



DAN PATCH *Newsletter*

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Dan Patch Days
2010 Button

**For more information
about our organization,
visit our website
www.danpatch.com**

2010 DAN PATCH DAYS

Every year the City of Savage celebrates Dan Patch Days. The event usually attracts 10,000 people but the weather presented several challenges. Friday night events were cancelled but Saturday the DPHS had a booth displaying our history and a trivia show. Everyone who purchased a Dan Patch Days button was eligible to win the prizes at our special drawing. Winner of the intarsia rendering of the button was

Jackie Drummer of Savage, MN and winner of the Savage blanket was Randy Sohn also of Savage, MN.



Scott Severson, Kyle Ringstad, Melanie Ringstad & Jens Bohn

Prior to Dan Patch Days a horseshoe hunt takes place. A horseshoe is hidden somewhere within the City of Savage on public property. Historic clues written by our very own clue-master are published in the local newspaper. Interest is high and competition is fierce. Winners of the 15th Annual Horseshoe hunt were: Melanie Ringstad, Kyle Ringstad and Scott Severson. Kyle and Scott are 2010 Burnsville Senior High School graduates. Kyle's comment was that he always knew about the history of our city because it is "imbedded in the curriculum at M.W. Savage Elementary."

Mission Statement: The Dan Patch Historical Society was formed for the purpose of collection, preservation and dissemination of historical knowledge and artifacts about the horse, Dan Patch, and it's owner, M.W. Savage.

1969 Thesis on M.W. Savage Resurfaces

BY JIM ROSS

I would assume the original document lies yellowing in some back room or sub basement deep inside Macalester College. A Xerox copy can be found in the Heritage Room at the Savage Library if you dig deep enough into the archives. However I now know that the carbon copy of the type written original is in the hands of the DPHS as it was received on loan this summer from the family of the author.

In 1969, to fulfill the requirements of his master's degree in education, Linton Kjera Levin wrote his thesis on Marion W. Savage. He titled it *A Man, His Horse, And His Iron Horse*. He subtitled it *A descriptive Analysis of Marion Willis Savage Pioneer Entrepreneur of Minnesota*. Though a mouthful of a title page, describe and analyze is exactly what he does, and he does it well. This 57 page dissertation is a treasure trove for amateur and serious historians alike. It is a gold mine of references, period details, analysis and insight.



Linton Kjera Levin

References:

Mr. Levin clearly did his homework as he incorporated no less than 15 periodicals from both the horse racing world and the rail industry. Included in the sources is a piece from *Readers Digest* (1947) and an article from *Feeds Illustrated* (1952) written by M.W.'s son Harold. Levin also used 6 different newspapers dating back to 1899 including the *Minneapolis Star, Tribune, and Journal*; *The Bloomington Sun* and *The Northfield News*. His research paper also cites seven unpublished sources that include mimeographed material from the Bloomington and Hennepin County Historical Societies. In addition Levin relied on interviews from a former employee of The Masonic Home (formerly Savage's summer mansion called Valley View on the north banks of the Minnesota river), Ben Morlock (historian, collector & City of Savage Justice of the Peace), and M.W.'s son Harold. For those wanting to learn more, Linton's work provides a comprehensive place to start.

"Had we known that these years would go down...as...golden years, would we have given more zest to them, more earnestness...more profound thought?"

Minnie Tapping, recalling a 19th century historian. From the thesis of Linton Kjera Levin

Details & Analysis:

Comparing and contrasting Savage's Minnesota exploits with that of his contemporaries across the country, Levin documents Minnesota's transition from an agrarian society to one of industry and capitalism. Savage personified the new order. Much like Rockefeller and Vanderbilt on the national scene, Savage amassed a fortune and spent it lavishly on his personal real estate holdings. His 2600 Portland Avenue residence was elegantly furnished with stained glass, Vermilion paneling, Tiffany lamps and 2 imported French coach horses housed in the stable. He then outfitted a summer home on Lake Minnetonka, and in 1906 moved to the Valley View mansion with its fluted columns, Italian marble staircases, billiard room, theater and bowling alley.

(continued on page 3)

(Thesis, continued from Page 2)

This showplace overlooked Savage's track and stable which were so elaborate they bore the nickname Taj Mahal.

In 1902 Savage purchased his beloved pacer Dan Patch and his nephew Merton Harrison promptly authored Dan's autobiography. Levin notes how Anna Sewell's best seller of the 1890's, *Black Beauty*, paved the way for the popularity and success of Dan Patch. Both were written in the first person of the horse and Merton echoed the style and vocabulary of *Black Beauty*.

Levin even coins a term for how Savage would negotiate contracts for Dan's appearances based on attendance and then conduct massive media and advertising campaigns. Since Dan endorsed almost every product out there, record turnouts were assured and Savage's cut was extremely lucrative. Levin referred to this whole spectacle as Dan Patch Syndrome.

"For 3000 years sports lovers have thrilled to the spectacle of a horse pulling a vehicle in a race, from chariots in the Olympics to sulkies at the fair."

Walter Olesky as quoted in Linton Kjera Levin's thesis

Insight:

In 1907 Savage announced the construction of a new electric rail line named of course, after Dan Patch. Levin chronicles Savage's dream that never came to fruition. Passenger service began the summer of 1910, with travel from Bloomington to Minneapolis. Customers traveled in style. They looked through stained glass windows, walked on plush carpet, sat in leather seats and rested elbows on inlaid vermilion wood. The line started at 54th and Nicollet then ran south to Richfield, Valley View, across a curious little bridge, past Taj Mahal and all the way to Northfield. In 1915, 15 more miles of track wound through Golden Valley, Edina and Saint Louis Park. Savage's Plan of running rail thru to Iowa never materialized as the citizens of Faribault would have nothing to do with it. When Savage died in 1916, so did his dream. The railroad was declared bankrupt in 1917 and purchased a year later. Savage's track however would spur growth along all the cities it lay and service industries like Ford, John Deere and Thermo King.

"The community owes a great deal of success to a man who failed"

Linton Kjera Levin

Very little is known of Savage's political beliefs. The Exposition building was so expansive it hosted the Republican presidential nominating convention in 1892 but that was before Savage purchased the building. It is believed politics left a sour taste in Savage's mouth but he did agree to become a candidate for governor in 1908, losing in the nomination convention when the county delegates met. Levin does not mention party affiliation in Savage's bid for governor but he calls M.W. a Republican (referenced to a *Minneapolis Journal* of 1899), probably of the liberal or progressive persuasion.

Savage also ventured into automobile manufacturing in 1911, naming his vehicle, what else, the Dan Patch. He was one of 16 manufacturers in Minnesota at the time. This operation came to an end when the Ford Motor Company began its assembly operations.

"Marion Willis Savage was aware of (the) transition from mercantile society to industrial and capitalistic enterprise and the changes of the 20 TH century are reflected in his life. He personified the term(s)".

Linton Kjera Levin

(continued on page 4)

(Thesis, continued from Page 3)

Linton Kjera Levin was born in 1934. After graduating with an MA from Macalester College, he served in the army and enjoyed a career teaching social studies and coaching football at Minneapolis South-west high school. It is believed he chose his thesis topic on the suggestion of his advisor, who lived not far from the Valley View Masonic Home. Mr. Levin succumbed to prostate cancer in 2006 and is interred at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. He leaves behind many legacies, including a thesis on a pioneer entrepreneur. ■

This article was researched and written by Jim Ross, lifelong resident of Savage, MN and Board member of DPHS.

HERITAGE ROOM / MUSEUM

We often get phone calls inquiring about our Heritage Room/Museum at the Savage Public Library. People are often amazed to find out it is open EVERY day.

The hours of operation are:

Monday thru Thursday 10 AM - 8 PM

Friday 10 AM - 5 PM

Saturday 10 AM - 4 PM

Sunday 1 PM - 5 PM

Please stop by and visit. Sign our guest book. We have a wonderful collection of Dan Patch and Mr. Savage artifacts.



Photo courtesy of Tausha Chamberland



Photo courtesy of Tausha Chamberland

Dan Patch Historical Society Membership Application

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Street Address: _____ E-Mail: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

ANNUAL DUES: Student (\$5) Individual (\$15) Family (\$25) Benefactor (\$50) Corporate (\$250 & more)

Please mail completed form and check to: Dan Patch Historical Society • P.O. Box 1:55 • Savage, MN 55378

DONATIONS:

- *Pure Toilet Soap Box from M.W. Savage Factories, Inc (Donated by Megan Allen, Savage, MN)*
- *Dan Patch Motion Picture Flip Book, 1986 reproduction (Donated by Greg Kash, Park Forest, IL)*
- *Dan Patch American Legion 50th Anniversary Token (Donated by Jens Bohn, Savage, MN)*
- *Port Cargill framed photo of workers (donated by Rene Thune, Lakeville, MN)*
- *Notebook of history and products of HOT-SHOT PRODUCTS CO. INC., Savage, MN (donated by Bill Bartel, Wayzata, MN)*

NEW/RENEWING MEMBERS:

- Nancy Allen (Savage, MN)
- Roger Applegate (Wilmington, OH)
- George Augustinack (Savage, MN)
- Jens/Joyce Bohn (Savage, MN)
- Grove Bradbury, Jr (St. Paul, MN)
- Joe Cade (Lakeville, MN)
- Tausha Chamberland (Savage, MN)
- David Christopherson (Farmington, MN)
- Kathleen Dempsey (Pompano Beach, FL)
- Chuck Erickson (Burnsville, MN)
- Rob/Lori Fendler (Savage, MN)
- Florida Chapter of U.S. Harness Writers Assn, (Pompano Beach, FL)
- Drema Huston (Anderson, IN)
- Rita McKenna (Clinton, CT)
- Richard Nash (New Prague, MN)
- Jim Ross (Savage, MN)
- Jim Ryan (Savage, MN)
- Barry/Lorna Stock (Savage, MN)
- Gen. John Vessey (R) (Garrison, MN)
- Will/Janet Williams (Savage, MN)

Items for Sale

- 2008 Dan Patch Pewter 2-1/2" diameter Holiday Ornament.....\$20



- Dan Patch Postcard.....\$1
- 2010 Dan Patch Days Button.....\$3
Previous years buttons also available
- M.W. Savage Storyboard.....\$75
- Dan Patch Storyboard.....\$75



- International Stock Food Farm Book.....\$25 (non-members).....\$15 (members)
- The Great Dan Patch and the Remarkable Mr. Savage Book....\$24.95
DVD also available for \$10
- Dan Patch Electric Railroad Book...\$15 (non-members).....\$12 (members)

*Items available at The Razor's Edge Barbershop, through the website www.danpatch.com or call 952-890-1669. Shipping and handling fees apply.

From the President...



Little did I realize when I wrote my last column about the Running Aces Harness Park that I would be selected to ride a sulky behind a harness horse around the track. It was an adventure and actually fun. Fifteen of us visited

the park in July as part of a Savage Recreation Department tour.

Other activities that we have been involved with include a history booth at Community Fest at our local high school where we asked history questions and gave candy to the winners. We actually stumped one of our council members.

Medicine Lake tours brought a busload of horse enthusiasts to our museum at the

library. As we were getting ready for our history talk we were joined by a member of the Florida United States Harness Writers Association. She was visiting the Twin Cities and just happened upon our city. We enjoyed meeting her. Also enjoyed a visit from Ben and Lynette Hart both PHD's from Davis, CA. He has a Dan Patch stop watch from his grandfather.

We held our Annual Meeting in July and elected our officers for the year. They and members of the board are listed below.

Thank you for your interest in our society and the history of Dan Patch and Mr. Savage.

Jens

**DAN PATCH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 1:55
Savage, MN 55378**

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**VISIT: Heritage Room/Museum
Savage Public Library
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