



# The Record

## **31<sup>st</sup> Annual Lasagna Dinner, Sweepstakes and Auction**

**Saturday, October 7, 2023  
Doors Open at 11:30 a.m.  
Buffet Dinner at 12:00 Noon**

**Fridley Community Center  
6085 7<sup>th</sup> Street N.E.**

**Dinner Tickets \$18.00 Each  
Raffle Tickets \$1.00 Each**

**To purchase Lasagna Dinner Tickets please call  
(763) 571-0120 and leave a message. Your call  
will be returned.**

**No dinner tickets will be sold at the door!**

**Raffle Tickets will be sold at the event. You do  
not need to be present to win!**

### **Upcoming Events**

**Open House**  
Saturday, September 23  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**31<sup>st</sup> Annual Lasagna  
Dinner and Raffle**  
Saturday, October 7  
Noon to 3 p.m.  
**Fridley Community  
Center**

**Annual Meeting**  
Monday, October 11  
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Monthly Board Meetings  
are held the first Thursday  
of each month at 6 p.m.  
Please call ahead if you  
wish to attend to confirm  
the date and time.

## **Fridley Historical Society Board & Committees**

### **Officers**

President- Mark Bonesteel  
Past President-Dorothy Garagro  
Secretary- Open  
Treasurer-Judy Anderson

### **Other Board Members**

Events-Mary Sue Meyers  
Maintenance- Al Taylor  
Archives & Exhibits-Rob Zelenak  
Membership- Noreen Rickenbach  
Grant Programs- Mary Ann Hoffman  
Fundraising- Open

### **Committees & Chairpersons**

Society members interested in attending a committee meeting should contact the Committee Chair to confirm time and dates.

### **Archives and Exhibits**

Mark Bonesteel 763-331-1885

### **City & Family History**

Dorothy Gargaro 612-709-2840

### **Finance**

Judy Anderson 612-499-0113

### **Maintenance**

Al Taylor 763-422-3878

### **Memberships**

Noreen Rickenbach 763-443-1269

### **Events**

Mary Sue Meyers 763-717-7987

## **Museum Building Update**

Hello everyone and thank you for your patience since our last newsletter. As you know, our building is rapidly approaching its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday having been built in 1931. The museum building is in need of some attention and we have been busy working on some issues that have come up.

The basement air conditioner stopped working in July. A short in the wiring was found as well as two leaks in the coolant line. An electrician and HVAC person came out and repaired the issues. The air conditioning appears to be working well again.

The overhead awning over the front entrance started coming apart as winter ended. It was discovered that the overhang was severely rotted out and could not be repaired without replacing the entire structure. A commercial contractor came out to give us a quote for the repair and that amount was over \$40,000. We have since found another contractor that can replace the structure for a lot less and that repair will be made shortly.

One of the basement window covers was found to be rotting away. It was found that the window sill behind the wood covering was also rotted out. That was repaired and sealed. Cracks in the outside stucco of the building will be filled shortly to eliminate any chance of damage.

The roof shingles need to be replaced entirely. There are currently several shingles missing. A contractor will be coming out to replace the missing shingles and give us a quote for a new roof. This will likely be a major expense and the society will be looking at fundraising efforts in the near future to help address this issue.

The lift, which was installed in 1989 to make our museum ADA compliant, will also need to be replaced soon. It has been getting stuck while in use and parts are becoming harder to obtain. The society will be looking at available grants for assistance with the estimated cost of \$60,000 to \$80,000 for replacement.

**Mark Bonesteel**

## Fridley's First Murder? Part Two

Minneapolis Police Officer George Connery had been missing since April 24, 1917. He had last been seen entering a vehicle occupied by two men and was in the process of directing the two men and car to the East Side Police Station to post bail. The murder of Alice Dunn on April 26, 1917 seemed too coincidental to Detectives working the cases. The Minneapolis and St. Paul Police began to work together and in hopes of solving both cases.

While processing the crime scene in St. Paul, fingerprints were found. Detectives finally had a break in the case! The fingerprints were found to belong to Joseph Redenbaugh, a known teenaged hoodlum out of Kansas City. The authorities in Kansas City were contacted and the name Frank McCool came up as an associate of Redenbaugh. The descriptions of both men matched those whom Officers Kort and Ziegler had stopped and turned over to Officer Connery. The descriptions also matched those in an earlier traffic stop that the St. Paul Police had made. A nationwide alert was sent out for the arrests of Redenbaugh and McCool.



On May 5, 1917 an anonymous phone call was made to the Military Police Office in Minneapolis. The caller advised that Officer Connery's body could be found 1 ½ miles north of the Columbia Heights / Fridley border. The caller advised that Officer Connery's body was located in the woods, north of the second bridge on Central Avenue. Detectives were advised there was a road located just north of Rice Creek and Patrolman Connery's body would be about 100 feet away in the woods.

On May 5, Officer Connery's body was discovered exactly where they were told it would be found. The directions were precise and very accurate and Detectives believed that one of the involved suspects may

have made the call. Officer Connery was found deceased with a gunshot wound to his leg and a fractured skull. A pocket knife was located near the body with blood stains on it as well as an automobile rug piece.

In Officer Connery's pocket was found his notebook. Apparently at some point after being left for dead, Officer Connery awoke and with literally his last breaths, he wrote a farewell note to his wife and kids, and a detailed description of his killers. A crucifix was found near his body. Officer Connery's hat had been placed over his head. The body had also been dragged through the woods some distance. His service revolver was missing.

Officer Connery's body was transported to Anoka for the autopsy. Anoka County Coroner H.P. Thurston found that Connery had been shot with a 44 caliber gun. The ballistics of the gun matched that of the gun that was used to kill Alice Dunn. Officer Connery had knife wounds to his chin and nose and the knife found nearby did not belong to Officer Connery. The skull fracture was believed to have been caused by use of the engine crank which had been found with blood on it.

On May 8, 1917, Patrolman Connery's funeral visitation was held at his home at 3009 Taylor Street in Northeast Minneapolis. Every Minneapolis Police Officer not on duty attended the funeral. From there, Officers and the Mounted Patrol escorted Officer Connery, his wife Mollie and his five children and family to St. Clements Catholic Church for his funeral service. Officer Connery was then interred at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Minneapolis.

Frank McCool was arrested on May 8<sup>th</sup> in North Platte, Nebraska. McCool had in his possession Officer Connery's revolver. Frank McCool was returned to Minnesota where Officer Kort and St. Paul Officers positively identified him as one of the two men in the car that had been stopped twice by Police. A Grand Jury indicted Frank McCool for 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Murder.

On May 11, 1917 Joseph Redenbaugh and his wife Pearl were arrested in San Francisco, California. Both were escorted to back to Minnesota where Redenbaugh denied any involvement in the killings. Police advised Redenbaugh that charges would be pursued against his wife unless he admitted his guilt. Joseph Redenbaugh plead guilty to the murders of George Connery and Alice Dunn. Redenbaugh told the court that Frank Dunn had paid him \$4000 to kill his wife.

Joseph Redenbaugh was sentenced to Life in Prison and was transported to Stillwater Prison. Joseph Redenbaugh was released from prison on May 9, 1962 after serving 45 years. Frank McCool plead not guilty and went to trial. He was found guilty of 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Murder and sent to prison for 30 years. Frank Dunn went to trial and was found guilty of 1<sup>st</sup> Degree. He was sent to Stillwater Prison where he died on February 26, 1958.

Officer Connery was the sixth Minneapolis Police Officer to be killed in the Line of Duty. He was survived by his wife Mollie, and children Mary (12), Genevieve (10), Katherine (6), Helen (2), and George Jr (?). The family received \$6600 from Workers Compensation, \$1000 from an insurance policy, \$358 from donations from officers, and \$500 from the Police Benefits Association.

On May 19, 2023 I went to St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. It took me quite a while to find Officer Connery's gravesite even with the Find a Grave App. I found the grave stone to be very dirty and covered up with grass and debris. I contacted a friend of mine, Minneapolis Police Officer Nick Davids. On May 21<sup>st</sup>, Officer Davids and his wife Anna went to the cemetery and cleaned up the gravesite and stone. Officer Connery's wife's burial site was next to her beloved George and was cleaned up as well.



Before



After

The murder of Officer George Connery was Fridley's first documented murder. I placed the question mark (?) in the title because records before 1900 are very difficult to locate. Anoka County was established in 1857 and Native Americans had been in the area of Anoka County well before this area was ever established. Conflict between settlers and Native Americans surely took place and cannot be discounted.

I hope you have enjoyed this article. Please search on line for more information about the Connery Murder Case. There are also several books that have this case mentioned including a fantastic, long out of print book titled The Dunn-Connery Murder Mystery published in 1917 by J.M. Near which can be found on line. Thank you,

Mark Bonesteel

## Memorial Donation

The Historical Society recently received a very generous donation from the family of Vern Gottwald. Vern passed away July, 20 2023. Vern was a lifelong Fridley resident and served as a Police Officer and Police Chief from 1953 to 1955. Vern left the Fridley Police Department to work as a Deputy with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. Vern was gracious with his time and knowledge and he and his wife attended our Public Safety Display Grand Opening several years ago. Vern had a wealth of Fridley knowledge and he was a very kind and compassionate man. Please keep his family in your thoughts and prayers. The Fridley Historical Society is very grateful to have known Vern and thank the family for their generous donation.

## Our New Endeavor

Mary Ann Hoffman

When you think of Fridley's past, especially back to the mid- 20th century, what comes to mind? If you lived here at that time, or have heard stories from people who did, you might think of sand and sand burrs; all the newly-built housing developments, consisting largely of ramblers; new schools that were needed for all the families moving here; the rapidly increasing population; and the establishment of Fridley as an inner-ring suburb.

As a means of recording our mid-century history, in 2012 the Fridley Historical Society was awarded a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society entitled "The Post-WWII Suburban Development of Fridley, Minnesota" which funded the recording of 15 oral histories. The people who were interviewed shared stories of life here before the war when Fridley was largely rural, as well as the many changes they witnessed after the war

. Our new endeavor is to use the stories and recollections in those interviews, plus other archival materials and historic artifacts, to install a permanent exhibit in our museum that will highlight the transformation of Fridley from rural to suburban. This will be a large undertaking because the suburban growth of Fridley is an important era in our history. In so doing, in June we applied for a \$10,000 grant from the Minnesota Historical Society. In fact, we were advised to apply for more than one grant to enable us to work on the project in three separate phases. If we are awarded the first grant (we expect to get the result sometime in September), we expect to finish Phase 1 by next summer; at that point we will apply for an additional grant so we can begin the next phase.

The grant we have applied for will enable us to complete Phase 1 by hiring a professional company to create what is called an Exhibit Concept. A St. Paul-based company has agreed to work with us on that project, giving us the benefit of having professional expertise and experience. Phase 2 would fund the use of professional guidance in designing the permanent exhibit, and Phase 3 would use professional help to build and install the exhibit. One reason we are excited about this project is that, to our knowledge, suburbanization is a mostly unexplored topic by local historical societies in the metro area, even though inner-ring suburbs surround Minneapolis and St. Paul. With the help of grants and professionals in the field, we anticipate eventually having an exhibit that can be a calling card for our organization.

We expect that the entire process will take somewhere around three to four years to complete. We'll keep you posted as things progress.

## Museum Inventory

The Fridley Historical Society has never completed an inventory of our contents and assets. Our insurer, The League of Minnesota Cities, recently contacted the museum about this issue. The current insurance policy we have was put together many years ago before our recent updates and remodeling. This is obviously a huge task to undertake with the thousands of artifacts and items that we have in our building and collections. The society will be putting together a committee shortly to begin the process of documentation and inventory. If you are interested in helping out, please contact a Board Chairs person.

## Some Interesting Facts

**Glass** takes one million years to decompose, which means it never wears out and can be recycled an infinite amount of times!

**When a person dies** hearing is the last sense to go. The first sense lost is sight.

**Your tongue** is the only muscle in your body that is attached at only one end.

**The tooth** is the only part of the human body that cannot heal itself.

**If you stop getting thirsty**, you need to drink more water. When a human body is dehydrated, its thirst mechanism shuts off.

**Zero** is the only number that cannot be represented by Roman numerals. (note - perhaps because zero wasn't considered a number in Roman times. That happened in middle ages)

**Kites** were used in the American Civil War to deliver letters and newspapers.

**The song Auld Lang Syne** is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the New Year.

**Drinking water after eating** reduces the acid in your mouth by 61 percent. Drinking a glass of water before you eat may help digestion and curb appetite.

**Peanut oil** is used for cooking in submarines because it doesn't smoke unless it's heated above 450F.

**The roar** that we hear when we place a seashell next to our ear is not the ocean, but rather the sound of blood surging through the veins in the ear.

**Nine out of every 10** living things live in the ocean.

**The banana** cannot reproduce itself. It can be propagated only by the hand of man.

**Airports at higher altitudes** require a longer airstrip due to lower air density.

**The University of Alaska** spans four time zones.

**In ancient Greece**, tossing an apple to a girl was a traditional proposal of marriage. Catching it meant she accepted.

**Warner Communications** paid 28 million for the copyright to the song Happy Birthday, which was written in 1935!

**Intelligent people** have more zinc and copper in their hair.

**A comet's tail** always points away from the sun.

**Caffeine** increases the power of aspirin and other painkillers that is why it is found in some medicines.

(Thank you Pat S. for sending this fascinating information to us!)

**FRIDLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

611 Mississippi Street Fridley, MN  
55432  
Phone (763) 571-0120

**RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED**



*Celebrating Fridley's past  
and securing its future*

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**Membership Renewal Form**



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Dues for the year 2023: senior dues \$10, individual dues \$12.50, family dues (2 adults, same household) \$18.50.  
Please consider making an additional donation to help us reach our goals.

Dues \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional tax-deductible donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Check here to request an IRS donation receipt.**

Office Use Only

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Nwl \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to Fridley Historical Society, 611 Mississippi Street, Fridley, Mn 55432

*Thank you for your support!*