Landscaping Progresses at Heritage Park

“My goal is to create a sustainable, appropriate, beautiful landscape for the historic buildings in Augustana Heritage Park!” This is the aim of Melvin Dean Van den Top and he is working hard to attain this goal. Melvin is a graduate of Augustana College, and out of gratitude for his Augustana education he is donating his time and labor to beautify the park. Melvin’s landscaping company is called Naturgreen and his intention is to use natural means to encourage growth of the flowers and discourage weeds. He works at Heritage Park in his spare time and often collaborates with retired chemistry professor Dr. Gary Earl. Between them they have donated, not only their time and labor, but also a number of the plants that are now thriving in the park.

A few of the beautiful flowers that have been planted in Heritage Park

Strolling along the paths one could enjoy the results of their efforts well into October. There is a central flower bed with goldenrod, lithrum, sedum and a dramatic stand of prairie grasses. Color is added with snapdragons and canna lilies.

The writer’s cabin will eventually be surrounded by a small forest of birch trees just as it was in northern Minnesota. Dr. Earl discovered a strain of birch that was developed in Wisconsin to withstand our climate conditions. Directly around the cabin there are hostas, blue salvias, day lilies, astilbes, iris, dogwood, daisies, cone flowers, dianthus and more.

By the main entrance to the house hollyhocks, gladiolas, mums, roses, pagoda dogwood, and daisies have been planted, just what one would hope to see by an old farm house. Around the other sides you might be surprised to discover tomato plants, winter onions, catnip, ginger, rhubarb, and gooseberries!

Ferns grow along the north side of the school. On the west and south are rhododendron, lilacs, iris, honeysuckle, and redbud.

A row of dogwood separates the house from the church, Norway pines have been planted near the pond. Numerous trees were removed as the buildings were moved several years ago and the park was reconfigured. The college has helped replace those. There is a catalpa tree and a coffee tree and an oak among others in the open spaces.

News Briefs

• For the second year Heritage Park historic buildings were open to the public between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturday of Augustana’s Homecoming weekend. Since the parade and the football games are both held on campus and the park lies between the two locations this would seem to be an excellent time for visitors to Heritage Park. Some homecoming participants did tour the house, church, school and writing cabin. Next year we hope for even more to take advantage of this opportunity.

Memorials

In memory of Arthur Olsen
Harry and Ronelle Thompson
Ham and Pearl Muus
James Olson
Dagmar Johnson
Gene and Ruthie Parker
Jim and Sandy Fink
Les and Sherry Carson
James and Vi Wehde
Ray and Marty Johnson
Bill and Opal Westerdahl
Margaret Wegner
Rhoda Wold
Steve and Char Espeland
Gary and Ann Pederson
Dennis and Mary Ann Knutson
Carl and Janet Naessig
Bill and Carolyn Geyer
Marion Roos
Gary and Andrea Nesdahl
Loren and Mavis Amundson
Willis and Phyllis Hanson
John and Marcia Kittelson
Eleanor Emmel
Lee and Liz Stadem
Joyce Olson
Robert and Kim Srstka
Gary and Rosaalen Olson
Dave and Shirley Stenseth
Norse Glee Club
George and Judy Regan
Bob and Rita Elmen
Dick and Edna Hasse

Volunteer landscaper Melvin Dean Van Den Top on the right and his assistant Terrence Rosten on the left.

Landscaping continued on next page

Memorial continued on next page
South Dakota Magazine Features Heritage Park

“Where Giants Came to Life” is the title of the article by John Andrews in the July issue of South Dakota Magazine describing Augustana Heritage Park, its history and its mission. It is illustrated with a stunning two-page photograph of the pond and the four buildings plus several other photos.Alan Berdahl, great grandson of Andrew Berdahl who built the Berdahl/Rolvaag house, was interviewed for the story. Berdahl is quoted as saying that family information about origins is ordinarily remembered and passed on for about three generations, but the park represents the lives of the early settlers in this area and preserves it for many generations to come, far beyond the usual three.

The house was the first building to be donated to the college and was followed shortly after by the church and the school. Home, church and school were the three institutions that made it possible for those early settlers to carve out a life on this unbroken prairie. The park has an excellent example of each, although they are not directly related to each other, with all three buildings appointed with original or authentic furnishings. The crown jewel in Heritage Park is the Rolvaag Writing Cabin in which Ole Rolvaag wrote the first draft of his novel Giants in the Earth, telling stories he heard in the house and weaving together the crucial role played by home, church and school during those early years.

In writing this story John Andrews visited with Kristin Rolvaag Garey, granddaughter of Ole Rolvaag. She thinks Rolvaag built the cabin to remind him of his home along Norway’s coast because the cabin was originally located on the shores of Big Island Lake in Minnesota. “Even more gradually,” Kristin said, “I have come to realize that one of my very favorite parts of the cabin was the fold-down writing table, which looked out across Big Island Lake through the multi-paned old-fashioned window. When he wrote Giants in the Earth there, he must have spent many hours staring out that window, imagining the scenes of boats departing the Norwegian coast and ocean waters, to arrive by covered wagon in prairie expanse and sod huts. I thank God for knowing this heritage.” Even though we are not all so personally connected to these buildings, the park preserves a heritage which might otherwise be lost, exemplifying for South Dakotans how their ancestors lived, studied and worshipped in a new and unfamiliar land.

NHF RECEIVES GIFT OF $1000 FOR EGGERS SCHOOL SUPPORT

The history of rural schools in Minnehaha County had not been written until Celia Benson took on that project in 2005. Branches of her own family had settled in different areas and had been instrumental in establishing several of the schools in the county so she had a personal interest in preserving their stories. Most of the buildings are gone now and the research depended on tracking people who had attended the various schools. Once located, the former rural school scholars and teachers were very generous to share record books and stories. It gave them pleasure to know that this piece of history would not be lost.

After three years of research the project was completed and a book was published. Celia Benson determined that the proceeds from the sale of the book should be used to support the remaining rural schools. Of the final amount left, $1,000 was given for maintaining the Grundy School at the Prairie Village and $1,000 was given to the Nordland Heritage Foundation for the upkeep of the Eggers Country School. The Nordland Heritage Foundation is very grateful for the generous gift.

The title of the book is Rural Schools in Minnehaha County and copies are still available for sale at the Old Courthouse Museum gift shop.
REPAIR, MAINTENANCE ON HERITAGE PARK BUILDINGS

Several important maintenance and repair tasks have been completed recently. Re-roofing the Berdahl/Rolvaag house was completed last August. Wood shakes were used once again to maintain its historic accuracy.

Board member John Sturdevant found a construction man who was willing to search and find stained glass to match the windows in the church because one needed replacing. John was also instrumental in locating logs to replace several that were rotting on the Writing Cabin. He personally power-washed that building and helped coat it with preservative. These building improvements were his gift to the NHF and the board is extremely grateful.

More recently board members Milt Hanson and Gary Olson restored the wooden sign for the Berdahl/Rolvaag House. The supports had rotted at ground level and the sign had fallen.

The inside of the Eggers School has been newly painted. Previously it had been painted 20 years ago when the building was moved to the campus.

Over the years the Nordland Heritage Foundation board has been blessed with members who have taken personal responsibility for maintenance and other tasks and have volunteered many hours to accomplish them. The Park would not exist without them.

News from other heritage organizations

SONS OF NORWAY

Sioux Falls Gjoa Chapter of the Sons of Norway sponsored a concert in September given by musicians Inger-Kristine Riber, piano, and Ivi Karnezi, soprano, both from Norway. The October meeting was a membership dinner. On November 22nd the Chapter will hold a cultural skills “Hands On Extravaganza” at Nordic Hall, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information call one of the co-presidents, Karen Kratochvil (339-3048) or Becky Ellis (336-7585.)

NORSEMEN’S FEDERATION

Norsemen’s Federation is an organization for Norwegians living outside of Norway. The local chapter met on October 11 at the Morrison Commons on the Augustana College campus. Following a dinner, there was a presentation by author Irene Levin Berman who wrote the book We are Going to Pick Potatoes; Norway and the Holocaust, the Untold Story. Watch for news of the group’s spring meeting or contact Jim Olson, president, at (605) 332-3121.

NORSE GLEE CLUB

Norse Glee Club will hold their annual lutefisk supper on Friday, November 7 at Nordic Hall, 218 W. 18th Street in Sioux Falls. Serving will be family-style from 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Tickets are $15 for everyone 12 years and older. Children under 12 are charged $7.50. The menu includes lutefisk, meatballs, potatoes, coleslaw, with sherbet for dessert. Call (605) 332-7489 for tickets. Prior to that they will participate in the Festival of Men’s Voices on November 2.

Heritage Organizations continued

MINNEHAHA MANDSKOR

Minnehaha Mandskor has recorded a CD to be released this fall. They will participate in the Festival of Men’s Voices on November 2 and will be in concert Monday, November 17 at 7 p.m. in the Dow Rummel Village Chapel. On December 1 they will have their Christmas dinner. In October the Mandskor took a weekend trip to Minneapolis to cruise Lake Minnetonka, to see a musical and participate in the church service at Mindekirken.

Obituary

Dr. Arthur L. Olsen
(November 24, 1929-May 4, 2014)

Nordland Heritage Foundation mourns the death of Arthur Olsen, co-founder of the foundation and charter member of the board of directors. After James Berdahl offered the Berdahl/Rolvaag historic house to Augustana College, the Nordland Fest Board appointed a committee to plan for a foundation that would raise funds to move and restore the house. Art Olsen was a part of the foundation when it met for the first time on June 23, 1977 and he served the board of directors in a variety of capacities throughout the years. Art was executive director of the Nordland Heritage Foundation at the time of his death. He had a vision of what the Augustana Heritage Park could be and he worked tirelessly through the foundation to achieve that vision.
THE NORDLAND HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Augustana College
Box 735
2001 S. Summit Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD 57197

Yes!
I want to join Nordland Heritage Foundation and support its work of preserving heritage.

NAME ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

ZIP ______________________________ TELEPHONE________________________________________________________________

Enclosed is a check for:     _____$25 Basic   _____$50 Contributor   _____$100 Donor   _____$250 Sponsor   _____ over $250 Viking

Annual membership dues include an individual or a couple.

Send to Nordland Heritage Foundation
Augustana College
Box 735
2001 S. Summit Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57197

The Nordlander is the news publication for the Nordland Heritage Foundation. This organization was founded in 1977 and maintains the historic buildings in Heritage Park and makes them available to the public.

Mark your calendar for the Annual Meeting of Nordland Heritage Foundation in June of 2015.

The four historic buildings are open for touring on Sunday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00, during the summer. Special tours can be arranged for school groups or other interested parties during the year. Call (605) 274-4700 or (605) 338-6372. The park is open all year.