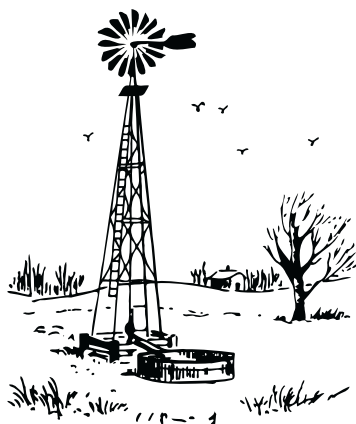
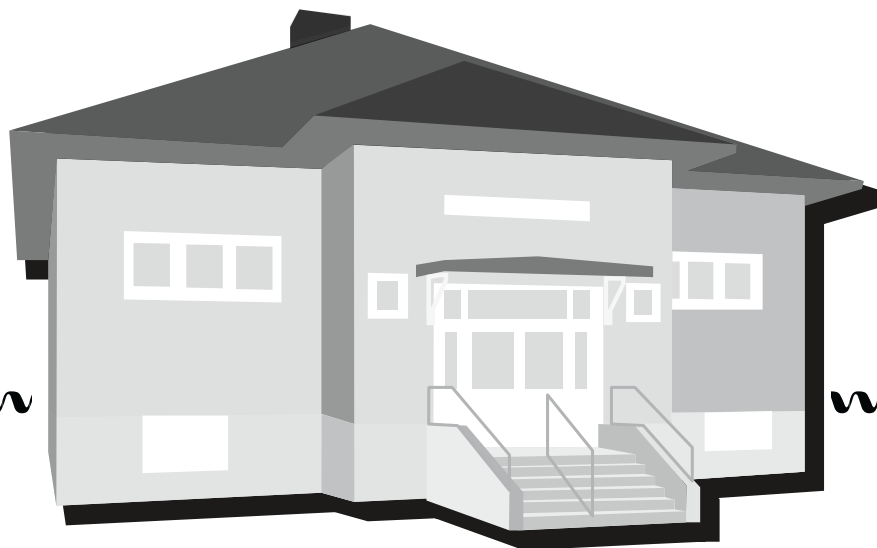




The Record



Museum Re-opening May 9!!!

The Fridley Historical Society will kick off our 41st year with an Open House on May 9! Author and tornado historian Al Taylor will be present as our museum remembers and commemorates the famous May 6, 1965 Fridley tornadoes. Photos and newspaper accounts will be available for viewing documenting this tragic event that devastated Fridley and many of our surrounding communities. Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and we hope to see you at our 2026 Open House!

Upcoming Events

Museum Re-opening
(61st tornado anniversary)
May 9, 2026

Semiquincentennial
Bingo & Potluck Dinner
July 7, 2026

Fridley 49er Days
July 16-18, 2026

Pasta Dinner
October 3, 2026

Kindergarten Art Fair
December 12, 2026

FridleyHistoricalSociety.org

✉ FHS1949@outlook.com

Officers

President: Mark Bonesteel 763-331-1885

Vice President: Mary Ann Hoffman 763-780-5911

Past President: Dorothy Gargaro 612-709-2840

Secretary (Interim): Rachel Westhoff

Treasurer: Dave Linton 763-843-3415

Other Board Members

Archives & Communications Chair: Rob Zelenak robzelenak1993@gmail.com

Programs and Events Chair: Mary Sue Meyers 763-717-7987

Grants Chair: Mary Ann Hoffman 763-780-5911

Maintenance Chair: Al Taylor 763-422-3878

Membership Chair Interim: Mark Bonesteel

Newsletter Chair: Rachel Westhoff rachel.westhoff@gmail.com

Social Media Chair: Pat Barrett pat.barrett@fridley.k12.mn.us



Building and Museum Updates for 2026

by Mark Bonesteel, President

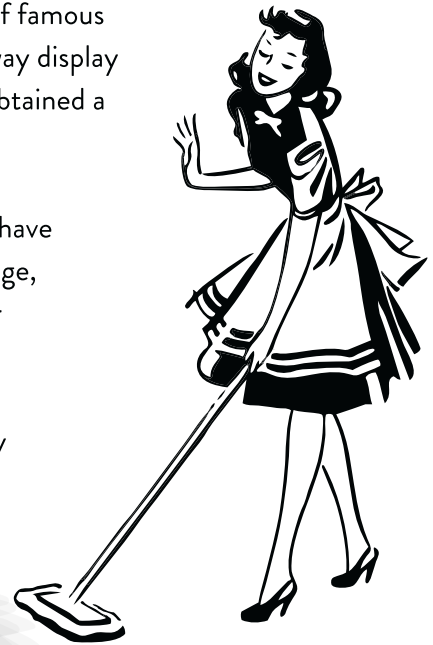
The FHS Board of Directors has been busy these past months updating some of our exhibits and working on issues regarding our nearly 100-year-old building. Further changes will continue throughout 2026 so please stop in the museum and check it out!

Mary Ann Hoffman has been busy working with the Minnesota Historical Society and our exhibit contractor on our Post-World War II Suburban Development Grant. This future permanent exhibit is in the early stages of development and will be located in the lower level of our museum. It is anticipated that this exhibit will open in a couple of years.

The Famous Fridley Folks Display has been expanded with more biographies of famous people related to Fridley. More business photos have been added in our back hallway display area. The Fridley Police and Fire Chiefs display has been updated, and we finally obtained a photo of missing Police Chief Roy Simonson.

The Fridley Historical Society YouTube page has two fantastic interviews that have been added. Bill Decoursey and Don Meyers provided a wealth of Fridley knowledge, and they were happy to sit down with Pat Barrett and Rob Zelenak and share their Fridley stories with all of us!

The Bauer family donated six boxes of photos and yearbooks related to Fridley Schools. Many of the photos are of sporting events, plays, and other school activities. The photos will eventually be scanned and added to our collection.



Building issues were addressed over the winter months as well. The Building & Grounds Manager for District 14 was consulted about a structural issue regarding the rear door to the museum and the concrete pad immediately inside the rear door. Eight wall joists were installed to strengthen the cement foundation inside the door. Some moldy sheetrock was removed as well as some older concrete type of wall board that was in bad condition.

All three storage rooms in the basement were completely emptied. The walls and shelves in the storage rooms were treated with mold remediation chemicals to kill any additional mold and prevent future mold from growing. The items in the storage rooms will be thoroughly gone through and items that are no longer needed will be donated to other charitable organizations or discarded based on their conditions.

Two air scrubber machines and a dehumidifier were purchased to continue our efforts to improve the air quality in the building. This will also improve the smell in the museum. A floor drain was added in the upstairs bathroom utilizing an existing drainpipe that had been covered many years ago. The Society is currently looking for options to replace the carpeted floor in the basement with a different type of flooring. A non-carpeted floor will accent our future Post-World War II Suburban Development project that we have been working on with the Minnesota Historical Society.

In Memoriam

by Mark Bonesteel, President

Dan Gourde passed away on February 18, 2026. Dan was a long-time member and supporter of our Society. Born in Grafton, North Dakota in 1943, Dan worked on his family farm in Oakwood, North Dakota. He graduated from the North Dakota State School of Science and served two years in the US Army. After his military service, he attended the University of North Dakota and earned a degree in accounting. Dan spent his entire life in Accounting & Finance, and he was a long-time member of the Fridley Lions Club. The Fridley Historical Society extends our heartfelt condolences to Dan's wife Shirley and his entire family. Please keep the Gourde family in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you for your service, Dan!



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Dan was very proud of his military service. He was very enthusiastic when our museum staff asked if we could display his uniform in our Military Exhibit. He donated his uniform; a couple pictures and his biography to share his military experience.

Dan's uniform represents the Vietnam Era of our Military Exhibit.

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Semiquincentennial Bingo & Potluck Dinner ~ Tuesday, July 7

FHS will be celebrating our country's 250th Birthday with a fun night of Bingo and food! The event will kick off at 6 p.m. with a potluck dinner and then the fun will begin! Please bring a food item to share and a couple of items for the bingo prize table! Bingo has always been a fun event to attend. This event is replacing our Valentines Bingo event which we had to cancel due to construction in our museum. We hope to see you there!



Donations Needed!

The Historical Society is seeking donations for this year's Pasta Dinner scheduled for October 3rd! The Society is seeking unused gift cards and new boxed items for our raffle. The Pasta Dinner is our largest fundraiser of the year! Donations are gratefully appreciated and can be dropped off at our museum beginning May 9th. Thank you!

Board Secretary Position Open

We are still looking for a secretary for our board meetings. We have one board meeting per month, and the position requires someone to take minutes at the meetings and then write them up in a summary for our newsletters. If you are interested, please let a board member know.



Upcoming Hall of Fame Nominations

Do you know of someone who has contributed to the growth and success of the City of Fridley? We are now accepting nominations for the October 2027 Hall of Fame. Application packets can be picked up at the museum.



Special Newsletter Update

If you would like to receive your newsletter via email, please send an email request to:

FHS1949@outlook.com

Your newsletter will be sent by email, rather than a hard copy sent through the mail.

Please remember to check your junk/spam folder if you haven't received your newsletter in a while.

Grant Update

by Mary Ann Hoffman, VP and Grants Chair

Work on the grant that was awarded to the Fridley Historical Society through the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund has begun. The outcome will be a professionally prepared design of a permanent exhibit, which will interpret the midcentury transformation of Fridley from a rural farming community to an inner ring suburb. The work must be completed by December 31.

Below is an example of a series of interviews that were conducted in 2012. The interviews were designed to collect information about life in Fridley between the 1930s to about 1970 and will be one of many sources used to design the new exhibit.

Bob Cook

by Mary Ann Hoffman, VP and Grants Chair

After getting married, Bob and his wife Lori lived with his parents in North Minneapolis, and a year later purchased a lot in Fridley overlooking Moore Lake on land that had been a pig farm. Soon after, in 1955, they used the GI Bill to have a house built, a rambler with a walkout basement (he recalled that this cost an extra \$500) for \$12,500. Bob described the cost as a lot of money, though he laughingly added that his monthly mortgage payment was \$53. The house was built by homebuilder Vern Donnay, who developed the entire neighborhood.

For many, the American Dream in the postwar years included buying their own home and, although the prices seem ridiculously low today, families had to work hard to make the down payment and then meet the monthly mortgage payments. Bob described a method used by Vern Donnay that enabled houses to be built more quickly and therefore more affordably. According to Bob, "what [the Vern Donnay company] was doing is down off East River Road, there was some vacant property, and the builder had the crews down there building walls and this and that, and then hauling them up into the project area to increase their building capacity. They'd do them a little faster and not just build them on site."



Cook continued...

Bob held several jobs as he supported his family. He drove bus for Art Christenson's bus company; he worked at Christenson's hardware store, eventually becoming manager; and then was approached to run the Standard Station on the west side of Mississippi and University. He is probably most remembered as a police officer, initially as part of the police auxiliary which supplemented five city policemen. When Officer Carl Hartman left the force, Bob was hired and served for over 20 years. One of his roles was as advisor to The Toppers, the local car club for young men, and he described a 1978 incident in which he survived a gunshot wound perpetrated by an armed robber on 61st and University.

The Cooks raised two sons, and Bob said there were so many kids in the newly developed neighborhood that it gained the moniker 'Fertile Flats.' Families who moved into the neighborhood exemplified the nationwide postwar Baby Boom. Bob passed away in 2013 at age 85 and is fondly remembered by those who knew him.



Check us out on our socials!



Fridley Historical Society

ETC33 Everyones Television Channel



YouTube

Fridley Historical Society Videos



ETC12ACCW

Fridley Historical Society Board Minutes Summary (Jan-March 2026)

Maintenance: Adams Pest inspected the building, while ongoing maintenance occurred. The basement closets were cleared, and mold mitigation advice included switching to lower MERV filters. The school district will handle installation and permits for a new back door (estimated at \$5,000). A structural board in the furnace room will be evaluated soon.

Grant Update: Mary Ann signed the grant agreement through the MNHS. She also received the contract from Steve. The board will be using part of the matching \$2,000 toward expenses during the grant period.

Pasta Dinner Discussion: The 2026 pasta dinner will be held October 3. Having fewer prizes and gift cards was agreed upon by all.

Archives and Media Update: Rob and Pat interviewed Don Meyers and Bill Decoursey. Both interviews are uploaded to YouTube. Mark added 9 new people to the “Fridley Famous” wall at the museum

Discussion of Increasing Visitor Traffic to the Museum: Plans include participating in community events like the Fridley 49ers parade, organizing activities such as a scavenger hunt, history trivia, and grade-level art fairs, and hosting a juried art show with shared proceeds. There’s also a focus on increasing membership to 175 and promoting events through local newspapers and the city newsletter.

Please visit our website for detailed board meeting minutes.

→ fridleyhistoricalsociety.org/board-meeting-minutes/

Important Membership Reminder

Membership currently runs from the day you join for one year. Because people join at varying times during the years, it is sometimes difficult to remember when your membership is about to expire.

Effective immediately, if the address label on your newsletter has a yellow line on it, your membership has expired! We will send out one additional newsletter after expiration. We will try to contact you via phone or email only if we have not heard from you.

If you would like to receive a digital copy of our newsletter instead of having a newsletter sent to you, please let us know. You can email the museum with your request at FHS1949@outlook.com. Please also let us know about any address change so we can update our files.

Please consider renewing your membership as we truly value each and every one of you. As you are aware, we are not publicly funded. Our entire society operates on the memberships and donations from our generous members, visitors, and civic organizations. Thank you!