

WINTER 2014-15

Paul Maravelas, editor.

Founded in 1972, the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society preserves the history of Lake Minnetonka and the communities of Deephaven, Excelsior, Greenwood, Shorewood, and Tonka Bay.

The Society's museum and archives are free and open to the public, and hold the largest collection of historical artifacts and documents in the area.

The Society's publications are available for purchase from the Society, Excelsior City Hall, and local retailers. The Society also presents lectures and programs on topics of local historical interest.

The Society's publications and memberships are available for purchase on our website:

[www.elmhs.org](http://www.elmhs.org)

**ELMHS**  
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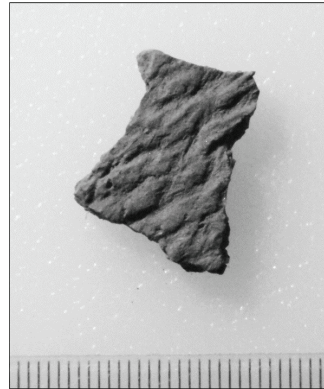
# The Harborage

## Archaeology work on Big Island

ARCHAEOLOGIST Christina Harrison has been working with the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society to survey an area of Big Island for evidence of prehistoric and historic Native American use. Harrison's crew was on the island for four days in October, 2014, and made some impressive finds of prehistoric ceramic and stone artifacts, notable mainly for the quantity of material found in a small area.

Archaeologist Harrison says: "the stone artifacts mostly seem to indicate tool maintenance or possibly tool finishing." Because no finished tools were found on the island, it's not possible to date the stone fragments. She dates most of the ceramic fragments from 800 B.C. to 200 A.D.

We know from pioneer accounts that a Dakota Indian sugar-making and rice-processing camp existed on Big Island, though its location is no longer known. Clearly, the island



Pottery fragment recently excavated on Big Island. The measuring scale is in millimeters.

has been inhabited for a very long time.

The project was funded by a grant from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, as well as by a contribution from the Excelsior - Lake Minnetonka Historical Society. Harrison is developing a proposal for further work on Big Island,

which may include the intensive excavation of a small area.



Both stone and ceramic artifacts were found on the island, with some test areas particularly fruitful. Archaeologist John Strot holds ceramic fragments before bagging them for further study.

# Tapping History programs

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*Our Tapping History programs are informal monthly presentations held at the Excelsior Brewery, 421 Third Street in Excelsior. The programs are free and open to the public, and begin at 7 p.m.*

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December 23, 2014

Tuesday | special date!

## **Coyote Lost at Sea: The Michael Plant Story**

with Julia Plant

Deephaven native Mike Plant was one of the most daring round-the-world solo sailors of his time. In 1992, while preparing to compete in his fourth single-handed circumnavigation aboard *Coyote*, Plant departed New York for the starting line of the Vendée Globe race in France. But he never arrived, and an overturned *Coyote* was discovered 32 days later.

Plant's sister Julia told his complicated story in a 2013 book. He spent many of his teen years and twenties as a miscreant, but grew up to be a sailing legend. She paints a well-defined picture of Mike's last days, a mystery that has intrigued the sailing world for more than two decades.

January 12, 2015 | Monday

## **Tales of Tonka Bay**

with Paul Maravelas

An eccentric pioneer apple grower, a fervent religious community, and one of Minnetonka's "big three" hotels were all part of nineteenth century Tonka Bay. The twentieth century saw a scheme to build a bridge from West Point to Big Island, the celebrated arrest of Frank Lloyd Wright, and the flourishing of the legendary Vern West. Maravelas will discuss the history of the Narrows, the Tonka Bay Boat Works and its boats, and Everglades Estates, a real estate development based on man-made canals.

February 9, 2015 | Monday

## **Excelsior in the '60s: Epicenter of Twin Cities Teen Life**

with Daniel Gabriel

Between Danceland, the amusement park, and the sprawling public beach and Commons on Lake Minnetonka, Excelsior provided diversions aplenty for Twin Cities youth back in the '60s and early '70s. Daniel Gabriel lived in the village in those years and has written extensively on the scene. Learn about Baldies and Battles of the Bands, about long-dismantled rides and legends of the Fun House. Gabriel's unpublished novel, *Paradiso*, is set in Excelsior and built around these very topics.



Commons, c. 1940

ELMHS

March 9, 2015 | Monday

## **The Excelsior Commons**

with Scott D. McGinnis

Generations have cherished Excelsior's public commons fronting Lake Minnetonka. Since the founding of Excelsior, the area designated as the Commons has expanded greatly and has been host to a number of structures, businesses, and activities. The boundaries of the Commons, as well as the revolving public/private partnerships proposed for it throughout the years, have long been a subject of controversy among its stakeholders.

Historian Scott D. McGinnis, author of *Excelsior's Waterfront: The History of the Excelsior Commons and Excelsior Docks*, will detail the history of this unique parcel of land. Hear about the pavilions, bath houses, water attractions, boat services, docks, and boat works once on the Commons, and its use as a campground and beer garden.

# Give the gift of Society membership

What was it that first ignited your interest in the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society? The thrill of sparking a childhood memory on a visit to our museum? The joy of discovering photos of the past in our collections? The sense of community you felt when you attended a Tapping History event?

For me, it was the realization that we have a diverse, interested, and deeply involved community dedicated to preserving the amazing history of our area. I have gained so much from my membership, and I want to share that with others. I encourage you to do the same. Give the gift of Society membership this Holiday Season.

*Molly Loomis, membership chair*



## THANKS TO OUR BOOSEUM VOLUNTEERS

We thank the many who volunteered on the trail, as well as: Joe Anderson, Bill & Heather Brands, Kim Cooney, Brianna DePauw, Kay & Bob Derner, Kathy & Mark Endres, Patrick Hanson, Sharon Hartung, Mark Headla, Susan Hocker, Jerry Holl, Jon Holt, Catherine Honzl, Cindy Larson, Molly Loomis, Paul Maravelas, Paul & Carol Prenevost, Mark Rossi, Becca Sanders, Joseph Schwartz, Amy Vasina, The Band Ruben, Chaska Valley Family Theater, Cub Foods of Minnetonka, Cub Foods of Shorewood, Excelsior Masonic Lodge, Gary's First Class Car Care, Jake O'Connor's, Laketown Chocolates, Minnesota Streetcar Museum, and Dan & Diane Wattenhoffer (Kettle Korn Factory).

### MEMBERSHIP

Society members shape our policies and programs, and support our work in preserving the area's history.

*Annual member benefits include:*

- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events & merchandise
- Newsletter and Society mailings
- Voting privileges

### Membership Levels

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Silver   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Gold     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Bronze     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Platinum |

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Mail to ELMHS, Box 305, Excelsior Minn. 55331. Make checks payable to ELMHS.

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The recipient of your gift membership will receive a warm, hand-written card acknowledging your gift. You will also receive an acknowledgement.

# Annual Halloween Booseum brings 1,300 visitors

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The Halloween Booseum, our largest fundraiser, brought in more than 1,300 visitors this year.

The annual event is also a fundraiser for the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. It features a stage show, a tour of the Society's museum decorated for Halloween, and a ride on Excelsior's historic streetcar down a trail lined with volunteers acting out frightening scenes.

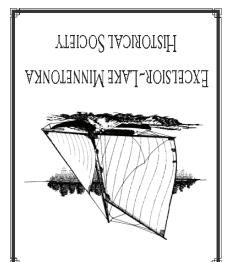
This year's event was organized by Kathy Endres and Becca Sanders. Kim Cooney rounded up volunteers for the trail, Sharon Hartung helped to

decorate the museum, and Cindy Larson organized a three hour stage show each night. Heather Brands rounded up actors from the Chaska Valley Family Theater, who came in costume and entertained the crowd. Paul & Carol Prenevost, who have helped out with the Booseum since its beginning ten years ago, arranged a \$1,000 donation from Bell Mortgage.

We couldn't conduct this event without the help of a large corps of volunteers. We list other Booseum volunteers on page 3.

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Board of Directors of the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society  
Paul Maravelas, president; Lisa Stevens, vice president; Betty Peck, treasurer; directors Bri Depauw, Kay Derner, Ben Duinick, Kathy Endres, Patrick Hanson, Jerry Holl, Cate Honzl, Molly Loomis, Joe Schwartz, Tad Shaw, Amy Vasina.



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