



# Dan Patch Newsletter

A PUBLICATION OF THE DAN PATCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## MISSION

*Dan Patch Historical Society collects, preserves and disseminates historical knowledge*

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## Dan Patch Days Cancelled for 2021

*By Barry Stock*

For the second year in a row, the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has taken its toll on the annual Dan Patch Days celebration. Earlier this month after much discussion and thought, the Dan Patch Days Inc. Board of Directors made the difficult discussion to cancel the celebration which had been scheduled for the weekend of June 18th.

Most folks are unaware that the annual Dan Patch Days celebration is coordinated by a non-profit organization. The Board of Directors consisting of 12 community members meet monthly to plan, direct, coordinate and manage the events and activities associated with the annual celebration. Work tasks include partnering and collaborating with organizations such as the City, Chamber of Commerce, and Savage Rotary. A great deal of time and effort is also spent securing sponsorships and volunteers.

The annual celebration budget typically exceeds \$100,000. Some of the key cost drivers include: Stage/Sound - \$15,000, Bands - \$20,000, Tent/table/chairs - \$6,000, Insurance - \$5,000, Biffs - \$3,000, Equipment Rental - \$5,000, Cost of Goods Sold - \$30,000, Fireworks - \$6,000.

While the annual celebration is held in June, there are a number of things that need to take well in advance of the actual event. For example, Liquor license approval must be approved by both the City and the State. This process typically begins in April. Prior to applying for the liquor license, we must obtain proof of liquor liability insurance. This means financial outlays for insurance purposes take place in March.

Given the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions in place and uncertainty surrounding when they might be lifted or amended, the Board of Directors did not believe it was practical to move forward. With anywhere between 2000 and 4000 guests in attendance on Friday night the practicality of enforcing social distancing alone was seen as impossible. Since a successful Friday night is essential to the ongoing financial stability of the organization, the Board quickly discarded the thought of attempting to schedule a celebration that was limited to anything that did not include a Friday night headline performer.

Other factors that weighed on the Boards decision to cancel included the uncertainty related to our ability to find volunteers that might be willing to step forward during Covid. Lastly, the Board did not relish the idea of being one of the first outdoor celebrations in the metro to test the State Health Departments policing powers as they relate to the Governor's orders. In other words – they didn't want to be the test case.

While everyone is disappointed with the decision to cancel, the Board has already begun to plan for next year. With a little luck, Hairball will be returning to headline Friday night and the Dweebs will be back again on Saturday night. Traditional activities such as the parade, kid inflatable rides, carnival, water fights, go kart races, Rotary Wine and Beer tasting, fireworks, bingo, business expo, food vendors, and a few new surprises are also in the works. So go ahead and mark your calendar for weekend of June 24th, 2022!

# Dan Patch Days History

By Janet Williams and Mark Roberts



Dan Patch Days started in 1953 and had been a very popular celebration for many years. But in the 1970s, it developed a reputation for rowdiness and came to an abrupt end in 1976 after a violent fight between two men ended with one of them being shot and killed.

In 1989, group of enterprising citizens (Art Suel, Rob Fendler, Roy Schneider and Rob Ampe) said that even though the Savage Jaycees had no budget to work with, the members had a lot of passion to bring the community together and celebrate the city's heritage.

But the first thing the group needed to consider was a fresh new name.

So the Jaycees opted to go with the name Heritage Days for few years, a name coined by a previous group of Jaycees who tried to get a similar community celebration going in 1985. After the first Heritage Days in 1989, the celebration grew and eventually incorporated into a formal nonprofit. The name was changed in 1997 back to Dan Patch Days.

Back in '53 Dan Patch Days was held downtown with a street dance, some beer sales and food sold by the church in a tent. It was spearhead by the Lions Club, headed by Ben Morlock, a local historian. (Fun fact: Morlock also served as the Justice of Peace and held court in his house near Quentin by the DP crooked RR bridge).

"It was a lot of hard work, but we sure had fun," Suel recalled of the first years. "We operated on a shoestring budget. We had no money to rent any equipment so we borrowed tables and chairs from the school, fire department and churches. Then the day after it was over, we had to run all around town and return everything."

Blue tarps were used to protect the game area and vendors in Hollywood Park, said Fendler, who remembers cobbling the tarps together with other volunteers to create a larger tent. "Everyone in the Jaycees helped out and along the way we got sponsors and the thing took off from there," Fendler said, "We made a few

bucks each year and eventually we were able to rent more equipment, including a tent."

Schneider and his family moved to the city in 1987, one of thousands of families who moved into new homes being built throughout the city. "We really wanted to bring the two parts of the community together to celebrate – those residents living in the Hamilton District and the new residents," he said of the Jaycees' motivation behind starting Heritage Days.

At the time, the city was averaging 500 new building permits a year for single-family homes, so it was natural for the Jaycees, all of whom were under 40, to gear the celebration toward children. At first there was a kiddie parade, a few carnival games, fire department water fights and an M.W. Savage Grande Day Parade. Each year new events were added and soon there was also musical entertainment, a petting zoo, arts and crafts, pony rides, a silent auction, a corn feed, a nondenominational church service, a horseshoe hunt and a civic dinner.

"No single person started Dan Patch Days, it was a collaboration by various individuals who made it successful," Suel said. "Everyone pitched in and did what needed to be done. The best thing was the community got behind us and Heritage Days grew and eventually became Dan Patch Days."

For Suel, it was fulfilling to see the excitement grow each year from the simple idea of offering a way for the community to come together. "I remember seeing the band from Eagle Ridge Junior High marching up and down the street near my house practicing," he said, "The school was brand new and those kids were just happy to have a parade to march in."

Schneider has a particular fondness for the water fights, which he saw as good, clean fun for the entire family, no matter if they were participating or watching the contest. He formed "Roy's Boyz" in 1992 with some friends and neighbors and that team eventually won 10 championships.



# Dan Patch Days Timeline Highlights

Fendler and Ampe always worked behind the scenes, and continue to do so today. Ampe is literally the one who powers up Dan Patch Days because he calculates the need for electricity and draws up a plan to make it all work together. His work, largely unseen by the public, is to make sure Dan Patch Days runs smoothly and safely, so he meticulously measures, calculates and troubleshoots the site each year.

"You have to thoroughly prepare because it might be extremely hot, it might rain, or there could be strong storms. But having a plan makes those unexpected things easier to handle."

Today, as the men look back at what the celebration has become, they say it is almost unbelievable and has exceeded their expectations.

Throughout the years there have been many exciting activities: kiddie parades, queen contest, street dance, watermelon eating contests, a rodeo, horse racing on Quentin Avenue (it was gravel back in the day) and a Sunday parade with lots of horses from surrounding horse clubs.

Of special note, the Dan Patch Historical Society was organized in 1992 and was involved in the celebration with button creation and sales at Jens Bohn's barber shop, launching a booth depicting local and Dan Patch history, the development of the Horseshoe hunt contest and the parade (that features a special Dan Patch "float" featuring a horse replica of Dan Patch owned by avid member George Augustinack).

There have been some years when Dan Patch Days was cancelled: 1965 due to the historic flood, 1976 due to a fatal shooting, and 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid pandemic.

Dan Patch Days is great event that we can't wait to see back in 2022. Let's gather each year to keep the traditions alive and help it continue to grow. Remember, great volunteers from Savage make it all happen! THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY VOLUNTEER OF DAN PATCH DAYS.

**1953** - First celebration

**1960** - Dan Patch Days incorporated

**1976** - A rowdy (and fatal) shooting occurred

**1989** - Jaycees restart event as 'Heritage Days'

**1992** - Dan Patch Historical Society was organized and launched celebration buttons and horseshoe hunt

**1997** - Event name changed back to Dan Patch Days

**2000** - Event moved from August to June (and almost failed because of that change!), also began transition to Community Park location that year

**2001** - Taste of Savage (showcasing area restaurants) was added

**2003** - Friday night music added (prior to this the event had been almost entirely on Saturday); Plus rotary craft beer/wine tasting added to Thursday night

**2005** - Current logo and branding was adopted (the stylized horse was designed by local graphic artist Rick Pollock)



# Donations

## M.W. SAVAGE SCHOOL DONATION

With the closing of the Marion W. Savage Elementary School, the school decided to donate all of its artifacts to the Dan Patch Historical Society. The nearly 70 year history of the school includes all of the annual yearbooks since it opened with photos of each class, a complete list of the staff starting with Jim McCoy the first principal who grew up in Savage. On their 50th Anniversary, students created storyboards of history and interviews with previous students. A former student called the historical society searching for her grade school class pictures and she found them! Once the material is inventoried, it will be available in the Heritage Room at the Savage Library.



## GREAT GRANDSON OF MARION WILLIS SAVAGE DONATES ORIGINAL PAINTING

Robert Coggeshall Savage is the son of Earl Bean Savage, who was the son of Earl Bean Sr., who was the son of M. W. Savage, our city's namesake and of course the owner of the famous Dan Patch.

Mr. Savage spent his career at Berquist Company, an electronic parts supplier located in Chanhassen, Minnesota. Bob has been a past grand marshal in the Dan Patch Days parade and was present for the official unveiling of the M. W. and Dan Patch statue at the Savage Public Library. He is now in retirement and has a passion for painting. His subjects are varied and he enjoys donating his work to various groups.

His latest work is his version of the iconic picture of M. W. in his white riding jacket holding the reins of Dan Patch who is broadside and hitched to the sulky. The framed acrylic on canvas was donated in December to the Dan Patch Historical Society at the Heritage Room of the Savage library and board members were pleased to add it to their collection. Plans are to display the piece when able after the pandemic. Thanks to Bob Savage for his generous donation.

## RAILROAD MUSEUM DONATION

The donation we received from the Railroad Museum contains an extensive collective of information about M.W. Savage's campaign soliciting money to build the Dan Patch Electric Railroad, the first electric railroad built in the country. Mr. Savage did not want to raise money through the stock market which he did not trust. He thus sold bonds for creation of capital to build the railroad. A \$200 RR bond could be purchased for 12 monthly payments of less than \$20 and a multitude of other options to invest in a business that cannot fail. After all, this is M.W. Savage, owner of Dan Patch & several other world champion horses; the M. W. Savage Companies, Antler's Park Resort; successful passenger and freight service; and etc. Don't hesitate, act now!



## MEMBER RENEWAL FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

ANNUAL DUES:  Student (\$10)  Individual (\$20)  Family (\$30)  Benefactor (\$55)  Corporate (\$250+)

Please mail completed form and check to: Dan Patch Historical Society; P.O. Box 1:55, Savage MN 55378  
Annual renewal date is listed in on the address label of your newsletter. Thank you for your support.

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## DAN PATCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEW & RETURNING MEMBERSHIP

Ed Egan, Prior Lake  
John/Cynthia Bergman, Watersmeet, MI  
Jed/Jennifer Williams, Savage, MN  
Robert Savage, Excelsior, MN

John Zugschwert, Middleburg, Va  
Diane Kleinsteiber, Watertown, WI  
Richard Nash, New Prague, MN  
Barry/Lorna Stock, Savage, MN

## History Corner: All About Antlers Park

by Jim Ross [a transcribed video]

*A Message from Mr. Savage circa last century:*

*Hello friends, Marion W. Savage here. Many people have asked me about my Antler's Park in Lakeville, Minnesota, so I would like to talk about that today.*

*I began a railroad that ran from Minneapolis and St. Paul through Savage and Lakeville to Northfield. It's called the Dan Patch Electric Line, after my famous pacer.*

*In 1908 I bought some acreage between the tracks and Prairie Lake, which I renamed Lake Marion after myself.*

*In 1910, on the fourth of July I opened up a wondrous park and since the lake was a favorite watering spot for deer, elk and other game, I named it Antler's Park.*

*The lake has no inlet or outlet, it's fed from springs with no malaria swamps around.*

*People from all around arrive by my electric rail cars which are equipped with the latest appliances for sanitation, ventilation and convenance for your comfort. There are 12 runs a day.*

*There is lots to do at my great park – there is a giant water slide into the lake with 1000 feet of beach to enjoy. A concrete bathing house with 200 rooms is available to use.*

*There is baseball diamond, tennis courts and an aerial swing. A miniature train and ponies to ride too. A large dance pavilion with live music and a beautiful clubhouse and café are on site too. This is a great spot for a picnic; a chicken ranch and fruit farm are available too.*

*No liquor of any kind is allowed in the park. There is some limited lakeshore lots available to purchase, 30 feet long by 65 feet wide. You would do well by letting our agent take you out to this beautiful lake resort! There are furnished cottages for rent with low excursion rates.*

*Well, I enjoyed talking with you, let's talk again real soon! Thank you Mr. Savage!*

## VISIT US

Heritage Room / Museum  
SAVAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

13090 Alabama Avenue  
Savage, MN 55378

## HOURS

Mon, Tues and Thurs 10a-8p

Wed 1p-8p

Fri 10a-5p

Sat 10a-4p

Sun 1p-5p

## CONTACT US

questions@danpatch.com

www.danpatch.com

## NEED A SPEAKER?

Let us know! We specialize in Dan Patch, M.W. Savage, and Savage, MN area history.

In person or virtual options available.

We speak for free, but a donation to the Dan Patch Historical Society is welcomed and gratefully appreciated.

## DAN PATCH ITEMS FOR SALE AT CITY HALL

Mon-Fri 8a-4:30p

Books, Postcards, Ornaments and Buttons!

## YOU ARE INVITED!

Upcoming Dan Patch Historical Society  
Annual Meeting

Thursday, July 16th - 6:30p

Library

## DAN PATCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 1:55  
Savage, MN 55378

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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