



Deephaven Historical Society Newsletter *Winter Report 2008*



Bob Williams—Author and Historian

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

History of St. Louis Bay, Part 4	2
Holiday Party Recap	3
Meeting Schedule	3

For those of you who have not yet read his books or had an opportunity to attend one of his presentations, may we suggest you might enjoy his books on the extensions and times of early Deephaven, Excelsior and Minnetonka.

Bob Williams is a product of the Great Depression who grew up in the 1920s and 1930s in our area. He offers a presentation about Lake Minnetonka history and the heydays of steamboats, railroads, hotels and wealthy summer visitors from the South during the 1880s and 1890s, he is the author of four historical novels and leads historical walking tours for the Excelsior Chamber of Commerce.

From movies of the 30's, dancing at the Excelsior Amusement Park ballroom, Northland Milk horses and wagons, relief checks, and names such as Bernie Bierman, Will Rogers and FDR come to life again with tenderness and gentle humor.

For more information about Bob Williams, his presentations, tours and books please call 952-474-6851 or write 214 Bell Street, Excelsior, MN. 55331.

Senator Oliver starts memorial fund for Paula Winter

Former State Senator Ed Oliver, a long time Deephaven resident and friend of the Deephaven Historical Society, has requested that the DHS begin a memorial fund for our dear friend, Paula Winter, who passed away this November.



Paula exemplified the dedication and unselfish contribution of her time and talents not only to the Deephaven Historical Society, but to all of the many civic groups that she so graciously volunteered. We will miss her very much.



To join Ed in supporting the fund, please make checks out to "DHS Paula Winter Fund" and send to Deephaven Historical Society, 20225 Cottagewood Road, Deephaven, Minnesota, 55331. At some point in the near future the DHS will use the funds in an appropriate manner, one that would have made Paula proud.

Thank you.

One of the first persons to envision the demands of development on Lake Minnetonka was Charles S. Gibson, a prominent and successful lawyer from St. Louis, Missouri. He first visited Minnesota in 1854.



Charles Gibson was born in Montgomery County, Virginia in 1825 to parents, Captain Hugh and Elizabeth B. (Rutledge) Gibson. His father's family originally came from Pennsylvania, while his mother's family originally came from South Carolina. When Charles was eleven years old, the family moved to western Missouri in 1836. For a short period of time he was a student at Missouri University in 1842. Charles came to St. Louis, Missouri in 1843 to study law under Josiah Spaulding and Edward Bates for three years, and was also the first librarian of the Law Library.

Gibson entered politics in 1844. He made speeches in the support of Henry Clay. In 1848 he supported General Zachary Taylor for the presidency. Gibson supported the Whig Party in the presidential campaign of 1856 and even after it ceased to be a national organization. During the Civil War, the Missouri Legislature called a state convention to take Missouri out of the Union, just as South Carolina had done. In 1861, Gibson raised his voice in favor of the state of Missouri to staying in the Union. Through his efforts and also those of Governor Hamilton Gamble, General Franck (Francis) P. Blair and B. Gratz Brown, "Missouri was saved to the Union". He originated the movement in 1860 for Edward Bates for President of the United States. When President Abraham Lincoln named Bates as Attorney General, Bates appointed Gibson as his assistant. Gibson then accepted office from Abraham Lincoln on July 22, 1861 as Solicitor of the U.S. for the Court of Claims (now called Solicitor General). He also was appointed on November 7, 1861 and served as agent of the state government of Missouri during the Civil War. He returned to St. Louis in 1864 to continue his law practice, which mostly pertained to land titles. He was called a western man, a scholar, naturally gifted with a strong sense of duty to his fellow man.

He considered himself not a politician but someone with close ties to many statesmen of his time. Honors were bestowed upon Gibson during his years of successful representation (1858-1892) of members of the German court. On December 16th, 1882, Emperor Franz Joseph decorated Charles Gibson with the cross of commandship of his sovereign Order Francis Joseph as a commander of the Knights in Austria. In 1882 and again in 1890, Gibson was decorated with medals from the German Emperors, William I and William II. With these honors bestowed upon him, he was often referred to as "Sir Charles Gibson".



It is documented that Charles Gibson first came to Minnesota in 1854. It has not been proven, but there is the possibility that Gibson's first trip to this

area was with his friends and associates from St. Louis, Francis Blair and Edward Bates. On June 5th through June 10th, 1854, 1200 citizens from the east and middle states, including Blair, Bates and possibly Gibson were invited by the Rock Island Railroad Company to attend the Great Excursion. Many of the prominent men and women who were invited were from state of New York.

The trip began in Chicago by railroad to Rock Island, Illinois and then all boarded steamboats on the Mississippi River to St. Paul and St. Anthony, Minnesota. This linked the Mississippi River to the Eastern United States by railroad for the first time! Of the 1200 to



start the Great Excursion, only 600 to 700 people made the trip to Minnesota. The group of men included writers, politicians, business leaders and Millard Fillmore, the 13th president of the United States. Minnesota's territorial Governor Willis A. Gorman held a ball in honor of the guests at St. Paul. His speech that evening spoke of the soil, climate, the great advantages of this state and the much-needed railroad connections from the East.

History of St. Louis Bay - continued

With a powerful and influential audience listening to his speech that evening, he felt many would go home with “enlarged ideas of the future greatness of Minnesota.” There was a great need for railroad building to bring the settlers and tourists to Minnesota. Without the much-needed transportation from the railroads, there would be very few tourists and settlers.

After discovering the fantastic summers of Minnesota, Gibson spent many years here to escape the searing summers of St. Louis, Missouri. He stayed at Nicollet House in Minneapolis and spent his time fishing at Calhoun, Harriet and Cedar Lakes. Minneapolis was then a small hunting destination for many Southerners and Nicollet House was hunting headquarters. Minneapolis in 1854 had only twelve homes.

His next stay in Minneapolis was in 1860 and he stayed at the Winslow House in Saint Anthony. It was filled with travelers from the South. Gibson tells of his leaving for St. Louis at the end of the summer season of 1860 and all the Southerners left September 1st by steamboats, afraid that if they did not leave that day the river could freeze over and they would be icebound for the winter!

It was said in these early trips to Minnesota that Gibson fell in love with the Lake Minnetonka area. When Minneapolis grew from a town to a city, Gibson brought land on Lake Minnetonka in 1870, as a “refuge for himself and his family during the heated term which annually blisters that city” (St. Louis). In summers before he built his home on the southwestern shores of Lake Minnetonka, he would bring his wife, Virginia and their seven children: Louisa 18, Victor 15, Archie 13, Preston 11, Charles 9, Lizzie 7, and Gerolt 5 and would camp on his property.

The land he purchased was heavily timbered and so the Gibson’s hired landscape Boston architects, the Olmstead Brothers, to choose a site for the house. The landscape architects designed three openings or clearings through the trees, which would have vistas for Gibson’s summerhouse. Two of the vistas had the lake as the terminus and the third opening had views at certain times of the year where the sun or the moon could be seen. The Gibson’s called their summer home “Northome”. The site of the house was reached through a winding walk through the trees. The house was constructed in 1877, along with an icehouse as one of the out buildings on the property. It was considered one of the handsomest places on the lake. There was no more a beautiful view than from Gibson’s point. The house was spacious with high airy rooms and broad verandas.

To be continued in our next newsletter...

Holiday Party a great success!

Our Holiday party was a great success! A wonderful time was had by all who attended the party held on December 8th at Deephaven City Hall.



We had a turnout of around forty people and were very lucky to have our guest speaker and author Bob Williams in attendance to speak on entertaining true life stories in the 1920’s and 1930’s Depression Era around Lake Minnetonka!

Boat Tour retracing Trolley Line on Lake Minnetonka

On the horizon and under consideration your board is considering a commercial boat tour of our lake sometime this Spring.

The idea would be to follow one of the old trolley boat lines with emphasis on our earliest hotels. Further details to come!



DHS Meeting Schedule

Please note— Just a reminder—there will be NO JANUARY MEETING.

Deephaven Historical Society Meetings are held the last Saturday of each month at 8:30 AM at City Hall Council Chambers.

All Members are Welcome!

These meetings involve planning and reporting by the committee chairs, the board, and the President. Plans for the upcoming year are discussed as well as decisions regarding the gathering and distribution of funds.



DHS

**Acknowledgements –
Current members**

Thank You!

John Ahern
Tim & Pat Alt
Tom & Nancy Anderson
Steven & Leah Barnacle
Marty Baskerville
John & Nan Beard
Mary Lou Bennis
David & Marion Bickford
Don & Moonyeen Bongaards
Dianne H. Brackett
Richard & Jean Brown
Barbara Burgum
John & Janette Burton
Mildred L. Carbonneau
Alan & Sarah Dale
Donald Davis

Maxine Dickson
John Dupont
Robert & Judith Evans
Mrs. Paul Flaten
M.J. Florance, Jr.
Judi Forsmark
Rosemary Fruehling
Furst Foundation
Rob & Ann Furst
Jerry & Pam Gens
Bob Gerlicher
Paul & Ann Gesme
Marty Gilbert
Rosemary Gluek
Louise Heffelfinger
Barbara & Leslie Hexum
Gordon & Betty Huber
Kathleen Jewett
Burton Johnson
James & Camilla Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Jones II
Sheila Laughlin

Walter & Constance Linder
Robert & Siri Marshall
Doug McNaught
Nancy Middleton
Mark & Michelle Mitchell
Edgar & Elizabeth Morsman
Chris & Sandra Napolitano—Wallace
Sue Neff
Dan & Joan Nelson
Nan Nicolle
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Peters
Judd Peterson
Julia Cole Peterson
Tom Pokonosky
Ronald Poole
David Pratt

Gary & Susan Rappaport
Mark A. Read
Dorothy C. Robb
Bill & Donna Robinson
Ben & Roamaine Shank, Jr.
Craig & Maureen Shaver
Clinton & Lois Shaw
Paul Skrede
Lewis Sopko
Peggy Stefan
Tom Sween
Bryan & Barbara Sykora
Robert & Nancy Woodburn
Dr. Gary & Vicki Wyard
George & Cynthia Yared

Take advantage of the books that are available for sale at City Hall!

Picturesque Deephaven	\$15.95
The Excelsior Amusement Park	\$10.95
Life in the Early Days of Cottagewood	\$ 6.25
A Post Card History	\$25.00
Sunsets	\$50.00
Lake Minnetonka 1850 – 2000	\$32.00
Lake Minnetonka 1905	\$20.00
The 1893 Handbook & Souvenir	\$10.00
Minnetonka Yacht Club Centennial 1882 – 1982	\$15.95
Tales of the Steamboat Minnehaha 1906—2006	\$20.00
Minnesota Vacation Days	\$34.95

DHS Committee

Finance

Tom Anderson 952-474-3515

Publicity / Publ.

Bob Gerlicher 952-474-7248

Museum Development

Tim Alt 952-470-8889

Mark Read 952-474-4091

Newsletter

Bill Robinson 952-473-3130

Meetings held the last Saturday of each month at 8:30 AM in the Deephaven City Council Chambers.
All Members Welcome!

**DEEPHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
20225 COTTAGEWOOD ROAD
DEEPHAVEN, MN 55331**

