



The Record

Open House Kickoff!

by Mark Bonesteel, President

On May 3, FHS had a special open house to kickoff the society's 40th Anniversary! This event coincided with the 60th Anniversary of the May 6, 1965 Fridley Tornado. Dr. Lee Switzer and Al Taylor signed books and shared stories with the nearly 70 visitors we had at the museum that day. Dr. Switzer met many former students and played a song on the piano. Buzz Arndt (Buzz the Barber) cut the ribbon on his new exhibit and the time capsule was sealed by Rob Zelenak. It will be reopened in June of 2049 to commemorate Fridley's 100th Anniversary.

Phat Phil's Mini Donuts were sold in the parking lot. The society provided snacks and beverages, and everyone appeared to have a great time. Many visitors enjoyed seeing photos of their homes from the 1960s. The tornado photos were a huge hit as well. Thank you to everyone who was able to make it to our event!

Upcoming Events

Museum Open House

June 14 // June 28
July 12 // July 26
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tent at Commons Park

June 14

Unveiling of new Buzz's Barber Shop exhibit



Pictured: (L) Buzz Arndt, (R) Mark Bonesteel



Dr. Lee Switzer visiting with new FHS members at his book signing

FridleyHistoricalSociety.org

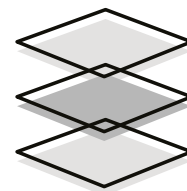
✉ FHS1949@outlook.com

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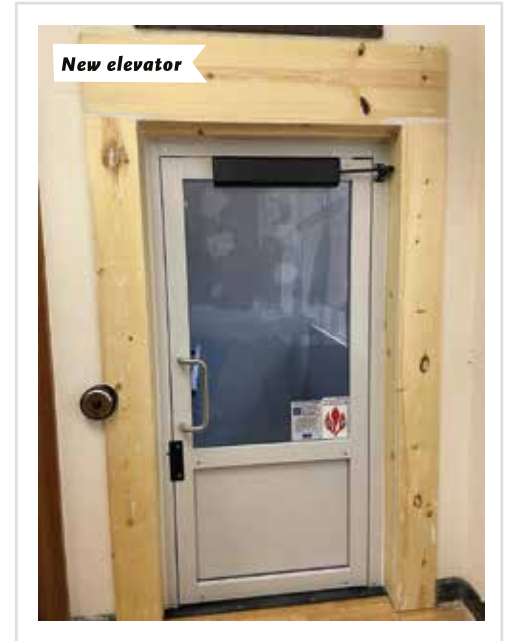
Elevator Update

by Mark Bonesteel, President

The elevator / lift replacement project has been completed! On May 3, a special dedication and ribbon cutting event took place at FHS during our special open house. Mark Bonesteel gave a short speech on the history of the original lift and the issues that came up while installing the new lift. Rob Zelenak cut the ribbon, and the lift was officially opened to the public for use. The society was honored to have one wheelchair bound guest use our lift that day and he was very appreciative of its ease of operation and use. The new ADA compliant lift ensures years of continued operation for both the public and students visiting our museum.

The lift passed the initial inspection of installation and operation. The State Inspector found one last major issue that needed to be addressed before opening. On the upper level of the lift, the inside shaft wall was only as high as the top of the lift itself. Three of the shaft walls went all the way to the ceiling, except for the north wall. The Inspector was concerned that a child could easily enter the lift through an open door then climb the wall and potentially fall about 10 feet to the middle level floor. State Law indicated that the wall had to be at least 42 inches above the top of the lift. Our construction guy Tom Gams came to our rescue again and extended the existing wall to just below the ceiling (a light fixture was in the way). Tom built the new wall around the existing shaft light saving our society time and money from having an electrician come in and installing a new light.

The society is very appreciative of everyone that helped us out with this huge undertaking. Thank you to The Friends of Fridley Education Foundation, Fridley Lions Club, and our members and concerned citizens that donated money towards this project!



Elevator Donations ~ Thank You!

The Fridley Historical Society Board of Directors would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous donation toward the new elevator.

Friends of Fridley Edu. Foundation Fridley Lions

Andrea Oman
Audrey Mahr
Barbara Kovacic
Bernadine Matushuk
Betty Ann Addison
Carolyn Nolan
Catherine J Ballot
Cathy J Fritz
Dan & Shirley Gourde
David & Arlene Linton
David & Constance Rivard
Dennis Lee
Donald & Joann Johanson

Dr. Lee & Gaylene Switzer
Ed & Arlene Hamernik
Ella Jo Friendt
Gerald & Margaret Maecklebergh
Greg & Sharon Hall
Jo Ann Johnson
Joanne M Carlson
Joseph Rocklenbach
Judy Anderson
Julian & Sharon Jensen
Karen Jacobson
Katharine Simon-Dastych
Katy M Johnson

Leon Madsen
Lynne Grigor
Mark & Laura Bonesteel
Martha & Sig Reckdahl
Ron Malcolm
Nancy Anderson
Nancy Lambert
Robert & Diane Zelenak
Roger & Gwen Nawrocki
Rosemary Frauly
Sarah Smith Joslin
Sonja Granlund Johnson
Susan Thompson
William J Plum
William Linton

See You All in 2049!

by Rob Zelenak, Archives & Communications Chair

At 1:05 p.m. on Saturday, May 3, we closed the Fridley Historical Society's time capsule which will be reopened during Fridley's centennial celebration in June 2049. Fridley became incorporated as a village in 1949 and then a city in 1957. During the city's 75th anniversary celebration, On June 13, 2024, we opened the time capsule which was sealed in September 1999 in conjunction with the city's 50th anniversary. Former Fridley Mayor Scott Lund did the honors and opened the time capsule. The video of the opening can be watched on our museum's YouTube channel. For the past year we have had the original items on display on tables in our museums basement. For the past year we had been collecting items for the capsule to be opened in 2049. A few of the items we put in the time capsule to be open in 24 years from now include newspapers, Time magazine issues, grocery ads, Fridley 49er days memorabilia, A Fridleyopoly board game and a letter that I wrote in which

excerpts can be read in a separate article in this issue. As the archives and communications chair member on the Fridley Historical Society's board, it was an honor to seal the time capsule. If one just takes a moment and looks back on the changes the world has seen in the past 25 years, one can only imagine the vast changes the world will see as the 21st century reaches its midpoint and as Fridley reaches its centennial. As I closed the time capsule I told the visitors gathered in the basement, **"See you all in 2049!"**



Letter Sealed in 2049 Time Capsule

by Rob Zelenak, Archives & Communications Chair

Below is the text of the letter that was recently added to the time capsule.

Dear reader, in 2049:

As the archive and exhibit chair member of the Fridley Historical Society's Board of Directors I thought it would be a fitting task to write a letter for our society's 2049 time capsule which is slated to be opened during Fridley's centennial celebration. In the year 2049 the state of Minnesota will have seen nearly two centuries of progress and the City of Fridley itself will have seen a century of change. In 1949, the year Fridley became a township, Home Rule Charter was still 8 years away, Fridley was still very much a rural farming community with cookie cutter ramblers and custom style homes quickly encroaching on the unincorporated area of roughly 3,000 residents. Dirt roads, farmhouses, barns, sand dunes and pastures were still quite common. Indeed, electricity had reached Fridley just a few of years earlier. Although electricity had reached Fridley as early as the 1930s, it was a rare amenity until the mid-1940s. By 1999, the city's 50-year anniversary of becoming a township Fridley had truly grown into a key inner ring suburb of nearly 28,000 with population topping over 30,000 in the 1980 census. By 1999, the city had become the worldwide headquarters for Medtronic and an important hub for the Target Corporation. Fridley High School had seen over half a century of students pass through its halls. Yet, as the city entered a new millennium it faced an aging population. The first quarter of the 21st century saw several Fridley landmarks fall to the

time capsule letter continued...

wrecking ball to make room for new retirement homes, apartment buildings, businesses, and a city hall, which were built amid much controversy. The city reinvented itself, as the older population moved or passed away and younger families and families of minority moved into the city. On June 13, 2024, for the city's 75th anniversary celebration, the Fridley Historical Society opened its time capsule that was sealed in 1999. Scott Lund, who was in the final year of his tenure as Fridley's mayor opened the time capsule. We found many items in that time capsule ranging from a cell phone, laptop, VHS tapes, yearbooks, buttons, maps, newspapers, business cards and countless of other items of 1999 nostalgia. We can only imagine the anticipation and celebration Fridley will observe for its centennial. As I write this in summer 2024, 25 years still seems a long ways off. But the time will pass quickly. Next year the Fridley Historical Society will celebrate its 40th anniversary and in 2031 the Hayes School Annex which houses our museum will be 100 years old. I look forward to many great moments that will occur in Fridley and at the Fridley Historical Society between now and 2049. May those who read this letter at the midpoint of this century know that those who were involved in putting together this centennial time capsule did so with great passion and dedication for the mission of the Fridley Historical Society. We learn from our past. May good fortune come to all who read this letter.

Sincerely,

Rob Zelenak

(Fridley Historical Society, Archives and Exhibits chair)

Fridley Historical Society Board Minutes Summary (April – May 2025)

Pasta dinner update: Al Taylor suggested asking members to donate unused gift cards to the raffle. Mary Sue Meyers is currently working on getting permits for the raffle, etc.

Maintenance: Al Taylor thanked everyone who cleaned in preparation for the grand reopening. The school district fixed the drain vent clean out top and it is now below ground level. The furnace filters have been replaced. There was a discussion of the back door needing repair, and it was suggested that it be replaced by a steel door. Mark and Al will look into having the museum's air ducts cleaned out.

Elevator update: Mark Bonesteel explained the elevator's operating procedure. It's faster, quieter, and has more electronics. He suggested new signage to reduce operating confusion. The elevator will have to be inspected yearly.



Please visit our website for detailed board meeting minutes.



fridleyhistoricalsociety.org/board-meeting-minutes/



Grant Update

by Mary Ann Hoffman, VP and Grants Chair

The Fridley Historical Society is in the process of applying for a Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage grant. If awarded, the grant will help us in planning and designing a permanent exhibit that will explore the postwar suburban development of Fridley. There is only one opportunity each year to apply and the deadline is later this summer. The basis for the exhibit will be a selection of interviews collected in 2012. Below is an example of one such interview.

Don Meyers - 2012

by Mary Ann Hoffman, VP and Grants Chair

Although Don grew up in St. Anthony Village, he had early connections to Fridley. His father worked for Northern Pump, and Don stated, "During World War II, they grew from a small pump company to a huge pump company because the Navy contracted with them to make pumps to move all of the fluids in their hydraulic systems on their ships for all their cannons....So I knew where Fridley was." In addition, his father was a trap shooter at the St. Anthony Gun Club, which was on University Avenue at about 61st.

Don graduated from University High School and then from the University of Minnesota in 1958 with the intention of teaching and coaching. A friend of his had just signed a contract with Fridley and told Don they were looking for a wrestling coach, leading Don to say, "I couldn't believe that Fridley had a school when my friend told me that they had a high school." This led to a 34-year career with Fridley schools, culminating with being Principal of both the middle school and high school. His first contract was for \$3,625, and he pointed out that he had been making more money as a dock worker.

After marrying, Don and his wife Sue moved into a new development of about 40 homes west of East River Road on land that had been a truck vegetable farm. Don recalled, "Now let's see, our first home in Fridley, we built in 1962 -- \$16,900 without a garage," and then laughingly added, "A garage was an additional \$400, and I couldn't afford it." The down payment for their home was \$1,200 and their monthly mortgage was \$149. The Meyers raised two daughters in their 3-bedroom rambler.

Don talked a lot about Fridley's housing. Regarding his own, he said it "was kind of on the high-end of the



Don Meyers continued...

houses that were built. I would say that most of the houses were built in probably the \$10,000 to \$11,000 to \$16,000 to \$18,000, and they popped up by the hundreds....I would say probably 50% of Fridley was 3-bedroom ramblers by then....By 1965 virtually all of the homes had been built all the way up to Rice Creek, so suburbia arrived, I would say, in a 10-year period." The rapid influx of new residents is indicated by Don stating, "The school that we started in -- which is now Fridley Middle School -- was a combined 7-12 school, and they doubled the faculty the year I came in 1958, and we went from 14 to 28 staff members."

When asked by the interviewer about the kinds of people in Fridley, Don responded, "I would say the majority of the people were blue-collar with not a lot of high-income families, with some of the exceptions people who lived along Rice Creek and the Mississippi River." Later, referring to the 1959 Fridley High School yearbook, (1959 marked the first graduating class), Don pointed out that, "Every student in there is white except one and he was, I think, an Irani....There were no Black students....When I retired, which was 1992, the number of Black students in the high school was fewer than 10. We had probably 10 or 15 Asian students. It basically was a very white community. The real changes have come in the last 20 years."

Don shared vivid memories of living on the Anoka Sand Plain. "I can remember sand burrs were one of the great crops of this area, sand burrs and tumbleweeds. Around the school, we actually put up a snow fence and put burlap over the snow fence to keep the sand from drifting on and covering the school parking lot whenever the wind would blow." Talk of sand and sand burrs popped up in several of the 2012 interviews, indicating how prevalent and bothersome they were at that time.

Pasta Dinner + Annual Fundraiser
October 4th, 2025

Save the Date

**LOOKING TO GET RID
OF UNUSED GIFT CARDS?**

Consider donating them
to the raffle at our upcoming
pasta dinner fundraiser!

~ drop off at museum by 9/27~

~gift cards must not be expired~

Check us out on our socials!



Ferd's Welding

by Mary Ann Hoffman, VP and Grants Chair

Although that little building on the southeast corner of Mississippi Street and Old Central has been the site of many businesses, it was originally Ferd's Welding. The shop is slated for demolition to make way for road construction.

Little is known about Ferd or his welding business. Whether Ferd was his first name or last name is a mystery. I contacted Roy Scherer to see what he remembered about Ferd's, and beginning in 1948, Roy had a paper route that extended from Old Central westward to Oakley Street (the current Highway 65 hadn't been constructed as yet). He had to pick up his newspapers in front of the Sandy Hook grocery store, across Old Central from the welding shop. He remembers the welding shop being there, and his sister Bernadine recalled that Ferd's family lived in a house on Mississippi Street just behind the shop.

Ferd's Welding is listed in the Yellow Pages of the 1967 Fridley Directory and his house is listed under the same name at 1314 Mississippi Street. The only other information I gleaned from Roy was that Ferd's wife's sister was Ann Weiss; she and her husband owned the Sandy Hook grocery store, which eventually became Sandees Restaurant.



Ferd's Welding ~ 1949



1990s



2000s

Membership Update

by Mark Bonesteel, President

Great News! Our membership as of May 15, 2025, stands at 170! Thank you all for your new memberships and renewals. Your membership dues and donations help pay our bills and keep our society growing. Thank you for your support. If you have not renewed, please consider doing so now.

Judy Anderson *

Carol Christenson *

Ron and Karla Ackerman *

Leon Madsen **

Margaret Pitts **

Audrey Mahr *

Stan Mack and Margaret Leibfried *

Warren Woods *

Susan Murzyn

Nancy Lambert *

Martin Lueders *

Betty Addison *

JoAnn Veres *

Mary Erickson

Erna Thomley *

J. F. (name withheld per request) **

Welcome New Members:

Ty Reed **

Brian Buechler *

Many members included a donation; a name followed by an * denotes a donation up to \$50, and ** denotes \$50 or more.

Correction: Due to an autocorrect error, April's member list incorrectly listed Dr. Lee Switzer as Dr. Lee Switzerland.