

## New Brighton Area Historical Society Newsletter

43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting Thursday, April 27, 6:00 PM

The public is invited to join the New Brighton Area Historical Society on **Thursday, April 27, at 6:00 PM**, at the New Brighton Community Center, 400 10th St. NW, for its 43rd Annual Meeting.

Have you ever wondered about the history of the delightful old homes in our area? The NBAHS has a lot of history on these old homes, some of which stand to this day, others which have been razed.

The Society will present "This Old House," a program showing vintage photos of old homes in the New Brighton area. We'll show photos of the home as it was, present some history about the home, and how the home looks now.

And then we'll talk about "Our House," the Bulwer Junction Depot, now the New Brighton History Center in Long Lake Park, which once was home to the stationmaster and his family. "Our House" was built in 1887 as a passenger depot and the stationmaster's family lived in four rooms in the back: kitchen, living room, and two bedrooms. The depot also had a waiting room, stationmaster's office and freight room.

New Brighton Mayor, City Council, City Staff, and New Brighton Ambassadors have been invited to attend.

Refreshments will be served. Questions can be addressed to (651) 633-4070 or nbahs@me.com.



### NBAHS Calendar of Events

April 27: Annual Meeting - 6:00 PM

May 20: Depot Spring Cleanup Day 9:00 AM

June 3: Rhubarb Pull - 9:00 AM

June 4: Rhubarb Fest & Museum Opens 1-4 PM for Summer Weekends

August 11-13: Stockyard Days

September 24: Depot closes for season



"Our House," the New Brighton History Center with new rain gutters and the new look of the depot with the diseased overgrown ash tree having been removed by Ramsey County Parks & Recreation.

## Honoring Pletschers' Greenhouses

It was a pleasure for the NBAHS to honor long-time New Brighton business Pletschers' Greenhouses on Sunday, October 22, at the New Brighton Community Center.



Pletschers' celebrated 102 years as a business in 2022. Thirty members of the Pletscher family plus the public attended the presentation of the history of the business.



The family donated over 150 photos that were used in our slide show that traced founder John E. Pletscher and his three sons, John N., Bob, and Glenn who then ran the business.

Shown above are John N. and Glenn at the beginning of the program greeting each other.

Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas read her proclamation naming Sunday, October 9, 2022 as Pletschers' Day.

Above, Brian Pletscher, son of Glenn, is shown giving the history of Pletschers but also sharing a timeline of what the greenhouse plants each season and when that planting needs to begin. Congratulations, Pletschers, on 102 years!

## New Brighton History Center Spring Cleanup Day - Saturday, May 20 - 9:00 - Noon

Each spring the New Brighton Area Historical Society does an annual clean-up to prepare the depot museum for its opening for the season. We are looking for volunteers to assist with this clean-up. We welcome older students who need volunteer hours for their classes, older Scout Troops, or any other group that is willing to give a few hours to assist the society. Duties needed to be completed include: wash interior & exterior windows, clean shutters & sills, dust displays, vacuum floors, clean bathroom, weed rhubarb patch and flower bed, plant perennials or annuals, sweep deck & outside stairs, and rake and cleanup of depot yards. Materials, coffee, lemonade & doughnuts provided. Please considering helping us for a few hours. Please call (651) 633-4070 if you need for more information.

## Thanks, Scout Troops

The New Brighton Area Historical Society thanks Cub Scout Pack 412, sponsored by the New Brighton Eagles. Brian Novak is the Cubmaster for this pack. Last spring Troop 412 scouts were a big help in raking the enormous amount of leaves surrounding our depot museum during our spring cleanup.



Now another troop is helping us. Troop 106 is sponsored by Christ the King Lutheran Church in New Brighton and has an advancement program that has resulted in over 100 Eagle Scouts over their 50 years of history. Douglas White is the Scoutmaster for this troop.

White's son Finn is now advancing toward an Eagle Scout project, which is to design and build a Little Free Library for the depot area. What's special about this Little Free Library is that it will be designed to look like the depot museum. The Library will be installed next to our bench in front of the depot.

To further help us out, Troop 106 members Drew White, Finn White, Isaac Botten, and Nathaniel Brandner also helped out by hauling New Brighton Bulletin books from Lillie Newspapers building in North St. Paul on Thursday, March 9. See article on page 6.



Troop 106 Scouts enjoying a tour of the New Brighton History Center after hauling books.

Thanks, Scouts!

## A Message From Our President



After surviving such a brutal and seemingly endless winter, spring is indeed, such a welcome thought. For those of us at the NBAHS, it means the commencement of a flurry of activities, after several months of dormancy; and we can hardly wait!

Of course, the seasonal “kick-off” event is our annual Rhubarb Festival, to be held from 1-4 PM on Sunday, June 4, at the Depot, which coincidentally, is situated on Joe Hipp’s historic rhubarb farm. The “fun” starts on Saturday, June 3, when many of us gather at the Dave Nathe farm in Elk River, to pull several hundred pounds of fresh rhubarb, a large portion thereof being immediately delivered to Key’s Restaurant, to be baked into fresh desserts overnight. The remainder of the harvest will be put into 3-lb. bundles to be sold at our Depot on that Saturday, and at the Festival on the

following day at the New Brighton History Center in Long Lake Park.

**Please be advised that the rhubarb bundles are a very popular item, and usually sell-out each year; so arrive early if you can.**

It should be noted that the rhubarb is harvested exclusively by our Board members and other “volunteers” that we welcome each year. Although the process does involve work, we all seem to enjoy the opportunity to be outside and “play farmer” for part of the day—and all for a good cause! (Anyone wishing to volunteer for this event should contact (949) 283-3050.

As we enter this new season, we want to particularly express sincere thanks to our active and hard-working Board, which now numbers ten, some of which are more recent members offering creative ideas and much appreciated energy. Equally important, we wish to thank our loyal members, and the various local civic organizations for their financial support, without which the NBAHS would fail to exist.

It should also be given mention that the Society has had the good fortune to be the recipient of occasional grant proceeds, that are generally available to qualified organizations such as ours. In fact, this past year we have received a grant to fund the substantial portion of a state-of-the-art security/surveillance system for our depot—a much needed improvement!

In summary, as a result of these collective efforts, I am pleased to report that the NBAHS is in sound financial condition. Moreover, it is uniquely blessed to proudly display, and showcase, such an attractive and historically relevant Depot Museum. Our Board remains dedicated to the continued preservation of this local treasure; we are, indeed, the envy of many of our peers. It has been a great honor to have served as your president.

See you at the Depot!

Fred Behrens, President



### NBAHS 2023-2024 Board of Directors

Left to right: Joyce Kloncz, Secretary, Director Mary Burg, Director Peg Joyce, Director Ron Cota, President Fred Behrens, Director Art Oglesby, Treasurer Wayne Searles, Vice-President David Peterson, Director Lori Nebel, Director Jim Nebel.

Art’s term as director expires this year but he will stay on the board, if elected. David Peterson will step down as Vice-President and Jim Nebel will take on that role. Rest of officers will remain in place. Election to take place at NBAHS Annual Meeting.

**Registration Form**  
**New Brighton Area Historical Society**  
**For new and renewing members.**

Mail to: NBAHS, Box 120624, New Brighton, MN 55112

The New Brighton Area Historical Society preserves our history and operates our New Brighton History Center, located in Long Lake Regional Park. Your membership supports our all-volunteer organization and allows us to showcase our history and honor our heritage for years to come. Help us preserve and share the fascinating history of the New Brighton area by becoming a member today and/or making a donation to our cause!

**Our Society's Future Depends on Your Support. We Thank You!**



Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Options (Check One)**

Single \$10.00     Family \$15.00     Business/Club \$100.00

Please consider an extra donation for museum maintenance

**• A Great Gift Idea for Your Family •**  
**Four NBAHS Historical Books**

*A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF NEW BRIGHTON, MINNESOTA (1987)*  
*A PICTORIAL HISTORY: NEW BRIGHTON AREA, MINNESOTA, FROM THE 1880s - 1950s (2002)*  
*A PICTORIAL HISTORY: NEW BRIGHTON AREA, MINNESOTA, FROM THE 1950s - 2000s (2005)*  
*HISTORICAL SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST*

**Available at:** • New Brighton Community Center • City Hall • Beisswenger's Hardware  
• New Brighton History Center (summers) or by mail

Mail form below to: **New Brighton Area Historical Society, PO Box 120624, New Brighton, MN 55112**  
Payable to: **New Brighton Area Historical Society.**

Each hardbound book, including tax **\$25; Snippets \$12** - Packaging & Mailing (per book) \$6.00

Book(s) and number(s) requested: Snippets \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2002 \_\_\_\_\_ 1987 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**TREASURER'S REPORT**  
**Wayne Searles, Treasurer**

FISCAL YEAR MAY 2022 - MARCH 2023

Income	\$12,480
Sales & Donations	\$11,365
Books	\$680
Memberships	\$435
Expenses	\$10,972
Museum	\$6771
Utilities & Security	\$788
Taxes & Insurance	\$2,146
Sales & Promotions	\$1,267

To preserve the engraved planks that make up our deck, we installed gutters on the depot roof for \$6500. Thanks to the generosity of several organizations as well as individuals the cost was almost all covered.

**Thanks Adagios, Lions Club, & Eagles**

A big thanks to Adagios and the New Brighton Lions Club, who at their Chili Cook-off last October, designated funds to go to the New Brighton Area Historical Society. Shown below is NBAHS Board member Mary Burg accepting a check for \$3,000 from Lions representative Val Johnson. These funds were designated for the installation of rain gutters on the New Brighton History Center in Long Lake Park.

In addition the NBAHS thanks the Eagles Aerie Gambling Fund for \$1,000 to the Society.



**National Register of Historic Places Eligibility**  
**by Dr. David Peterson, Ph.D., Anthropology**

After attempting to place the depot museum on the National register of Historic Places in the 1990s, NBAHS is again investigating the possibility. According to the National Park Service, "The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation." Among the criteria for significance are historical, cultural, artistic, and scientific significance. For instance, churches and historic community structures are good candidates for the National Register, as are houses 50 years old or more (usually older) that are representative of a particular architectural style.

Archaeological sites are often eligible for the National Register when they are associated with religious practices, including Native American burial mounds, or well preserved so they might be of scientific importance for future research.



The Foss House on Silver Lake Road is a structure currently on the National Register due to its age and representation of fine late 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture.

Current state of preservation is an important factor. Although New Brighton's 1887 Soo Line depot museum is the oldest known existing standing structure in the city, before it was restored as the museum, it had been moved off its original location near the Bell Pole Yards. Being moved off of its original site was a main factor it was judged to be ineligible for the National Register by administrators at the Minnesota Historical Society.

While being on the National Register is a matter of civic pride, it does not guarantee a building will be preserved in the event of a construction project, although it may be eligible for funds for upkeep when on the register.

There are pros and cons, for instance when receiving funds, certain changes that may be needed for convenience or other reasons may be prohibited if judged to harm the historical integrity of the building.

When meeting with Minnesota Historical Society field personnel, I learned that creation of a local register of historic places with the City of New Brighton could do more to preserve the depot. For instance, if threatened by new construction the City might prevent the depot's destruction and this could be a better protection than offered by the National Register. We will keep you informed of developments.

## Mounds View School District #621 Formation

The earliest schools in our area were New Brighton School (District #18, consolidated in 1951 as District 37), Irondale School (District #36A), the Red School (known as Mounds View, District #4), the White School (District #15, consolidated with District 18), Spring Lake Park (Red Oak, District 36B), Wilbur Lake (District 28), Snail Lake (District 25), Turtle Lake (District 35), and Lake Johanna School (District #20). These independent districts housed students in grades 1-8 in the early years.

In 1951, Independent District #621 district was formed, following the approximate borders of Mounds View Township, established in 1858. District #621 was led by respected leader, Ralph Reeder, who came from the University of Minnesota. The new district was needed to provide schooling beyond grade eight.

Before Mounds View High School was opened in 1954, students going on to high school would go to one of many different high schools: Columbia Heights, White Bear, Alexander Ramsey, Minneapolis Edison, Marshall, University, Vocational, and St. Paul Central and Murray High Schools. Those school districts then said they could not house our high school students.



The first schoolhouse for New Brighton's District 18 was built in 1890 and located on 5th Avenue and present-day County Road E-2. This school existed until 1939 when a new New Brighton School opened on 8th Avenue. The old school eventually held the Setchell-Carlson electronics company. This postcard was taken in 1910. Original photo loaned by Stella Perry Flygare, NBAHS #09.04.

Consolidation then produced Mounds View High School, which opened in fall 1954 with grades 7-11. Edgewood Junior High was soon built which helped the overcrowding at the senior high. The first graduating class at Mounds View was the class of 1956.



New Brighton students in 1905. Photo donated by Margaret Reasoner Nerheim, NBAHS #89.09.



### New Brighton Bulletin - Lillie Newspapers

Lillie Suburban News, headed by Ted Lillie, had published weekly local newspapers for 82 years in the metropolitan area beginning in 1937. Papers included the New Brighton-Mounds View Bulletin, Shoreview-Arden Hills Bulletin, St. Anthony Bulletin, and many other east metro cities. Lillie stopped publishing the New Brighton Bulletin in 2019.

The Society was approached by the North St. Paul Historical Society who told us that the building where the Bulletin newspapers were stored is slated to be torn down soon. So NBAHS board member Jim Nebel worked to retrieve those 75 books and brought them to the depot. Evidently Ted Lillie had these copies hardbound and are we glad he did! A real treasure trove for us. Now to determine how to best display them.

Pictured above are the books safely stored at our depot museum. We need now to build shelving to accommodate the books. If you can help with a financial donation for shelving, please send a check to the below address. Your assistance is appreciated!