seems to go by faster. My 20-year high school reunion was a few weeks ago, which I'm still struggling to believe. I also just passed my eight-year anniversary at the History Center, and it sure doesn't feel like that's possible. This always leads me to think about what's been accomplished. As for the past year, we had a busy one in the Research Center and Archives.

One of the main accomplishments Jenna and I wanted to achieve was an updated Collections Management Policy, a document which sets standards for our collecting and helps guide us in collecting decisions. There were two big changes. The first was restricting the number of donations we take in in a month to five in an effort to reduce backlogs and keep ourselves from being further overwhelmed. The second was the creation of a Collections Plan that includes a tiers chart, basically a grading system, for incoming donations as well as existing collection pieces. Our goal is strong, highly relevant, and thoroughly documented collections, and the tiered system is meant to keep our focus on that and help weed out material that doesn't contribute to that goal.

Early in the year we went through a strategic planning workshop, which resulted in a dozen or so accomplishments we thought were obtainable in the next 12 months. One of these was to assess the collections for deaccession potential. If you've read our previous newsletters, you may recall the mention of our limited and/or full storage space and options for addressing the issue. This strategic accomplishment is directly related to that, as well as our goal for strong collections. I've broadly reviewed the archival collection and noted areas to work on.



## ▲ *Weeding and reorganizing in progress*

For example, if you've come in, you may have noticed the bookshelves immediately inside the Research Center are a little barer. This is a result of weeding using our tiered system. Some of the freed up space will likely be used for display, but most of it will be used to bring out little seen material from archives storage, where similar weeding has also taken place. My hope is that next year I will be able to rearrange some boxes and consolidate newly freed space to get a better grasp on how much room we have for growth.

Volunteers have had a huge hand in all of this, too. As mentioned in a previous newsletter, several have worked on digitizing local newspapers, which, once done, will allow us to free up many feet of shelving. They've almost completed *Byron Review* and *Chatfield News*. Next year the goal is to get through the other two, *Stewartville Star* and *Zumbrota News-Record*. Volunteers have also been busy this year digitizing thousands of photos for preservation and access, not to mention cataloging, indexing, and researching too many things to cover here.

**I fully expect next year to move by as swiftly as this one, but I'm looking forward to making more progress with the collections and sharing it all with you!**

# INTERGENERATIONAL SHARING AND THE WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS

By **Wayne Gannaway** | Executive Director

While the History Center is wrapping up some programs for the season, our staff and volunteer decorators have just finished gift wrapping a beautiful season for the time-honored Christmas tours at Mayowood. The theme this year is Songs of the Season. Visiting Mayowood during the holidays is a tradition for many families. Of course, spending time with one's parents and grandparents is another.

At our recent Fall Fest (always held on the Thursday of MEA weekend in October), I had the opportunity to walk among the throngs of families in and around the History Center. Despite a light drizzle from an overcast sky, the kids were having a blast. I also noted a lot of grandparents streaming in with their grandchildren, like those shown at right, perhaps giving their grown kids a break from parenting for the afternoon. While the youngsters enjoyed coloring pumpkins and making crafts under the pavilion, I saw more than one grandparent sneaking a peak of our exhibits. Young and old alike seemed to enjoy stepping into the rustic Dee Cabin and Hadley Valley Schoolhouse.

Some of the grandparents may have been able to share memories of attending a one-room schoolhouse. Fewer and fewer can pass along first-hand experience of growing up in a log cabin, but they likely know family stories involving rustic living conditions or persevering through tough times. There is no doubt that Fall Fest encourages intergenerational sharing (maybe stories about trick or treating during the historic Halloween blizzard of 1991). Staff and volunteers see grandparents sharing stories with grandchildren all the time, whether it's at Days of Yesteryear, in the exhibit gallery, or during our new Story Time program. Two examples stand out. The KTTC exhibit has inspired conversations about the big news events of the late-20th century, especially the 1978 flood, not to mention about how TV and getting news has changed. I saw similar multigenerational sharing at the Mosh Pit and Memories exhibit, with three generations of family members discussing music and pop culture.



In Olmsted County, many more grandparents than grandchildren have grown up on family farms. More often than not, a grandparent who grew up on a farm may be the closest connection a child has to farm life. Although there are fewer family farms today, agriculture remains critically important to our county and state. Passing down family history, from one generation to the next, is an important way to maintain connections and an appreciation, not just of farm life, but simply other ways of living.

## **This holiday, will you be visiting with grandchildren?**

**As you plan your gatherings, think about encouraging your own intergenerational sharing with family stories, photographs, or artifacts, perhaps an ornament passed down from your grandparents, or a Christmas tour at Mayowood.**





# STOPPEL FARMSTEAD UPDATE: LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024, AND BEYOND

By **Wayne Gannaway** | Executive Director

The Stoppel farmstead reached a milestone in 2023—the smokehouse went from the brink of ruin to its sturdiest condition perhaps since it was built about 150 years ago. Not only does the bell ring again, but the hand-built limestone foundation is more solid than ever after careful restoration by skilled stone masons. But there is so much more work to do. Thanks to our legislative delegation, in 2023 we received a \$500,000 legislatively-directed Legacy grant to begin urgent work on the Stoppel barn. The funding will pay for critical structural work, including a large amount of stone masonry restoration, and repairs to the exterior siding, doors, and windows. We have also applied for a competitive large Legacy grant for replacing the roof (we’ll find out in December if our application is successful). All that work, which we expect to begin

next summer, will be phase one of the barn restoration. The next phase includes adding restrooms and a classroom in the lower level. *See page 11 for project restoration timeline.*

It’s one thing to restore a historic farmstead, it’s another thing to activate it. In the summer edition of *The Scribe*, I wrote about our interpretive or long-range planning for the Stoppel Farmstead. In short, it’s our road map for how we’ll tell stories at the historic site. The plan, which was funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, is now complete and available for review. I invite you to go to our website ([olmstedhistory.com/the-stoppel-farmstead](http://olmstedhistory.com/the-stoppel-farmstead)) to check out our vision of the George Stoppel Farmstead.



## A YEAR IN REVIEW AND MORE FUN TO COME

By Ashley Evans | Events Coordinator

If you have been to any of the History Center events recently, you may know we've had a busy summer and fall season with the Hootenanny (*pictured above*), Creepy Dolls Masquerade, Fall Fest, many lectures, and membership gatherings. While I was only responsible for a portion of these, the others organized by our Education Coordinator Madeleine, I think it is safe to say the both of us, and the other staff, were ecstatic to see wonderful turnouts and engagement from our members and everyone in the community. Looking back at these first several months of my working at HCOC, I can't help but feel proud of the events I've planned. I also feel extremely supported by all of our members, volunteers, and staff whenever I see your faces at these events – whether attending or helping to make them that much better. With this “yearly” review, I want to give a bit of insight into how I review events after they happen to determine their success as that is part of the process we don't often share.

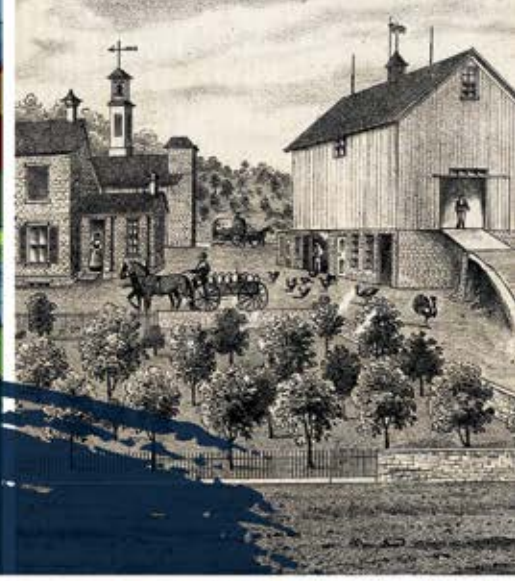
While I won't get into numbers, though that is obviously an important factor, I often look at three things: did the majority of the audience have fun, how long did people stay at the event, and are people interacting with the exhibits/activities/etc. It can be incredibly subjective if people are having fun, but I always hope to see people smiling and engaged with what the event has to offer. This ties into people interacting; if the event is in the museum and people are taking their time to read through the exhibits? Amazing! People are touring the farmstead at the Hootenanny and learning the history?

Superb! However, if I can see people are confused by an activity or the presence of something at an event, then that signals to me that I need to rethink how to present the activity or, potentially, remove it all together. That same logic can be applied to the type of food we serve, locations events are hosted at, and many other details. I could be swamped at an event, but I still make mental notes of how to improve the event for the following year based off of this criteria and more.

The last thing I mentioned was how long people attend the events for, and this is often something people don't think about or are surprised to find out I consider. We understand people have other commitments and maybe cannot stay for all six hours of the Hootenanny or only want to socialize for an hour at an exhibit opening; I promise we are not counting everyone who leaves partway through an event. Often, we are looking to see if half of the group is still interacting with the event two-thirds of the way through, what demographic of people stay for all six hours of the Hootenanny, are people still dancing and having fun three hours into their being at the Creepy Dolls Party, or have half of our attendees left after an hour because the event is a flop? Thankfully, none of our events have flopped, but it is certainly something that could happen if we lose touch with our audiences. It is my hope as I continue to improve events, with the help of everyone at HCOC, that day will not come. I want to see our events expand and continue to teach people about history.

All that being said, I take all of our event feedback to heart, and I strive to change past mishaps in the future. I would be foolish to say every event has been perfect, but people had fun, smiled, and have learned just a little bit more history. As we finish off 2023, I am already beginning to plan the 2024 events such as the Creepy Dolls Party (who knew I planned things so far in advance!), but I also encourage you to keep an eye out as some new events will be storming the scene including members' only events, fundraisers, and much more.

**I just want to say one last thank you for a great 2023, and I hope to see all of you readers at at least one event next year!**



# George Stoppel Farmstead Building Restoration

## 2023 – Smokehouse:

This "remarkable building has few, if any, precedents within its type or region."

- Architectural historian.

- › Restoration completed
- › Next up, interpretive signage and exhibits

## 2024 – Barn Phase One:

› Funded by a \$500,000 legislatively-directed appropriation:

- Structural repairs
- Restoration of stone masonry
- Interior carpentry repairs and life/safety renovations
- Building envelope repairs

› Restoration of the cedar shingle roof—if awarded a \$171,170 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage (Legacy) grant

## 2025 – Barn Phase Two:

› Renovation of lower level (east addition) into classroom and educational programming space

- › Construction of bathrooms (modular) in lower level
- › Site work for utilities
- › Finish carpentry and lighting for exhibits

## 2026\* – 2028:

- › Farm House exterior and interior restoration
- › Universal accessibility to the farmstead
- › North cave repairs and lighting
- › Landscape and grounds (see interpretive plan)
- › Farmstead exhibits



### Historic Building Restoration Budget:

~\$3.2 million

### Interpretive Programming and Exhibits Budget:

~\$1.5 to \$2 million

*\*2026 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the History Center of Olmsted County.*



To learn more, visit our website  
[olmstedhistory.com](http://olmstedhistory.com)



▲ Detail of the decorations you'll see this year.



▲ Members from SPARK Children's Museum decorate Charlie and Edith's bed.

## "SING A SONG OF THE HOLIDAYS" AT MAYOWOOD

By Dan Nowakowski | Mayowood Historic Site Manager

**It is that magical time of year again, Christmas at Mayowood.**

This year's theme throughout Mayowood is Christmas Songs. The decorators chose a variety of popular Christmas songs and used their artistic talents to bring the songs alive in unique ways. Each room has a notable part of the song's chorus for visitors to enjoy. When walking through the house, it feels like you're walking through a Christmas album.

One notable tree this year that our guides will emphasize during the tours is the Grand Alice tree. This tree is distinguished because it comes from Liisa Mayo's childhood account in 1962 of how her Grandmother Alice Mayo decorated the family Christmas tree in a particular way.

## Christmas Tours Begin: November 4 through December 17, 2023

*(Closed on Thanksgiving Day)*

Please go to the History Center website for availability and times under the Christmas tab on the Mayowood page. Below the dates and times is a link for our popular Candlelight tours. **These tours run on Saturday and Sunday until December 17.**

## We would like to thank all the hard work of the decorators for making our Christmas tours successful

Lin Funk • Mollie Funk • Kathy Schroeder • Rochester Art Center • Mayo Clinic Historic Properties Staff: Chuck & Bonnie Potter • Lauren & Eric Olson • Abbey Potter • Ben Brueske • Allison Matthews • Jayne Pompein • Mary Jo Casio • Gail Hester • Historic Properties Staff • History Center of Olmsted County & Friends • 125Live • Artistic Framers • The Rochester Flower & Garden Club • Rochester Deaf Club • Zumbro River Fiber Art Guilds • Alice Mayo Society • SPARK, Children's Museum of Rochester • Jane Schmidt • Sarah Cima • Casey Lineberry • Debi Neville • Mariah Mihm • Joan Hunziker-Dean • Patrick Dean • Elizabeth Schmidt • Linda Carrol • Mark Michels

# HANDLING A SOGGY SITUATION

By Jenna Collins | Collections Manager

Dedicated readers of The Scribe might remember an article I wrote back in the Winter 2022 edition about the perils of disasters like fires and floods affecting historic collections, titled “Hope for the Best, Plan for the Worst”. In it, I wrote about how training and planning can help us prepare for a potential crisis. This past September, the training continued when the History Center hosted a hands-on wet salvage training. Led by professionals from the Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC), it was attended by representatives from various historical organizations including the American Swedish Institute and the historical societies of Stearns, Anoka, Hennepin, Goodhue, Mower, and Houston counties.

**“Wet salvage” is the process of saving items—in this case historic artifacts and archival materials—from extensive water damage.**

Water damage is one of the most common issues that collecting institutions like the History Center can face, and untreated water damage can lead to mold. In this training, we learned the best methods to remove artifacts from standing water, and how to dry items with as little damage as possible. The instructors from MACC brought items to drop into pools of dirty water, including books, clothing, records, video tapes, and more. These pools were outside, and we staged a mock emergency, learning the best method of drying for each item. Most objects can be air dried if there is space and materials for it, and humidity is controlled to prevent mold growth. Other objects need to be freeze dried, and interestingly, some items like video tapes and microfilm should be kept wet until they are brought to a conservator for the best chance of saving the material.

It was great training to be able to handle wet objects without the pressure of a true emergency. Taking care of the History Center’s collection is one of the most important parts of my job, and preparing for disaster is part of keeping it safe.



▲ Pools outside on the History Center lawn held different objects brought by MACC soaked in dirty water. These items were not collection pieces.



▲ Objects are laid out to air dry using different drying materials.



# HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## STAFF

Wayne Gannaway  
Executive Director  
[execdirector@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:execdirector@olmstedhistory.com)

Darla Buss  
Member Services Coordinator  
[services@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:services@olmstedhistory.com)

Jenna Collins  
Collections Manager  
[collections@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:collections@olmstedhistory.com)

Ashley Evans  
Events Coordinator  
[events@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:events@olmstedhistory.com)

Patrick Gannaway  
Facilities and Grounds  
Coordinator

Madeleine Lawler  
Education Coordinator  
[education@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:education@olmstedhistory.com)

Krista Lewis  
Archivist  
[archivist@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:archivist@olmstedhistory.com)

Dan Nowakowski  
Mayowood Historic Site Manager  
[mayowood@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:mayowood@olmstedhistory.com)

Barb Whipple  
Accountant  
[accounting@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:accounting@olmstedhistory.com)

## BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Paul Scanlon  
President  
[scanlon@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:scanlon@olmstedhistory.com)

Kyle Benish  
Treasurer  
[benish@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:benish@olmstedhistory.com)

Linda Willihnganz  
Secretary  
[willihnganz@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:willihnganz@olmstedhistory.com)

Dave Senjem  
Olmsted County Board of  
Commissioners Representative  
[senjem@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:senjem@olmstedhistory.com)

Jordan Cepress  
[cepress@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:cepress@olmstedhistory.com)

Ben King  
[king@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:king@olmstedhistory.com)

Jean Marvin  
[marvin@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:marvin@olmstedhistory.com)

Kerry Olsen  
[olsen@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:olsen@olmstedhistory.com)

Dan Penz  
[penz@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:penz@olmstedhistory.com)

Josefina Pozas  
[pozas@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:pozas@olmstedhistory.com)

Christine Rule  
[rule@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:rule@olmstedhistory.com)

Jim Suk  
[suk@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:suk@olmstedhistory.com)

Mark Warner  
[warner@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:warner@olmstedhistory.com)

Samuel Wick  
[wick@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:wick@olmstedhistory.com)

# HOOTENNANNY! AT THE HISTORY CENTER

LIVE MUSIC ★ CAVE TOURS ★ & MORE!




September 16 ★ 12PM – 6PM

Featuring music by:

Root River Jam | 12PM ★ Amanda Grace | 1:45PM  
Becky Schlegel | 3:20PM ★ The RavensFire Band | 5PM

Tickets available at the door or online:  
\$15/adults, FREE kids admission (12 and under)  
[OlmstedHistory.com/Events](http://OlmstedHistory.com/Events)

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1195 West Circle Dr SW  
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◀ The History Center experienced wonderful turnouts and engagement from our members and everyone in the community with many of our events this year including Hootennanny! and Creepy Dolls: Murder at the Masquerade (below).

 HISTORY CENTER  
OF OLMS TED COUNTY

## CREEPY DOLLS Murder at the Masquerade

OCTOBER  
FRIDAY the 13<sup>TH</sup>

Chateau Theatre  
7PM–10PM doors open at 6PM  
Tickets \$35 • 18+ Only!

Enjoy Dinner, a Cash Bar,  
DJ, Costume Contest, Live  
Painting, and More!

And don't forget – our creepy  
dolls will be out all night!  
Use your detective skills to  
solve our murder mystery.

Buy tickets at [OlmstedHistory.com/events](http://OlmstedHistory.com/events)



This event is sponsored by:





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