

PLYMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2018

TRIBUTE TO GARY SCHIEBE

Plymouth Historical Society (PHS) lost a great man on April 3, 2018 when Gary Schiebe passed away from mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer. Gary worked tirelessly for PHS, serving as President, Vice President, and Treasurer over the past 20 years. In addition to his work on the Board, Gary managed the PHS membership, mailing list, newsletter, website, and digital archive. He was a gifted story teller and led many tours of the PHS Museum, often giving schoolchildren rides in one of his Model-T cars. Gary was integral to PHS's annual event, Old Fashioned Christmas, securing donations from local businesses and helping to make the party a great success year after year. After his diagnosis, Gary worked to secure a partnership with the City of Plymouth, which is discussed in greater detail on page 4.

This newsletter is dedicated to Gary Schiebe, PHS advocate and friend. If you have stories about Gary you would like to share, please email them to info@plymouthmnhistoricalsociety.org

UPCOMING MUSEUM OPEN HOUSES

- September 2
- September 16
- October 7
- October 21

All Open Houses take place 1:00-3:00 pm at
Plymouth History Museum
3605 Fernbrook Lane N
Plymouth, MN 55447

GARY SCHIEBE: A LIFETIME IN PLYMOUTH



Fern, Harvey, and Gary Schiebe, June 1939



Wilhemenia and Gary Schiebe, 1939-1940

Gary Loren Schiebe was born April 17, 1939 to Fern Iona (Klemm) Schiebe and Harvey John Schiebe in a springtime snow storm. For his first several years, he lived at the farmhouse built in 1879 by his great-great grandparents, Carl and Johanna Schiebe for their son Gustave and daughter-in-law Wilhemenia. Great Grandma Wilhemenia still lived there, along with grandparents Mary and Henry.

In the early 1940s, Harvey and Fern built a small home on one acre on the northeast corner of the farmstead, right where the Fourth Baptist Church is located today on Highway 55. Later in life, Gary realized "how wonderful that was. Sixty acres of

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open fields and woods to run, play and explore, plus the many great days and nights spent at the farm.”



Gary and Henry Schiebe on the farm

Gary attended school at Beacon Heights School on 6th Avenue (now called County Road 6), about one mile west of his home. He remembered each of his Beacon Heights teachers: Mrs. Mitchel (1st), Mrs. Munson (2nd), Mrs. Buckley (3rd), Mrs. Hegstrom (4th, but also the school’s principal), and Mr. Kerr (5th). Gary attended the 6th grade at Widsted School, but transferred the next year to the brand new Wayzata High School on Barry Avenue in Wayzata. Gary graduated from high school in 1957, a year he described as a “very good ‘vintage.’”



Gary Schiebe with his Cushman scooter, c. 1957



Schiebe's Hardware , 1950s



Fern, Harvey, Sheldon, Gary, Lowell, and Jeff Schiebe at the 40th anniversary of Schiebe's Hardware, 1995

In high school, Gary worked at Schiebe’s Hardware, which opened in 1955. The Hardware store closed in 1997 after 42 years supporting Plymouth.

After graduation, Gary attended the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) from 1957 to 1960. Though he started his academic career as an Engineering major, a new program interested him. This curiosity proved beneficial. Gary eventually switched to the new program, Computer Technology. According to Gary, “it was the second best thing that happened to me in my lifetime. The best thing that happened to me was marrying Pat Rimer.” The couple married on January 3, 1959 at St. Mary of the Lake Church in Plymouth.

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Pat and Gary Schiebe on their wedding day, 1959

With his new degree in hand, Gary immediately fielded a job offer from Royal Precision. He and Pat moved to Boston, Massachusetts where they lived in a “cute house about a half block from the ocean.” But, after a short while, Gary was promoted to supervisor, requiring the young family to move to Hartford, Connecticut. Although they “hated” to leave Boston, they spent nine happy years in Hartford.

In 1965, Royal Precision was purchased by Control Data Corporation (CDC), a mainframe and supercomputer firm based in St. Paul. At the time, CDC was one of the nine major computer companies in the United States, competing with powerhouses like IBM. In the early 1960s, the company began buying smaller companies such as Royal Precision in an effort to offer products competitive with IBM’s, but “10% faster and 10% less expensive.” The ambitious people at CDC recognized talent and transferred Gary back to Minnesota in 1968. Though CDC underwent many changes over the years, Gary adapted, serving in several capacities within the company.

Gary and Pat bought a house on Vagabond Lane in Plymouth, the same house they would live in for the next fifty years.

The couple “added many improvements and additions over the years,” including the addition of four children: David, Darrick, Laura, and Lisa.



Gary Schiebe (center) with his family, c. 2016

Gary retired in 2006, focusing on his many hobbies: photography, skiing, hunting, camping, bee keeping, square dancing, traveling, biking, gardening, wine tasting, and tinkering. He could fix anything and everything, which came in handy while he worked on his Model-T, model train, and antique clock collection. Retirement also allowed Gary to indulge in his passion for Plymouth history, volunteering countless hours at the Plymouth Historical Society where he put his computer expertise to good use. Gary was also passionate about family, counting Father’s Day among his favorite holidays, and loved spending time with his ten grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Thank you to David and Darrick Schiebe for providing the outline and photos for this article.



Gary Schiebe (center) with second graders at Plymouth Historical Society, c. 2015

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Plymouth Historical Society (PHS) and the City of Plymouth have a long history of partnership. For example, the City owns the Old Town Hall, site of the Plymouth History Museum. PHS rents this 19th century building from the City and works together to maintain it and its grounds. The City has also helped to organize and host Old Fashioned Christmas since 1987, the beginning of this popular event.

Now PHS and the City embark on a new partnership. In June 2018, the City hired a new Historic Site Manager to work with the current PHS Board to assess operational, programming, and preservation needs and help develop new opportunities for the Society. This collaborative model means that the Society retains their non-profit 501(c)3 status, which allows it to apply for Minnesota Legacy funding and assure

donors their gifts are tax-deductible. This model also retains PHS's Board and membership with their wealth of historical knowledge. Meanwhile, the City supplies funding for staff, administrative support, and access to their extensive volunteer program.

This partnership does not mean PHS will be changing overnight. Instead, it will help PHS build on previous successes. For example, each and every object in the collection has a unique identification number along with a written record of its description, donor, and historical significance. Now, with inexpensive collections software, PHS can digitize this excellent archival resource and make it accessible online. In this way, PHS can share the story of Plymouth with individuals in Minnesota and beyond.

NEW HISTORIC SITE MANAGER: NATASHA THORESON

I am so excited to be Plymouth Historical Society's new Historic Site Manager. Over the past 14 years, I worked in visitor services, security, administration, education, development, collections, and curatorial departments at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Goldstein Museum of Design, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Museum of American Art, Huntington Art Collection, California Museum of Photography, and, most recently, the Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This wide range of experiences means that I have encountered and worked through many of the challenges this partnership will face, including implementing new digital collections software, writing grants, and updating our website.

My career focus has been on curation which means I have been trained to acquire, care for, interpret, and present museum collections. I specialize in the history of textiles and clothing and have a PhD from the College of Design at the University of Minnesota. Because textiles are traditionally made by women, I am naturally interested in women's history as well. This summer, in my spare time, I am writing biographies of Minnesota suffragists for the Online Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States. I also volunteer as the Newsletter Editor for the Textile Society of America (TSA). In September, I am speaking at the TSA's 16th Biennial Symposium on the sub-



Natasha Thoreson

ject of printed textiles from the 1970s. This was the subject of my dissertation where I focused on situating these designs in the context of the dramatic social and cultural changes that took place in the decade.

I look forward to learning more about the items on display in the Museum. One of the objects that has already captured my

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imagination is this blue dress with foil stars. Coincidentally, this dress has a connection to Gary Schiebe. It was his grandmother Mary's dress.



Mary Schiebe, dress, c. 1915, cotton. Gift of Gary Schiebe, 11.4.4

The Schiebe family originally moved to Plymouth Township in 1873. Gary's great-great grandparents Carl and Johanna were ambitious, purchasing a tavern as well as 160 acres of farmland. The farm passed down to their son Gustave and later, to his son, Henry. This is where the story of the dress begins.

Mary Dressel lived on her family's farm in Minnetonka. She was reported to be an excellent seamstress, so, when Henry Schiebe asked her to a dance, she decided to make a special dress. The dress, made from deep blue, finely-woven cotton batiste, featured an oversized bodice, fitted natural waist, and full calf-length skirt. This hourglass silhouette reflected the latest European style, meaning Mary, like any good seamstress, was a student of fashion.

Most Western fashion trends originated in Paris and were widely disseminated through fashion plates – illustrations

published in ladies' magazines. The new style introduced in 1915 was a dramatic shift from the previous look. Instead of fitted hobble skirts (named so because they restricted a woman's ability to walk), the new silhouette came with a shorter, flared skirt. This new look not only required more fabric, but also a layer or two of bulky petticoats or crinolines, undergarments women hadn't had to worry about since the 19th century.

This new silhouette debuted in France just before the outbreak of WWI. Quickly renamed the "war crinoline," advertisements claimed the new style allowed for a range of movement not possible in a hobble skirt. However, the crinolines were actually heavier and more cumbersome than the previous year's styles. While the gowns were criticized for their lavish use of fabric, journalists did not always denounce the look, praising its patriotism instead. Women dressed in this flouncy feminine style, they argued, brightened the spirits of soldiers on leave. "The war is long, but the skirts are short!" was the fashion slogan of WWI.



Fashion plate from La Gazette du Bon Ton, c. 1915

Mary's dress was much less extravagant than the fashion plate pictured above. Though the dress features an abundance of extra fabric in the gathered bodice and bias cut skirt, it had a

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narrower proportion. A crinoline was found inside Mary's gown, the hem trimmed with bulky crocheted layers, but its modest proportion seems more in line with practical Mid-western values.

Still, Mary had a flair for the dramatic. When Henry picked Mary up in his horse-drawn buggy, he was sure to notice her shining ensemble. Mary decorated her gown with numerous silver foil stars. Large stars are adhered to the skirt and smaller stars decorate the blouse, collar, and cuffs. However, these smaller stars may not have been original to the dress. Star shaped patches of discolored fabric are visible across the blouse, larger than the stars currently stitched there. No matter the date they were applied, Mary's decision to embellish her dress with foil stars is highly original.



Detail of Mary Schiebe's dress showing discoloration

I am new to Plymouth and, unfortunately, never met Gary Schiebe, but the photos and stories I've discovered in the museum make it easy for me to imagine Gary's grandfather's handsome white horse pulling his beautiful grandmother down to Parker's Lake for a summer time dance. I can picture Mary, in her star spangled dress, making quite the impression on her new beau.



Henry and Mary Schiebe, c. 1915

Henry and Mary Schiebe were married November 15, 1916 and went on to have four children: Harvey (Gary's father), Doris, Carol, and Loren.



Mary Schiebe (back row, 3rd from left) with son Harvey, daughter-in-law Fern, husband Henry, and grandsons Lowell and Gary.

A SUMMER TREAT: BERTRAND'S DILL PICKLES

Now that you've admired the display of pickles and preserves at this year's State Fair, consider Plymouth's own contribution to pickle history: Bertrand's dill pickles.

H. Bertrand Manufacturing, a Minneapolis-based company owned and operated by Plymouth resident Henry L. Bertrand, was nationally famous for its dill pickles. Fermented foods were much more common in the pre-refrigeration era, and Danish-born Bertrand's own affinity for Danish open-faced sandwiches of herring and cold cuts with pickles got him thinking. He was already making vinegar, why not pickles?

Though the company had been manufacturing food products (including vinegar) at 13 North 1st Street since 1894, the modern Pickle Factory was built at 701 North 4th Street in 1934. While machinery could automatically wash and fill pickle jars with brine, they couldn't be designed to properly pack jars with pickles. At the height of cucumber season, family, friends, and neighbors were called in to help pack pickles – not too tight, not too spare. It was also impossible to replace the handmade oak barrels that held the pickles while they fermented outside in the yard.



Workers filling brine barrels with cucumbers, c. 1940

Bertrand's pickles came in whole, cross cut, spear, and Kosher varieties. They were sold by the caseload or truck load all across the country until the 1960s, when Bertrand began feeling the effects of competition from hometown food companies like Gedney, International Multifoods, and Peavey. When H. Bertrand Manufacturing was purchased by Home Brands in 1968, pickle production was discontinued.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

We miss you! Your membership helps Plymouth Historical Society tell the story of Plymouth by funding museum operations and supporting community-building events like Old Fashioned Christmas. Please renew today.

Annual Dues

Individual: \$10.00 Individual Lifetime: \$100.00

Family: \$15.00 Family Lifetime: \$150.00

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AND MAIL IT WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

Plymouth Historical Society
 3400 Plymouth Boulevard
 Plymouth, MN 55447

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

VOLUNTEER!

The Plymouth Historical Society is in need of volunteers to help with the following activities:

- Researching and writing newsletter and blog articles
Start with PHS's archives or design your own research project, it's up to you! Write one article or many. Timeline is flexible and work can be done from home.
- Serving on the Board of Directors
Help PHS grow! Meetings take place on the 4th Monday of every month at 7:00 pm and are held at the Plymouth History Museum.
- Cleaning and caring for the collection
We'll start by cleaning the collection objects and museum. Some elbow grease required, though light work can also be found. Those interested in objects will find plenty of work beyond cleaning, including inventory, storage, and conservation projects. Training will be provided. This opportunity is best for those who can commit 3 hours per week or more.

Contact Us

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City of Plymouth Historic Site Manager

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Discover Plymouth's history on our new website!
www.plymouthmnhistoricalsociety.org