

SAVAGE Pacer



Dan Patch is part of MN 150 exhibit

By Nancy Huddleston

Editor

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Dan Patch is part of the MN150 exhibit that opens Saturday at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The exhibit launches the 2008 celebration of 150 years of Minnesota statehood by exploring changes – some wrought by powerful people and others by ordinary citizens. Dan Patch shocked the world on Sept. 8, 1906 by pacing the mile at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in a record time of 1:55. He was the only harness horse in history to break the 2 minute barrier 35 times.

After 101 years, Dan Patch is continuing to bring fame to the city.

He's part of a new exhibit called MN150 that opens today at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. The exhibit launches the 2008 celebration of 150 years of Minnesota statehood by exploring changes - some wrought by powerful people and others by ordinary citizens.

Dan Patch shocked the world on Sept. 8, 1906 by pacing the mile at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in a record time of 1:55. He was the only harness horse in history to break the 2 minute barrier 35 times.

His owner is the city's namesake, Marion W. Savage, who built a palatial horse barn on the banks of the Minnesota River across from downtown Savage. Savage built a commercial empire around his horse and Dan would travel the country for races and publicity events. His likeness was used by Savage to sell everything from animal feed to washing machines to cars that were sold by his International Stock Food Factory in Minneapolis.

Dan Patch is featured along with Prince, the GPS system, Hubert H. Humphrey and the 1980 Olympic Hockey Team in MN150.

The exhibit was created from more than 2,700 nominations provided by Minnesotans living in every corner of the state, as well as across the globe. Society Director Nina Archabal describes it as "unprecedented in the degree of public participation." Delighting in its homegrown nature, she asks, "Who better to tell Us about Minnesota than the people who live here?"

A committee of Minnesota Historical Society staff, community members and subject experts selected the final list of 150, basing their choice on the compelling case made by the nominator as well as the potential for each topic to be developed into a successful exhibit component. Nominations included in the exhibit cover a wide range of categories, from sports events, to political figures and pop icons, to inventors and their inventions, to lasting examples of cultural traditions.

Maggie Knoke of Minneapolis wrote a nomination that caught the committee's eye.

"EVERYONE knows about Dan Patch Avenue at the State Fair, but how many folks know he was a RACEHORSE, the subject of a movie, and that the city of Savage was named after his owner? Dan Patch must be the most influential horse in Minnesota history!"

Another nomination was submitted by Dan Patch Historical Society Secretary Janet Williams. "He was an advertising symbol before his time, a household word, and the topic of two books -one by Nodin Press and the other by S&S," she wrote.

Other nominations came from Marie Magnuson of Roseville, Rosemary Diedrick of Garfield, Madison Overmoen of Shoreview and Matt Toohey of Carver.

Visitors will engage with the subjects through hands-on activities, multi-media presentations, artifacts, historical interpreters, music-listening stations, web portals and a video station where guests can provide feedback to the exhibit.

Visitors can find out more about the 150 subjects, as well as read nominations that weren't selected for the exhibit, through the "MN150" wiki available in the gallery or via the web at www.mnhs.org/mnl50 beginning Oct. 13.

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