

# The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## FALL 2024 Newsletter



**HISTORY CENTER**  
OF OLMSTED COUNTY

### WHATS IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

Can You Read the Signs? .....	1
The Alan Calavano Legacy Society .....	2
IRAs and Pledges .....	3
You Win Some, You Lose Some .....	4
A Successful Summer Event. Now On To Christmas! .....	5
Back To School Is In The Air! .....	6
Spotlight On Polling Stations And Ballot Containers .....	7
"Feedback Surveys Matter" – Creepy Dolls .....	8
2024 Events & Programs .....	10
Staff and Board Members .....	11

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

### CAN YOU READ THE SIGNS? HISTORY MYSTERY DONORS MATCH THE MYSTERIOUS DONOR AND SET A NEW RECORD

By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director

Once again, our History Mystery donor shared the clues and once again History Center supporters delivered the solution. Our members, along with the anonymous donor, raised \$37,455. Add to that a \$10,000 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant (commonly known as Legacy grants) and we are well on our way to educational interpretive signs for our historic buildings. Thank you to everyone!

A good interpretive sign is like a caption to the historic building and landscape. If you've paged through a National Geographic or architectural magazine, the picture gets your attention first, then you look at the caption for details. A well-designed interpretive sign works a lot like that. It complements the building or landscape, rather than distract from it. As history fans, a lot of us are undaunted by reading an article or two in a magazine, but you may have noticed that most people don't want to read a lot of text. The USDA Forest Service has a rule of thumb that any sign should meet the needs of visitors who spend three seconds, 30 seconds, or three minutes reading a sign. That's why it's worth taking time to design an interpretive sign (or any exhibit) carefully.

Toward that end, we expect to contract an exhibit designer to help us research, locate or place (on the site), and design the signs. Our members will have a chance to preview the signs and (as required by the Legacy grant) we'll have two independent historians provide a critical review of the text and images. We're aiming to have that entire design process completed before the end of the year. Then we'll apply for another Legacy grant to help pay for the fabrication and installation. Depending on how busy fabricators are, we expect to have the signs installed by summer 2025.

**My sign for you, our supporters,  
would be short and sweet:**

**Thank You!**



## THE ALAN CALAVANO LEGACY SOCIETY: A REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT A NOBLE CAUSE

By Mark A. Warner, M.D., President

Like many of you who are involved in your communities, my wife, Mary Ellen, and I have either volunteered our services or served on a number of non-profit organizations and foundation boards locally and nationally. One of the most important roles for board members of these organizations is to ensure that the resources needed to accomplish their visions and missions are available. For the History Center of Olmsted County, the vision and mission are:

**Vision:** To become a gathering place for the broader community that inspires and encourages the exploration of history.

**Mission:** Give people of all ages and backgrounds access and opportunity to learn about the past through interpretive programs and exhibits, research, publications and events.

What is more important in our world today than to highlight lessons learned from the past to guide the future?

Few non-profit organizations and foundations succeed long-term without sustained financial resources. For a lucky few, a consistent source of annual funding is available. For most, however, legacy funding (e.g., commitment to endowments and reserves) provides sustained support over the years and contributes to the success of meeting their visions and missions.

For this reason, the History Center honors Alan Calavano, a long-time supporter of the History Center who passed away in 2016, with its Alan Calavano Legacy Society. The Legacy Society recognizes planned giving in estate plans from our passionate members and generous community. Mr. Calavano was a significant contributor in virtually every way to the History Center and its mission.

Legacy Society members help safeguard the future of the History Center's noble mission by ensuring that its education programs, collections, and facilities will continue on behalf of the residents and communities of Olmsted County. Mary Ellen, and I believe strongly in the mission of the History Center and are members of its Legacy Society.

The History Center would love to have you become an Alan Calavano Legacy Society Member. Legacy Society members are partners in the past to ensure a better future for the community. To become a Legacy Society member, simply contact me and express your interest in learning more about the society. I'd love to discuss the opportunity with you. You may reach me at [warner@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:warner@olmstedhistory.com).

Wayne Gannaway, the History Center's Executive Director, and I will work with you to complete a very simple Legacy Society membership form ([olmstedhistory.com/legacy-society](http://olmstedhistory.com/legacy-society)).

You do not need to provide documentation of the gift type or amount. There is no minimum gift amount. We only need to know that you plan on including the History Center in your estate planning. Members of the Legacy Society will be noted on our website if they wish to receive that recognition.

Please consider joining Mary Ellen and me by becoming members of the Alan Calavano Legacy Society. [The vision and mission of the History Center of Olmsted County are noble causes and never more important than in today's fast-paced world.](#)



**Alan Calavano**  
— Legacy Society —



## IRAS AND PLEDGES: FLEXIBILITY IN FINANCIALLY SUPPORTING THE HISTORY CENTER'S MISSION

By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director

As the History Center looks to transform itself to be better prepared for its second century of service to our community, we know that our financial outlook must grow to match our vision. Key to that success is diversifying our funding sources, namely, gifts from individuals.

For many of us, a cash donation comes out of discretionary income and, as the IRS points out, "you can only deduct charitable contributions if you itemize deductions." In 2018, only 13.7% of taxpayers itemized their deductions, opting instead for the standard deduction. However, if you have an IRA and are age 70½ or over, a qualified charitable distribution may save you money on your federal taxes. This is because, at age 73, IRA owners must make a minimum required distribution which is considered taxable. With a qualified charitable distribution of up to \$100,000, such as to the History Center, it is tax-free each year. As I include in every donation acknowledgement letter I sign, it's a good idea to check with your tax advisor to understand the tax implications of a donation.

In sharing his plans to make a generous donation late last year to the History Center's campaign to restore the George Stoppel Farmstead, a long-time supporter told me one reason for doing so was that he needed to make a minimum required distribution from his IRA. Other History Center supporters have cited reaching age 70½ for spurring them to consider a qualified charitable distribution. If you are reaching that milestone and have minimum required distribution to consider, please consider a gift to the History Center.

### MAKING A GIFT TO THE HISTORY CENTER, ON YOUR TIMELINE

But what if you want to contribute to one of our appeals, such as History Mystery or the Stoppel Farmstead, but you're haven't quite reached that golden age of 70½. That was the case for a husband-and-wife team who wanted to specifically contribute to our recent History Mystery campaign for interpretive signs for the Stoppel Farmstead. The IRA owner will still need to wait until they reach the eligible age for a qualified charitable contribution, but they were able to make a pledge so that their generous gift counted toward the interpretive sign project. What's a pledge, you ask?

A pledge is a written promise to give; it results in a donation eventually. The benefit for the donor is that they can support the History Center's mission on a timeline that is convenient to them. It benefits the History Center because it is considered "book-able," that is, it can be recorded in the general ledger. This is especially valuable when the History Center is trying to reach a financial goal within a specific amount of time.

Our campaign to match the Jeffris Family Foundation Challenge Grant and restore the farmstead is a good example of the power of the pledge. Although we have until June 30, 2026, to raise the two-to-one match of their \$833,000 grant, donors can make a pledge before that deadline, and pay their donation in an installment plan, with all pledges paid no later than June 30, 2028.

To learn more about making a pledge, give me a call at the History Center or email me at [execdirector@olmstedhistory.com](mailto:execdirector@olmstedhistory.com). To learn more about IRAs and a qualified charitable distribution, please consult with your tax advisor.



*Members enjoying themselves at our recent ice cream social*

## YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME

By Krista Lewis, Archivist, CA

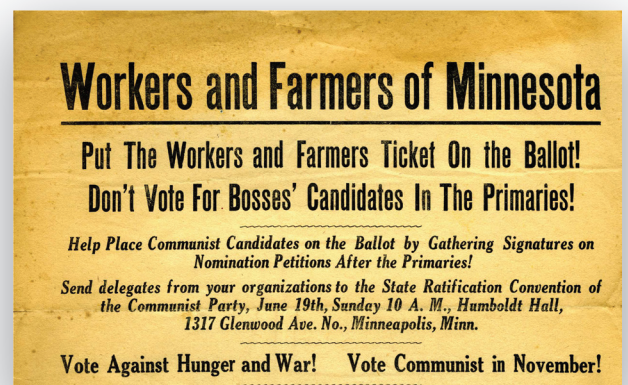
Unless you've somehow managed to avoid all media sources for the last several months (and if that is the case, congratulations!), you know we're in the middle of another election year. Minnesotans mean business when it comes to elections – we've led the country in voter turnout in all the most recent elections, and historically we've had consistently high turnout, even in non-presidential years.

This year, with Governor Walz on the Democratic ticket, Minnesota is getting extra attention. Visits from presidents and presidential candidates is nothing new for Olmsted County, and Rochester in particular. [We've hosted at least 12 presidents going back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, not to mention candidates like Bob Dole.](#)

So, it's no wonder we have archival gems connected to politics in our collection. (The 3D collection also has great examples of pins and ribbons that circulated in past elections, including those for unsuccessful candidates, like Wilkie, Dewey, Stevenson, Humphrey, and Goldwater.) [This picture \(top\) of Republican Headquarters on South Broadway was taken during the 1934 election year.](#) That year, the election results for the Republicans and Farmer-Laborers (they hadn't merged with the Democrats to form the DFL yet) were pretty evenly split. Of the names in the window, only Martin A. Nelson and Oscar Youngdahl lost to their competitors. [In 1958, Rochester hosted the DFL convention at Mayo Civic Auditorium \(and handed out this souvenir program, middle\).](#) Election results leaned a little more in the Democrats favor that year, but not by much.

Of course, there are other options besides the Republican and Democrat parties, though they've rarely garnered significant attention in our political system. In 1932, the Communist party was one of these. [As this flier shows \(bottom\), heading the ticket were William Z. Foster and James W. Ford.](#) Ford, an African-American, would run as the Vice Presidential nominee in 1936 and 1940, as well. And in case you're wondering, the Communists got 6,101 votes in Minnesota (compared to 600,806 for the winning Democrat team of Roosevelt and Garner).

**While we're on the topic, don't forget to vote in this year's Creepy Doll Contest. Polls open October 1st!**







Site Assistant Jean and Guide Megan are carefully removing a black dress worn by Ruth Rakowski Mayo from a mannequin. Guides and volunteers carries, assembled, and dressed 11 mannequins.



Jean, Megan, Volunteer Mary Wiater, and Site Manager Molli Funk carefully return Mayo family clothing to boxes. HCOC stores all clothing in acid free boxes and paper, following proper collection care protocol.



Guide John taking apart a poster stands - nineteen in total were displayed.



Guide Joan is standing in Alice Mayo's sitting room next to a dress believed to have belonged to Alice. Joan was instrumental in the research and creation of this tour.

## A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER EVENT. NOW ON TO CHRISTMAS!

**By Molli Funk**  
**Interim Mayowood Historic Site Manager**

In July, Mayowood Historic Home held The Women of Mayowood: Mothers, Daughters, and Staff specialty tour and exhibit. I am happy to report that it was an amazing success, not only an enjoyable experience for our visitors, but the feedback we received was that the guests learned a new piece of the Mayo story; one that is meaningful and still relevant over 100 years later. This event could not have been successful without the dedication and hard work of a group of Mayowood guides and volunteers.

As a "picture is worth a thousand words," the images on this page of the guides and volunteers on the day of the specialty tour and event give some insight into the work that went into making The Women of Mayowood: Mothers, Daughters and Staff specialty tour and exhibit possible. Pictures provided by Michael Joyce.

### The theme for this year's Christmas tours at Mayowood is "Christmas around the World."

The History Center invites Mayowood visitors to step into a world of wonder and delight as they journey through diverse cultures and traditions, all centered on the joyous spirit of Christmas. Each room at Mayowood will be decorated to represent a different country. As we speak, decorators are researching traditions and preparing their designs. It will be exciting to see the unique traditions they will choose to represent at Mayowood. What a wonderful way to explore the magic of Christmas!

Christmas tours will be held November 2nd through December 15th, 2024. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children. For guests who would like to experience the magic of Mayowood at night, candlelight tours are once again being offered. Candlelight tours will be held on November 30th, December 1st, 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th. Ticket prices are \$50.

Christmas tickets are currently available at [olmstedhistory.com](http://olmstedhistory.com) or by calling 507-282-9447. Candlelight tickets will be available starting in November.



## BACK TO SCHOOL IS IN THE AIR!

By Valerie Wassmer, Associate Director/Education Director

As students are preparing to head back to the classroom (some more excited than others) we have been busy here at the History Center wrapping up summer events and planning new exciting things for the future.

Summer brought Play on the Plaza, bilingual Storytime, learning about the history of baseball and playing with the Rochester Roosters, lectures on the Stoppel Farmstead, learning about trains, and our most recent hit, the History Theater Camp at HCOC. **Thank you so much to everyone who helped with or attended these successful events.**



Steve Glischinski shares information & photos regarding railroading in Minnesota & beyond.



The silly cast members of "An Olmsted County Immigration Story: George Stoppel's Journey" presented by HCOC History Theater Camp participants. A very heartfelt thank you to our playwright and director Susy Olsen for sharing her time and talent, as well as our wonderful student volunteer, Meg.



▲ The Rochester Roosters explain the history of baseball before heading out to play a game of vintage ball with members of the Rochester Youth Baseball players and families (many too shy to be in the photo). ▼



Autumn is on the horizon, and with it come many new plans for members and visitors to the History Center. Our Thursday evening lecture series, Gather 'Round, has many great speakers and events lined up to discuss a myriad of topics, including the story of Art Donahue, a St. Charles native who flew with the RAF prior to Pearl Harbor, tips for fall gardening from our Master Gardeners, the author & illustrator of the Children's activity book Making Minnesota, and the history and legacy of Gold Cross. September will also see a fun and family friendly presentation on the history of feed sack fashion and the return of our wildly popular Oakwood Cemetery Tour. **Don't forget to mark your calendar for the annual Fall Fest held on Thursday, October 17th.**

Thank you again for spending time with us at the History Center of Olmsted County, we hope you have enjoyed having fun while learning a little about our shared history. We will see you again soon!



# SPOTLIGHT ON POLLING STATIONS AND BALLOT CONTAINERS

By Dan Nowakowski, Collections Manager

With election season on the horizon and designated areas for voting stations made, **have you ever wondered how townships play a part in voting and why you go to designated voting areas?**

To answer these questions, I must provide some background history on townships. Townships are not just a way to divide land; they are also the oldest form of government in Minnesota. An election board comprising three, five, or seven residents serves as the legislative body. The legislative body sets policy, enacts local ordinances and budgets, and levies property taxes. They also administer elections by setting up polling stations in township halls, churches, and other locations.

## Now, what about bigger cities like Rochester?

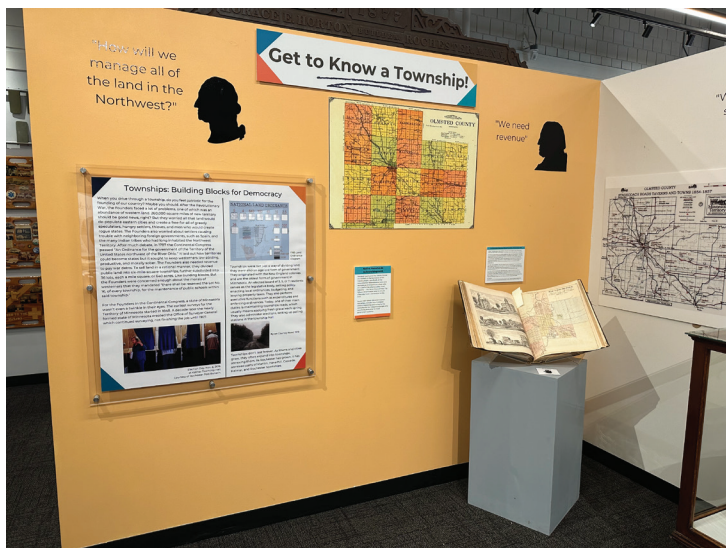
Rochester has annexed parts of townships like Marion, Haverhill, Cascade, Kalmar, and Rochester, and, in doing this, polling areas have changed. This change in size leads to redistricting, meaning the city government must draw new district boundaries to ensure proportional representation in each district. With new districts, the original polling places change because of size or because they are no longer suitable for use.



**How did officials tally votes before electronic voting?** In smaller communities, townships would designate a voting area, and voters would have to travel to the designated area to vote and place their vote in a container. On display at the museum in our township exhibit (left) are two ballot containers from Kalmar Township.

These containers were produced by the Buffalo Steel House Company and customized to be used as ballot holders. Each container has a locked top with a wooden handle. In this case, one is painted red and one is painted white.

Candidates were assigned a color, and voters would cast their ballots in the container with the corresponding color. Once voting was finished, the count began. This type of system was common in rural areas for voting.



## “FEEDBACK SURVEYS MATTER” – CREEPY DOLLS

By Ashley Evans, Rental and Special Events Coordinator

Planning for our 6th Annual Creepy Dolls party (+ exhibit!) has been in the works for even longer than WATW as it has been on my mind since last years' party ended. You may ask yourself, “What could she possibly be working on a year ahead of time?” I work on the evaluation. For reoccurring events such as Creepy Dolls, the guest feedback and my evaluation forms are my number one tool for improving events the next time around.

There is a common notion that feedback surveys never get read or utilized, but that is incredibly false. I read every single comment given about the event, and I use them to directly apply changes that you want to see. The evaluation form on the other hand tells me what our profit margin is, return on investment, and other important financial information.

While that's incredibly important, I certainly prefer hearing feedback from attendees. Only 17.5% of guests filled out the survey for last year's party, so if you've ever been to an event, fill out that survey, or a very small portion of guests help dictate how the entire event may be changed.

Enough of semantics, we have an event afoot. Our poor dolls have been brought to and left at the circus! Throughout the month of October, learn about the dolls through our social media accounts, by visiting the exhibit in person, or attending our party.

On October 19th, the dolls that were left behind are hosting their own Creepy Circus\* for your enjoyment. Enjoy dinner, a cash bar, dancing, the costume contest, and so much more. Check our social media and website regularly for updates on times, to buy tickets, to learn about our costume contest and prizes, and to stay up to date on all things history.

\*The party is not a circus; it is circus-themed.



Guests dressed as living dolls at Creepy Dolls: Murder at the Masquerade



Enjoying dinner at the Chateau Theatre, 2023





HISTORY CENTER  
OF OL MSTED COUNTY

THE CREEPY DOLLS PRESENT

# CIRCUS AFTER DARK

OCTOBER 19TH  
CHATEAU THEATRE  
6PM | Tickets \$50  
Ages 18+ Only

Dinner, Cash Bar,  
Costume Contest, DJ,  
Circus Entertainment,  
and More!

Buy Tickets Before They're Gone at  
[OlmstedHistory.com/events](http://OlmstedHistory.com/events)  
& Follow the Dolls on Social Media





## 2024 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Please check our website and Facebook regularly as the schedule is subject to change, [olmstedhistory.com/events](https://olmstedhistory.com/events)

### SEPTEMBER

- 19th:** Gather 'Round Lecture Series: Making Minnesota author & illustrator (family-friendly event!)
- 21st:** Oakwood Cemetery Walk
- 26th:** Gather 'Round Lecture Series: Spotlight Exhibit: The History & Legacy of Gold Cross
- 28th:** Storytime

### OCTOBER

- 3rd:** Gather 'Round lecture series: Susan Bartlett Foote, author of The Crusade for Lost Souls, Reforming Minnesota's Mental Institutions, 1946-1954.
- 5th:** Restoration & Preservation at the Stoppel Homestead
- 17th:** Gather 'Round Lecture Series: Jesse James and the First National Bank of Northfield Robbery
- 17th:** Fall Fest
- 19th:** 6th Annual Creepy Dolls Party

### NOVEMBER

- 2nd:** Mayowood Christmas Tours Begin, Tuesdays through Sundays
- 7th:** Gather 'Round Lecture Series: History & Music of Woodstock
- 30th:** Mayowood Candlelight Christmas Tour

### DECEMBER

- Mayowood Christmas Tours, **Tuesdays through Sundays**
- Mayowood Candlelight Christmas Tours, **Saturdays and Sundays**





## STAFF

Wayne Gannaway  
Executive Director

Valerie Wassmer  
Associate Director/Education Director

Darla Buss  
Member Services Coordinator

Ashley Evans  
Rental and Special  
Events Coordinator

Molli Funk  
Interim Mayowood Historic Site  
Manager

Patrick Gannaway  
Facilities and Grounds  
Coordinator

Krista Lewis  
Archivist

Dan Nowakowski  
Collections Manager

Brian Boettcher  
Buildings and Grounds Manager

Barb Whipple  
Accountant

Mayowood Guides:  
Jean Joyce Williams  
Assistant Site Manager  
Carolyn Barsness  
Grace Curry  
Patrick Dean  
Marcia Goodmanson  
Joan Hunziker-Dean  
Dana Knaak  
Kathy Lamb  
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Elizabeth Schmidt  
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