

# The Scribe

HISTORY CENTER OF OLMSTED COUNTY

## SPRING 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!**

## THE HUB AND THE SPOKES: 50 YEARS OF THE HISTORY CENTER ON WEST CIRCLE DRIVE

**By Wayne Gannaway, Executive Director**

Did you know that the History Center is approaching its 50th year of residing on the southwest edge of Rochester? The historical society broke ground in November 1972 but did not actually move into the new museum (our current home) until two years later.

And how things have changed in our neck of the woods since then.

More roads, more traffic, more residential dwellings--but less cultivated farmland. In fact, growth on the city's periphery is one reason the board members and director at the time wanted to move here from downtown. Proximity to the recently acquired Mayowood home and landscape offered yet another benefit. And with the circa 1874 George Stoppel farmstead located immediately north, the historical society's leadership envisioned an agricultural museum unique to the region.

Even before acquiring the historic Stoppel farmstead in 1976, the historical society built an understated museum, so as not to overshadow or distract from the stone house, barn, smokehouse, and assorted outbuildings.

## THE HUB AND THE SPOKES - continued

As we approach our centennial anniversary in 2026, we reaffirm the History Center's commitment to activate the historic Stoppel farmstead while recasting our vision to serve Olmsted County and Rochester's 21st-century needs. Historic rehabilitation of the smokehouse is scheduled to be completed by May and we are confident we will have rehabilitated the barn and stone house in 2024 and 2026, respectively. Meanwhile, we continue planning tours, exhibits, and programs—in other words, the visitor experience. But, activating the Stoppel farmstead won't succeed if it is isolated from the other places on our land, such as the schoolhouse, the Dee Cabin, the baseball field, the Ralph Stoppel farmstead gardens, and the agricultural fields. Perhaps most importantly, the History Center Museum must relate to the historic farmstead and other amenities.

One of our board members likened the museum to a hub, with the property's various other features as the spokes. As a fifty-year-old hub, the building has done an admirable job, but it is starting to show its age. One perennial problem is storage. A recent space-use analysis revealed that the History Center needs at least 31% more square footage for collections objects, even after cannibalizing space from the exhibition gallery. Meanwhile, space for staff, volunteers, and visitors has been shrunk, shifted, and cobbled together over the past few decades. This hodgepodge of space means that today, the museum does a poor job of serving the rest of the property.

The board's Upholding Our Legacy committee, which oversees HCOC's physical plant and property, has created schematic designs for renovating the museum, courtesy of CRW Architecture and Design Group and Knutson Construction. Building on that work and the interpretive planning, over the next several months the board will engage in master planning. The goal is to ensure our plans for the historic Stoppel farmstead make sense in relation to the museum, the gardens, the Ralph Stoppel farmstead, or any future development. As our successors look back on our work in ten or twenty years, hopefully they find that we honored the spirit of our predecessors and mapped out and executed a bold, but sustainable vision for the next fifty years.

**"As a fifty year old hub, the building has done an admirable job"**



**Groundbreaking near the current HCOC location in 1972.**



**Thinking Spring at HCOC**

## EXTRA! EXTRA! LOCAL PAPERS GET DIGITIZED.

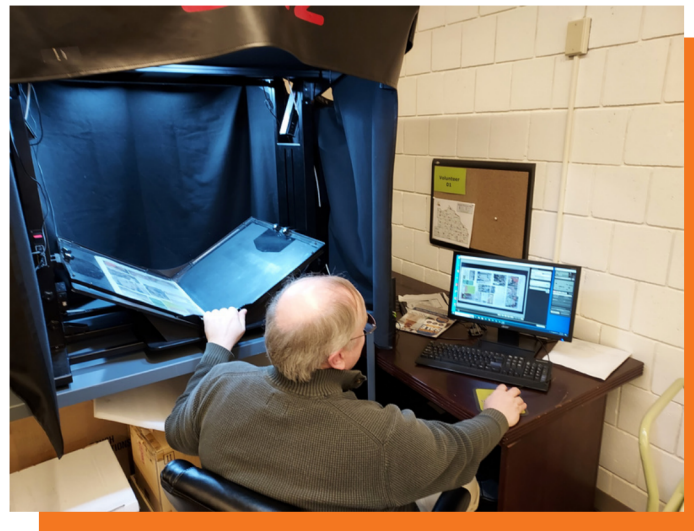
By Krista Lewis, Archivist, CA

For most of my time here, volunteers in the archives have each had their own projects, which means we could have up to a dozen or more projects going at once and that ends up being a lot to manage. It also means some projects can take a really long time to be completed. To streamline our efforts here, I've started to assign multiple volunteers to a project, beginning with a sizable digitization project. Since last summer, there have been nine volunteers (five of them currently active) using our book scanner to scan our local newspaper collection. These include the Byron Review, Chatfield News, Stewartville Star, and Zumbrota News-Record. It's my hope that with this combined effort we will have most, if not all, of our paper copies of these newspapers (roughly 2008-present) in PDF format by the end of the year. It's a big undertaking, and the volunteers will tell you the scanner has its quirks and the steps can be tedious, but in the end we will have a resource that is much more usable AND we will be able to clear those physical copies from our shelves, opening space for growth, which, if you read the last couple of newsletters, you know is at a premium. I recognize that the disposal of collection items, especially those that meet our institutional and collecting missions, may be concerning, and I don't take the task lightly, but the Minnesota Historical Society also collects these publications and is in the long process of microfilming them. So, rest assured, these resources exist in more than one place, which safeguards their longevity.

As individual projects wrap up, I have a few other projects in mind that I'd like to have multiple volunteers tackle, the biggest being the digitization of our print photo collection. This has long been on my to-do list, and now I want to push it to be a priority. Unlike the local newspapers, however, we will retain the original prints. While there are instances of duplication, for the most part these are unique items, so the only reason I would suggest removing any of them from the collection would have to do with poor or unsafe conditions.

We really could not accomplish all our goals without our volunteers, so I count myself exceedingly lucky to have such a dedicated group here in the archives. Many thanks to them for all they do!

**"Refining our collection means focusing on quality over quantity."**



**Volunteer George Romano hard at work in the archives. Thank you, George!**

# SAY HELLO TO OUR NEW EDUCATION COORDINATOR: AN INTRODUCTION

By Madeleine Lawler



Hello all! My name is Madeleine Lawler, and I am the new Education Coordinator at the History Center. I am very excited to be part of the team and to help the History Center continue to develop vibrant educational programming. We've already added a few things to the 2023 calendar—be sure to check out the events page on our website!

A little bit about me: I grew up in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and went to school at Loyola University Chicago. I earned my bachelor's degree in history with a minor in English. After graduating in 2020, I continued my Loyola education journey by pursuing a master's degree in public history. Between studying how we engage with history and volunteering at the Art Institute of Chicago (before the pandemic), I learned that I enjoy how museums and programming enable guests to engage with the past. Museums are also a unique platform for community building. During my six years at Loyola, I was routinely struck by the emphasis on community. This lesson was reinforced each time I visited home; I learned that the various groups of people are what makes home, home. I am excited to get to know this established community of history enthusiasts and hope to contribute in exciting and meaningful ways.

**"I am excited to get to know this established community of history enthusiasts!"**

One of the events I am most excited about is our summer day camp (July 11th-13th) for elementary-aged kids. This will be an opportunity for campers to engage with local history through hands-on activities. The camp is still in the early planning stages, and we are workshoping some pretty fun activities. See you soon!

# FEATURES FROM THE COLLECTION: EARLY MAYO FAMILY PHOTOS

By Jenna Collins



These photos and many more pieces are on display in our updated Mayo exhibit!



In my few months of working here at the History Center, I have discovered many fascinating objects in our collection. These objects help tell the story of Olmsted County, and I am pleased to be able to share them with you.

As I researched possible artifacts to put on display, I came across a set of photographs. These photos portrayed a young Mayo family, before they moved to Rochester. The largest photograph in the set shows Dr. William Worrall, his wife Louise Wright Mayo, and three of their children. Dr. W.W. is almost unrecognizable with his dark hair and beard; many people today may better recognize him from later photos with his white hair and mustache. Dr. W.W. holds his two daughters, Phoebe and Gertrude, in his lap, and Louise holds their young baby Sarah. Another photo in the set shows Louise holding baby Sarah, and two others feature a young Phoebe in a white dress and dark jacket and young Gertrude in a dark dress.

Based on the appearance of the children, we can estimate that these photos were taken around 1860. At that time, the Mayos were living in Le Sueur, Minnesota. By examining the background and clothing, we can tell that these particular photos were most likely taken in the same session, by the same photographer. Baby Sarah would pass away later in 1860, at 20 months old. Gertrude, the eldest daughter, donated these photos to the Olmsted County Historical Society in 1937.

To see these photos in person and learn more about the early life of the Mayo family, visit our new exhibit, A Lasting Legacy: The Story of the Mayo Family.

**"I have discovered many fascinating objects in our collection"**

# LOUISE MAYO: THE ARTIST

By Dan Nowakowski

If you have been on tour through Mayowood in the past several years, then you have heard about the bust of Dr. Charlie Mayo, made by Louise. Instead of retelling the story, I wanted to enlighten you on other facts about the sculpture.

The bust currently is on display in the library, but it was likely displayed in other prominent places in the home. Louise created this piece for a high school art project (I wonder if she got an A?) Like most parents, Dr. Charlie was more than happy to display his child's artwork, but a lifesize bust isn't easy to attach to the fridge with a magnet.

The bust seems to depict Dr. Charlie in his 50s, which would fit the time frame of its creation.

One famous story about the bust involves the kids knocking it over during a game of hide and seek. I imagine the parents weren't thrilled! Today, the bust is attached to the base to prevent such incidents.

Mayowood season is coming soon! Be sure to check [olmstedhistory.com/mayowood](http://olmstedhistory.com/mayowood) for more info on our tour times and coming events!



The bust of Dr. Charlie



Dr Charlie and young Louise

**"A lifesize bust isn't easy to attach to the fridge with a magnet."**

## A HUGE THANKS: AN UPDATE ON OUR YEAR-END APPEAL SUCCESS

"Your end-of-year support is enormously important"

Once again, the History Center's members and donors have demonstrated their commitment to the preservation and sharing of local history. Last November we announced a challenge grant from Mayo Clinic: If the History Center's supporters contributed \$10,000, they would match it with the same. Because of your generosity, we more than matched that, raising \$34,430 (not including Mayo Clinic's gift). Your

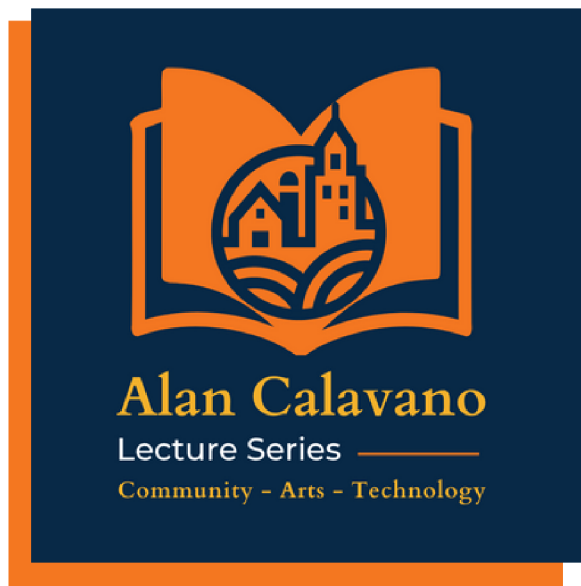
end-of-year support is enormously important as the History Center heads into 2023 with bold plans for the future.

With your generosity and our continuing mission as inspiration, HCOC staff are working with the board of directors to establish a new annual giving program, with an improved recognition plan. This effort isn't just about acknowledging your generosity because, we understand, some prefer not to make a big deal about giving while others are eager to shout out the good news. This is just as much about building the HCOC family and providing our supporters with different ways of getting to know the History Center, and one another. Look for more details in the next edition of Scribe.

And, we can't say it enough, thank you for your support!

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## UPHOLDING OUR LEGACY: THE ALAN CALAVANO LECTURE PROGRAM



Expect more Alan Calavano lectures in the future!

Long-time members and volunteers at the History Center may remember Alan Calavano, who passed away in 2016.

Alan, "Mr. Rochester Historian," was a champion of the History Center who did a great deal to support our mission.

In the spirit of remembrance, and to honor Alan's contributions, we're making a commitment to restore and rejuvenate the Alan Calavano Lecture Series, a series which will focus on aspects of Alan's passions.

We always hope to see our members take advantage of their free lecture access, but particularly with this series!

# MORE THAN JUST CONTENT: YOUTUBE AND OUR VIDEO ARCHIVES

By Caleb Baumgartner

If you've subscribed to our YouTube channel, you may have noticed a recent trend of weekly updates - our From the Archives series.

Years ago, the History Center came into possession of a small chunk of KTTC's archives - much of it b-roll footage and behind-the-scenes tidbits, but also quite a few 90 second to 2 minute stories from roughly 1975 to 1991. Recently, we've been combing through these videos and we now have content scheduled to upload through the end of the year!

These videos provide a fantastic insight into history. From fashions and trends to remarks on historical occurrences or moments, they're primary source reflections on a wide variety of topics.

These videos are also important because they are recent, lived history. It's important to connect people to the fact that history isn't just something that happened in the distant past, but that we're living historical moments (big and small!) regularly.

Some of our upcoming videos even have a few celebrity appearances, including singer John Denver playing a little softball at Rochesterfest.

If you're not currently a subscriber to our YouTube channel, now is a great time to sign up and enjoy!



Our YouTube videos provide a fun look at the recent past!



"It's important to connect people to the fact that history isn't just... the distant past"





# WHAT'S WITH THE LIGHTS?: THE FIRST NIGHT BASEBALL GAME IN MINNESOTA

By Lee Hilgendorf

The newspaper story caught Fred Oesterreich's imagination. The first professional baseball game played under a permanent lighting system was to be held in Des Moines, Iowa on May 2, 1930.

The wheels began to turn.

In the late 1920s, Fred's friend Claude McQuillan constructed a new baseball park in southeast Rochester at the corner of Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue SE. By 1930, the ballpark was going bankrupt. Day games were poorly attended due to people working. On Sundays, people played golf or tennis and spent time with their families. Baseball played under the lights would be the answer to saving the park.

Fred was one of 12,000 spectators that watched as the Des Moines Demons defeated the Wichita Aviators on May 2. The next morning, Oesterreich talked with the ballpark's facility manager about the lights. On the train trip back to Rochester, he drew plans for his own lighting system.

When Fred arrived in Rochester, he heard the news that a judge had put the ballpark into receivership. Undeterred, Fred made a trip to the Giant Illumination Co. of Council Bluffs, Iowa. He was convinced that Rochester and the surrounding area had enough baseball enthusiasm to warrant the installation. All he needed was a place to put it.

The front page of the May 20, 1930 Post Bulletin told the story; the Olmsted County fairgrounds had been obtained for night baseball. Projector lamps were being shipped from Council Bluffs. The 60-foot poles on which to mount them were coming from Minneapolis.

**Rochester Leads the Northwest**

Bringing to Southern Minnesota, Northern Iowa and western Wisconsin, the first electrically equipped field built especially for playing baseball in the evening.

**Opening Game Thurs. 8:15 P. M.**  
**Albert Lea** Minnesota-Iowa League Team vs. **Detroit Colored Giants**

Don't miss this first big game by artificial light—a guaranteed attraction—not an experiment. 2,000 comfortable grandstand seats, without a shadow to mar your view of every play of the great American game.

**Evening Baseball**

**Guaranteed Baseball**  
Three or more games each week thru the playing season, featuring only high class teams.  
All Games will start promptly at 8:15 P. M.

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for over 1,000 Autos

**Sensational—Practical**  
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The entire playing field and a high ceiling—lighter than any daylight. No shadows—no blinding of players.

You'll enjoy baseball with a new thrill. Join the crowd and root as you did in the old days.

**Friday** Memorial Night  
**LaCrosse vs. Detroit Colored Giants**

**Saturday** May 31  
**Winona vs. LaCrosse**  
Two Bitter Rivals

**Monday, June 2**  
**Rochester White Sox vs Austin League Team**

Post Bulletin advertisement, May 28 1930, p. 9

"Day games were poorly attended due to people working."

## What's With the Lights? - continued



### The first night baseball game ever played in Minnesota

Opening night was set for May 29. The crew had nine days to turn the southeast corner of the county fair racetrack and part of a cornfield into a baseball field. That corner had been chosen because of the existing 3000-seat grandstand had been built there after World War I.

Claude McQuillan was in charge of the chaos. Now, all he needed was someone to play that first game. The first to answer the call was the Detroit Colored Giants, who revamped their upper Midwest tour to be in Rochester. Their opponent would be the Albert Lea Tigers.

After that, an entire week of games was scheduled to promote night baseball. One thousand posters announcing the new venue and the upcoming games were printed and distributed in a 75-mile radius of Rochester. Additional seating was built along both base lines. Oesterreich and McQuillan expected record crowds, maybe as many as 5000 people for opening night.

The day before the game, it was discovered that the bulbs for the projectors had not been shipped from Cleveland. After some frantic phone calls, bulbs were found in Chicago. Max Conrad, a flying instructor from Winona, left at 3 a.m. for the Windy City, returning to Rochester before noon on opening day with the cargo.

at 8:15 pm on Thursday, May 29, 1930, with temps hovering around the freezing mark, less than 400 people watched as the Detroit Colored Giants jumped out to an early lead, only to be defeated by the Albert Lea Tigers in the first ever baseball game played under the lights in Minnesota.

The next three games drew about 100 people each. The last game was called due to torrential rains that continued for two days and ruined the new ballfield. The remaining games were cancelled, along with Oesterreich's dream of night baseball and profits.

Several attempts were made to sell the lights to recoup some of the estimated \$10,000 spent on the failed experiment, but there were no takers. The Giant Illumination Co. went to court and repossessed the 30 reflectors on October 7. Oesterreich was ordered to pay the outstanding balance of \$3,465.

# STOPPEL SPRING: SMOKEHOUSE RESTORATIONS ALMOST FINISHED!



**A recent photo of progress this winter versus the early start in Sept/Oct.**



After almost 9 months of work, the restoration of the Stoppel Smokehouse is nearing completion!

Thanks to many grants and donations (including your wonderful outpouring of support for our History Mystery campaign last year), we were able to raise the funds to get the work done on the smokehouse.

The Smokehouse is the first of the three Stoppel Farmstead buildings to get the restoration treatment, and we're hoping to have all three finished by our centennial year in 2026!

We've got a ways to go but a lot of promising developments of late, so stay tuned!

Expect a smokehouse open house early this summer.





**HISTORY CENTER**  
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