

# The Radiator Brush



Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum & Historic Cottage 11 Boys' Cottage  
~ Winter 2015 Newsletter Edition ~

## *Message from Harvey*

**The Owatonna People's Press published the following Letter to the Editor from Harvey Ronglien on November 3. Since Harvey has so many admirers far and wide, here's his message:**

To the editor,

Years ago, I received the deepest wound to my psyche that it would ever have to absorb. For whatever reason, I was abandoned by my mother and father in 1932 and placed in the State School. Little did I know that the next 11 years would be the best thing that could have ever happened to me. I had to go through it in order to gain the credibility needed to do what God had planned for me.

My good and faithful wife has always told me that God had a plan for me way back when I was in my mother's womb — that he had picked me out of 10,635 kids to record and preserve the history of the State School. Maybe so, because 60 years later in 1992, I was motivated to put my heart and soul into preserving the State School history.

Today I'm in the sunset of my life — old and weary. Before I close my eyes for the last time, I want to take this opportunity to thank anybody and everybody in the Owatonna community who helped me in this effort the past 23 years.

My hope is that the Owatonna community will continue to respect and preserve the legacy of West Hills in the years to come. We're proud our restoration efforts



were recently honored by the State of Minnesota, and proud West Hills is today listed on the National Register of Historic Places. My sincere thanks to all who helped preserve the history of West Hills as a historic site for our community, Minnesota, and the nation.

## **Year-End Appeal**

During this charitable time of the year, we are asking you to please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Orphanage Museum. As a non-profit, we rely on donations to help keep the museum open. We are not sending out a formal fundraising request this year, but are using the Radiator Brush to make our appeal.

With your gift, we will continue to work diligently to promote the Orphanage Museum as a memorial to the State School children and an important educational experience. Many visitors—who had not heard of the Museum prior to coming—often share how touched they were by what they learned. These tours continue to change lives and perspectives.

**Please consider making as generous a gift as you can. Your donation will make a world of difference.**

Checks payable to 'Orphanage Museum' should be sent to the address below. Donations may also be made through our website. Thank you!



### Corporate Sponsor

Federated Insurance

### History Stop Sponsors

Advanced Coil Technology

Alexander Lumber

Anonymous

Bosch Automotive

Central Park Coffee

Einhaus, Mattison, Carver & Haberman, PA

Express Employment Professionals

ERA-Gillespie Real Estate

HomeTown Credit Union

Owatonna Motor Company



## *2015 Lighting the Path*

September 12, proved to be a beautiful evening for our Lighting the Path Event. Attendees participated in a history walk along a luminary-lit path, enjoyed the beautiful harp music by Sheila Rame, and listened to an emotional presentation by Barry Adams outside the Children's Cemetery. Thanks to our sponsors and donors, nearly \$7,000 was raised that evening. **Today's Legacy Fund total is \$45,560.95.**



## *Pilgrimage – a Poem by Donna Scott Norling*

I stare at the exhibit that acknowledges 10,000 orphans.  
 In this dining room they ate dinners of creamed cod and parsnips,  
 empty plates required.  
 A photograph reveals somber girls in flour-sack dresses  
 and square haircuts. My sister and me, front row.  
 Among sleds, boxing gloves, clodhoppers,  
 I spot a wiry radiator brush that stung against soft buttocks,  
 but no crying allowed.  
 Pain sucked from these objects hits me like an icy blast.  
 But I've been hostage to pain and confusion too long.  
 I let the corked and sealed memories bubble up and overflow,  
 cleansing the wound within.

## 2015 Tourism Season

We gave 45 formal group tours this year that brought 1,351 visitors to the museum. That does not include the hundreds of people who stopped by on their own over the past year. People came from the surrounding states, but also Alaska, Washington, California, Texas, Florida, Arizona, Connecticut, and even the Bahamas and Faroe Islands. We attribute some of the increase in drop-in activity to the fact that the Orphanage Museum was named Scene Magazine's "Best of Southern Minnesota" in the Museum and History Center category for the second consecutive year! The award is the result of online voting and we appreciate the honor.

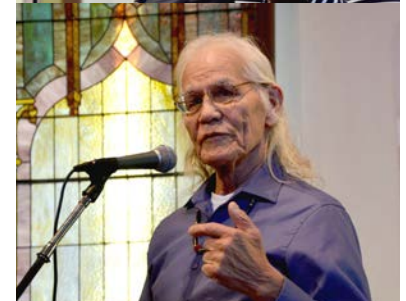


## Folksingers Curtis & Loretta CD Release – November 21

The CD Release of Curtis & Loretta's "When There's Good to Be Done" was held on Saturday, November 21, at the OAC Performance Hall, hosted by the Orphanage Museum and the Owatonna Arts Center.

Loretta Simonet was awarded an Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board in 2015, and wrote 12 original songs about real-life people who overcome great odds in their lives. Harvey Ronglien and Peter Razor, who both grew up at the State School in Owatonna, are two of the people about whom Loretta wrote songs and they were in attendance at the concert.

Copies of the CD are available for sale in the Museum Gift Shop for \$15. A portion of the sales is being donated to the Museum. If you would like to order one through the mail, please add \$3 for shipping.





### *Case Number 6212 – Lorena Haefner*

As eager as many State Schoolers were to get out of the system, what really did happen to them once they reached the age of 18? Hopefully, they had an education, but were they ready for the “real world” after living in an institution? What happened when an indenture contract ended? Here’s the story of just one little girl.

Lorena Haefner was placed in the State School in March of 1920 when she was 10 years old. She was not an orphan; both of her parents were living at the time and she had older siblings. Her admission records show her to be a healthy young girl, but she had no schooling, so she was placed in first grade.

Her education at State School was quickly interrupted in May of 1920 when she was placed on indenture to a farmer near St. Charles, Minnesota. That arrangement must not have worked out because in January of 1923 she was indentured out again, this time to a family near Meriden, Minnesota. That was a lot of adjustment for a girl who was barely 13 years old.

For the next five years, Lorena fulfilled her duties as an indentured student, helping with the family’s young children and even doing farm chores. A 1925 agent’s report stated, “Lorena was shocking wheat today to help get the harvesting done.” The report also said that the child was “content” and the guardian’s treatment of child was “good.” Only two items stand out in her file. Superintendent Galen Merrill sent a simple message to the farmer saying, “Will you kindly inform Lorena Haefner that her mother died August 13.” And there was a notation in 1926 saying that her father had tried to “take her away,” but the farmer had scared him off.

When Lorena turned 18, the indenture contract ended. The farmer met his obligation of providing a bed, food, a roof over her head and material to sew a dress. She also received a check for \$100 for her five years of work.

But what would she do next? She stayed on as a servant, but eventually asked if she could help another family with their growing brood. Clarence & Elsie Nelson accepted her into their home, which eventually counted 5 children, including a set of twin girls. Lorena was even godmother to the youngest child. She’d found a home. In telling this story, Joyce Nelson, one of the twins, said, “She was family.”

Thank you to Joyce Nelson for sharing Lorena’s story and her State School records. The records were cold and businesslike. Joyce was able to provide details about Lorena’s personality and dreams and her impact on their family.

## Donations

### Lighting the Path/Legacy Trust Donors

Luminaries (H = In honor of/M = In memory of)

Vivian Manthe . . . . .H - In Thanksgiving for Harvey & Maxine Ronglien  
 Joyce Frank . . . . .M - Napoleon Bonaparte  
 Dan Lewis . . . . .M - Myrtle Lewis and Bertha Eriksen  
 Bev Miller . . . . .M - Roger & Charlotte Miller and Hans Paulson  
 Janice & Joel Jensen . . . . .M - Donald & Margaret Bruno and Oscar & Eva Jensen  
 Sandy & Ken Dinse . . . . .M - Eva Carlson Jensen and Brothers  
 Al & Corky Kolander . . . . .H - Harvey & Maxine Ronglien  
 John Stadler . . . . .M - State Schooler #6463 Frieda C. Funck  
 Harriet Matchan . . . . .M - David Matchan  
 Conrad Heusinkveld . . . . .M - Russell & Claretta Heusinkveld  
 Margo Dinneen . . . . .M - Elise Ragne Hansen, Norman Earling Hansen,  
 and Margaret Alvilde Hansen  
 Julie Tenhoff Lyons . . . . .M - Marvin & Virginia Tenhoff  
 Edward Peterson . . . . .M - Arthur Peterson, Hjelmer Peterson, Ruth Peterson,  
 Lillian Peterson, Roy Peterson  
 Elsie Turnmire Potter . . . . .M - Paul Turnmire, Albert Turnmire, Jr., Mary Jane Turnmire Kyseth  
 Jerry & Dorothy Huiras . . . . .H - Harvey & Maxine Ronglien  
 Janice Hyland . . . . .M - George Timson Rothe  
 Myrtle Loch . . . . .M - Floyd Clark  
 Gloria Stock Mickelson . . . . .M - Edith Johnson, Tracy Johnson, Louie Johnson,  
 Lillian Johnson, Claude Johnson, Clyde Johnson, Edna Johnson  
 Jill Smith . . . . .M - Fred Trickey  
 Bob & Donna Ayers . . . . .M - Vina Dahl, Bud Dahl  
 Jane M. DeVos . . . . .Jaxon Sorenson  
 Kenneth & Dorothy Carroll . . . . .M - Mary Shimpach  
 Norma Phillips, Janet Phillips Brockman,  
 Ann Marie Phillips Vinopal, and Virginia Phillips Larsen . . . . .M - William "Billy" Hernon  
 Harvey & Maxine Ronglien  
 Silvan Durben  
 Denise Gardner  
 Katherine Kylo  
 Maribell Chauncey  
 Nina Zak  
 Darren & Shelby Zempel  
 Linda Knutson  
 Mary L. Smith  
 James Novak  
 Tom & Anna Marie Brick  
 Owatonna Shoe Company  
 Harland & Ramona Strohschein  
 Brick - Meger Funeral Home  
 Owatonna Chapter of Thrivent Financial



## State School Orphanage Museum Board Members

Dale Tracy, Chair  
Nancy Sletten, Treasurer  
Tom Bonacci  
Mark Carver  
Denise Gardner  
Katie Godfrey  
Gloria Kolander  
Carol Raetz  
Harvey Ronglien  
Maxine Ronglien, Past Chair  
Greg Thomas  
Shelby Zempel, Past Chair

## Staff

Anne Peterson,  
Museum Director

Interested in volunteering?  
Please contact Anne Peterson or  
Tom Bonacci, Lead Cottage 11  
Volunteer.



## Donations

### General Donations

Sandra Morrill  
Harold T. Jones  
Elizabeth Kummeth  
DeLoyce Anderson  
Corky Kolander  
Julie Lyons  
Paul & Yeahuey Wu  
Bill & Catherine Harrison  
Elsie Potter  
Wayne Quist  
Linda Arthur  
Vickie Knickerbocker  
Bill & Gretchen (Nina Bayer) McGillivray

### Legacy Trust

Mary E. Larson

### Memorials

Harvey & Maxine Ronglien – In memory of Willard Ehrich  
Harvey & Maxine Ronglien – In memory of Wayne Knutson  
Karen & Richard Nohel – In memory of Mildred, Joseph, and Robert Bakunas  
Edna Cummins – In memory of John Roger Carroll  
Barb and Jerry LaSee – In memory of Elaine Bruhn  
Pattie and Tom Karlovich – In memory of Elaine Bruhn  
Anne Peterson – In memory of John Roger Carroll  
Bunnie Haberman – In memory of Ritchie Mead

### Word of Deceased State Schoolers

Mildred Bakunas Lamb Severine  
Robert Voshell (born Robert Mastny)  
Lewis Reynolds

### Obituary Record Book

Thank you to Board Member Carol Raetz for assembling a large binder to keep all the obituaries of former State Schoolers that we receive. And thank you to everyone who has shared obits and memorial cards.



We wish to extend a special “thank you” to Sandy Dinse, longtime Board member, who recently retired from the Board. Thank you for the countless hours you graciously donated creating beautiful displays and volunteering to keep the memories of these children alive.

(l to r: Museum Director Anne Peterson, past Board Member Sandy Dinse)

## *100 Years Ago*

In December of 1915, The State Board of Control filed a report on conditions at the State School, which included the information below:

An interesting study has been made of the first 4,000 children received at the State Public School, showing what progress has been made by those who reached the age of self-support and what degree of success they have attained. The results of the inquiry are summarized as follows:

- 885—Farmers
- 981 – Day laborers, teamsters, florists, etc.; 926 doing well, 55 doing poorly.
- 103 –Trade or handcrafts as carpenters, masons, plumbers, painters, machinists, engineers, etc.; 100 doing well or fairly well, 3 doing poorly.
- 105 –Salesmen, office clerks, stenographers, telegraph operators; 103 doing well, 2 doing poorly.
- 16 – Merchants, real estate and insurance, factory owner, house movers, etc., all doing well.
- 30 – Lawyers, teachers, musicians, college work, publishers, bank clerks, etc., all doing well.
- 25 – Railroad work as engineers, conductors, brakeman, postal service etc.; all doing well.
- 65 –Domestic services as janitors, porters, elevator men, chauffeurs, bakers, cooks, etc.; 60 doing well, 5 doing poorly.
- 25 –Miscellaneous as barbers, cigar makers, news agents, etc.; 23 doing well, 2 doing poorly.
- In the army and the navy there are 34 former wards of the school, of whom 26 are doing well and 8 are doing poorly.
- Of those former wards of the school only 75, or a little over 5 percent are reported as doing poorly.

An investigation in regards to 1,593 girls shows the following results:

- 295 – Girls who married; 213 are doing well, 49 fairly well. In 28 cases the marriage appears to have resulted in failure.
- 20 – Unmarried girls engaged in domestic service of various kinds as waitresses, cooks, laundresses, etc.; 16 are doing well and 4 doing poorly.
- 43 – Teachers doing well.
- 74 – Telegraph operators, stenographers, clerks, sales women; 72 doing well, 2 doing poorly.
- 14 – Nurses all doing well.
- Of 682 girls remaining with foster parents or at home with their own parents, 531 are doing well, 109 fairly well and 42 or only 6 per cent are doing poorly.
- Four girls have become county or hospital charges and 63 are classified as feeble-minded and 92 girls have died.

One has to wonder what criteria they used to determine who was doing well and who was doing poorly.





*State School  
Orphanage Museum*

540 West Hills Circle  
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060



Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 7  
Owatonna, MN 55060

---

**Return Service Requested**

---



*Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year  
to all*

*from the Museum Board!*