



Historic depot moves home

by Jessica Allen Thisweek Newspapers Posted: 8/7/06

After spending 32 years at Murphy's Landing in Shakopee, the Savage Depot finally returned home July 28.

Built in 1880 the depot is best known for being one of the last standing buildings that was frequented by Marion Willis Savage.

Marion Savage was a wealthy entrepreneur in the region and owner of the famed race horse, Dan Patch.

When Savage lived in what was then known as Hamilton, he was said to have received the most mail at the depot, which inspired the depot owners to rename it Savage Station in 1904. This later led to the town being re-named Savage in 1919.

In addition to the town's history, the depot has been important to longtime resident's family history.

Will Williams, who is Councilwoman Janet Williams husband and who has lived in Savage all his life, recalls riding the passenger trains as a child in the 1940 and 50s from Savage to Texas and other destinations across the nation.

It has a lot to do with Savages history and its great to have it back, said Nancy Allen, whose father was Savages last depot agent.

Allen's most vivid memory of her fathers days as a depot agent was when he would stand outside while holding a device that contained messages for train conductors to grab as they whizzed by.

Allen's father starting working as an agent at the depot in 1952 until his retirement in 1970, when the depot closed.

The depot was then moved to Murphy's Landing in 1974.

I'm glad they took it, because it probably would have been demolished like many other depots in the 1980s, Councilwoman Janet Williams said.

No one is sure how it got from Savage to Shakopee. When Murphy's Landing was taken over by Three Rivers Park in 2000, they couldn't afford to keep the depot, and agreed to return it to Savage.

Janet Williams, who is also a member of the Dan Patch Historical Society, said she is glad the city and historical society are bringing the depot back since the Hamilton District has too few historical buildings.

A caravan of eight or nine vehicles drove in a snake-like pattern, starting at 1 a.m., to ensure the safest journey from Shakopee to Savage.

The depot rode from Highway 101 to Old 18, to county roads 16, 27, 42, and 5 to Williams Drive, and finally arriving at 4:30 a.m. to its final destination on the Highway 13 service road, across the street from where it was built in 1880.

Trucks from Shakopee Utility, Comcast and Xcel Energy followed or met the movers along the way to lift signal lights and powerlines.

Removing the roof and disposing of environmental hazards has been the most challenging aspects of the project so far, said Fendler and Patterson Construction President Rob Fendler, who helped coordinate the move.

Unexpectedly, the roof had to be divided into four sections, since it was too difficult to remove as a whole unit, he said.

Workers additionally had to remove flaking lead paint and check for asbestos before moving the building.

The depots move will cost the historical society about \$13,000, Fendler said.

But total costs of renovation are still unknown, historical society members said. Assistant City Administrator Scott Summers estimates that the society could end up paying as much as \$100,000 in renovation costs.

The historical society raised about \$50,000 in donations thus far to cover the depots expenses.

In 2005, the historical society started a fundraiser called Bring the Depot Home, which is an ongoing effort for people to mail donations for the project.

The Brick Walk of Fame, was another fundraiser that the historical society held to raise money for the depot. It ran from November 2005 to June 2006 in which people donated money for paver bricks that they could write their surname or a saying on. The bricks will make a walkway outside of the depot, when renovation is completed.

The historical society also received a portion of profits from the sales of the book The Great Dan Patch and the Remarkable Mr. Savage by St. Paul author Tim Brady for the depots move and renovation.

When the depots renovation is finished, ownership will be turned over to the city of Savage, which will lease it to M.W. Savage Elementary third-grade teacher Annette Grant to open Kaffee Depot.

Jessica Allen is at jessica.allen@ecm-inc.com