



# DAN PATCH *Newsletter*

A Publication of the Dan Patch Historical Society

Number 29 • Fall 2008

[www.danpatch.com](http://www.danpatch.com)



## TELLING OUR STORY IS WHAT WE DO BEST

We have a fancy Mission Statement but the bottom line is that we are about education. During the last few months we have been busy participating in many events where we have an opportunity to talk about M.W. Savage and Dan Patch.

Our neighbor across the Minnesota River, the City of Bloomington, was celebrating their sesquicentennial this summer when they asked the DPHS to participate because of the history that we shared with Mr. Savage. (Mr. Savage lived on the bluff in Bloomington overlooking the river and the International Stock Food Farm in Savage. This celebration was on the actual site of his home.) We had a booth in a very special location where members answered many questions and we learned a few things ourselves. The mayors of Savage and Bloomington both spoke of the historic significance.



New to us was a bus tour. A tour company from Rochester, MN contacted us and arranged for a visit to Savage, MN. We boarded the bus with 56 tourists at the Savage Library to tell the story of our city. They had already viewed the video before they arrived so they had some knowledge. We then toured them thru the museum at the library, went on to visit the Savage Depot and Camp Savage. For this our society received a nice donation.



The Red Hatters from Shakopee came to the Depot for lunch and arranged for us to give them the "history talk." They loved it and said they could have listened for another hour! The members of the Board of the James R. Brown Center in Henderson, MN met us at the Depot for lunch, read the kiosk, checked out the brick walk and visited the Heritage Room at the public library. They were so impressed with the building being open seven days a week since they are struggling with volunteers to have their center open a couple of hours a week.



For the third year we participated in the Prior Lake/Savage Community Fest. This event sponsored by the Chambers of Commerce and community education department featured over 200 booths. St. John the Baptist Catholic School had their fifth graders come to the Razor's Edge Barber Shop for their local Minnesota history lesson. Then it was off to Edina MN to give the talk to the cub scouts.

People like history and all of these activities help them learn about our story.

### 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 its owner, M.W. Savage.

## BOOK REVIEW – CRAZY GOOD – KINDA SASSE

By Jim Ross, long time Savage resident and board member DPHS

Last year I was excited to hear of a new book coming out on our beloved Dan Patch called *Crazy Good* by Charles Leerhsen. This year I got a signed copy and even had my picture taken with the author at Dan Patch Days. Anyone with an appreciation of history has to be excited to read about our namesake, M.W. Savage and have the legendary pacers story re-told. Having read it, Leerhsen's version is at times cleverly worded then poorly written; part revisionist history then traditional lore.

In 1957 Fred Sasse also wrote a book on Dan Patch. A book Leerhsen calls "appallingly bad". He criticizes Sasse as basically being a brown noser as Sasse places a positive spin on every aspect of Savage's life. This earlier version is reflective of that era's more civilized style of writing. As one sided as Sasse's point of view is Leerhsen speaks to the other extreme most often depicting Savage in a negative light and suggesting conflict. He is sassy and disrespectful, also a style reflective of the time.

He can eloquently bring you back to the era and describes it as "a golden age of sports...ladies hats and bull\*\*\*\*." Leerhsen is entertaining and down right intriguing when he describes his quest to find Dan Patch's gravesite. He's off the mark as far as location but none the less hip deep in Credit River, where he drinks some, baptizes himself, then realizes that's where Dan Patch "bathed, peed, and shat." But alas "it's always fun to trespass, especially in middle age." He describes the experience of traffic jams from when horses were the main method of transportation as a way to get kicked, bit or peed on. Back then equine bodily functions must have factored in greatly to a persons daily routine.

But Leerhsen's liberal use of the dash – I counted 8 on one page and most have 3 or more – creates a herky-jerky style that forces one to often re-read the sentence in order to understand the point. The flow of the story is often interrupted. He starts the sentence, introduces a new thought heading in a different direction, and then completes the original idea of the sentence. And sometimes the conclusion of the sentence does not support the beginning. Such as: "Signs of a leveling off of Dan's physical ability became evident...when...he could manage no better than 2:01 ½ over a wet track..." Wouldn't a slow time over a wet track make sense? These illogical conclusions occur frequently throughout the book.

But what do I know? I'm just the son of a grocer from Milbank South Dakota and not an east coast screenwriter wannabe with attitude. Okay, maybe a little attitude.

Leerhsen also drops titillating literary sound bites like "possibly gay stallion" and writes that Savage "employed more than 200 woman...and he took a special, and not exactly paternal, interest in them." Accusations such as these are unsubstantiated, scurrilous and presumptive.

If you can get around Leerhsen's constant ripping on Mr. Savage, his never giving him his due, the legendary tale does lie beneath. And there are some nuggets that were news to me such as the colors that Dan raced under and what his stable nickname was.

This is foremost a tale of an awesome standard bred, but also partly a tale of fortune lost, early death and priceless beautiful landmarks lost to the ages. And so in the end, it is truly a sad tale. But whom do we believe? The Sasse version, or the Sassy version? What kind of man was Mr. Savage? A self-absorbed snake oil salesman, or a brilliant driven businessman? I think perhaps, a lot of both. I think it's fair to ask what did Mr. Savage ever do for his city? I wish there was a park in his name from land that he donated. I regret that the keys to his majestic farm nicknamed The Taj Mahal were not handed over like some suburban Glensheen or Swedish American Institute. But is it fair to hold that against him? And what is Mr. Savage's legacy to his 21ST century namesake? I fear it is the same as what he left to his family and his deprived heirs: a squandered fortune, pipedreams, and not enough time on the planet to rehabilitate either.

So let's continue to embrace the beautiful bay colt. Revere his dominance of the sport of kings, admire his work ethic, emulate his temperament, and appreciate all of his human-esque qualities. Let's build a statue, erect a monument and give speeches.

The king is dead. Long live his amazing story.

## ITEMS FOR SALE

- **2008 Dan Patch Pewter 2½” diameter Holiday Ornament (NEW)** ..... \$20  
(+\$2.50 S&H, if mailed)



- Dan Patch Postcard ..... \$0.50
- 2008 Dan Patch Days Button ..... \$3
- 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 & DVD ..... \$24.95  
DVD only ..... \$10
- Dan Patch Electric Railroad Book  
Members ..... \$12  
Non-members ..... \$15

Items available at The Razor's Edge Barbershop, through the website [www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com) or call 952-890-1669. Shipping & handling fees apply.

## DONATIONS

- ❖ 53 drinking glasses from the Savage municipal liquor store donated by Mary J. Compton, Huntsville, Alabama. Mary's father was a Minnesota judge who had the glasses and she inherited them so she donated them to us for a good home.
- ❖ Dan Patch coaster wagon donated by Terry Briskie, Apopka, Florida. Terry found the wagon in a dumpster in Massachusetts, had it for 30 years and wanted it to have a good home so here it is in our display case at the entrance of the Savage Public Library.



## NEW MEMBERS

Alan and Shirley Pervil, St. Louis, MO

Megan Klein, Savage, MN

David, Kathleen & Spencer Przelomiec, Rome, NY

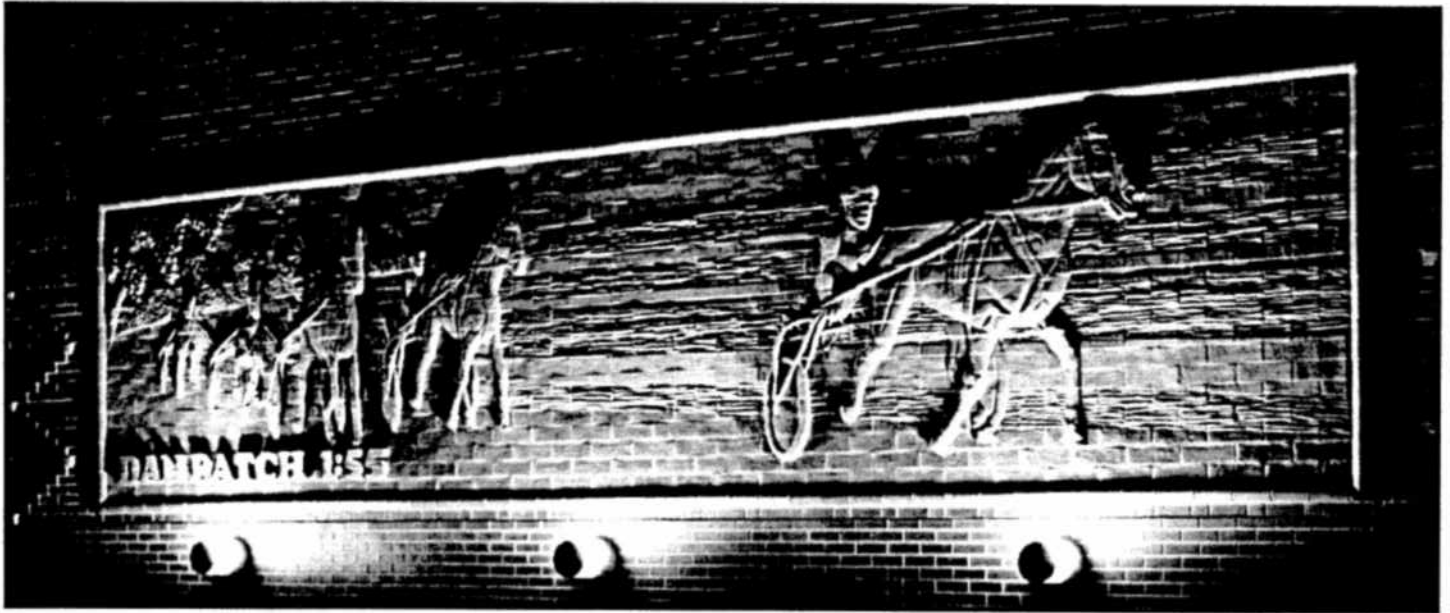
Marvin & JoAnn Kumpula, Waite Park, MN

Visit our website  
**[www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com)**  
for more information  
about our organization!

## DAN PATCH SCULPTURE

Reprinted with permission. Photo by Brian Sorenson, *Savage Pacer*

Often people say that we need a statue of Dan Patch in our city. That is something that has been talked about and perhaps will happen. But for now we want to point out that we have a beautiful sculpture (also called a frieze) that depicts Dan Patch setting his world record time of 1:55 at the Minnesota State Fair in 1906. The sculpture measures seven feet tall, 30 feet long and weighs 9000 pounds. It is on the exterior wall of the Savage police station next to city hall. The details of Dan Patch are even more striking close up and at night when the sculpture is beautifully lit.



## DAN PATCH PRIVATE TRAIN CAR

Raymond Baumann constructed this car as a labor of love in memory of his late grandfather, Sylvester Redford, a horse enthusiast and fan of Dan Patch. His grandfather picked up a piece of shavings from the hoof of Dan Patch at the Wisconsin State Fair in 1904 after the horse threw a shoe and had to be refitted with a new shoe.

Construction began in March, 2008 after many hours of research, planning, and gathering of materials. The car was scratch built using plans from the Garden Railroad magazine of a G-Scale passenger car in 1:20.3 scale. Modifications were made to change the car to a baggage car by adding sliding doors and screened windows. In excess of 200 hours of labor later, the car was completed in June, 2008.

The car and scenery were modeled after a picture postcard circa 1900. The details were replicated as accurately as possible although the research produced conflicting facts about many details such as the color of the interior, the color of the barn roof, the type and color of lettering and the signage.



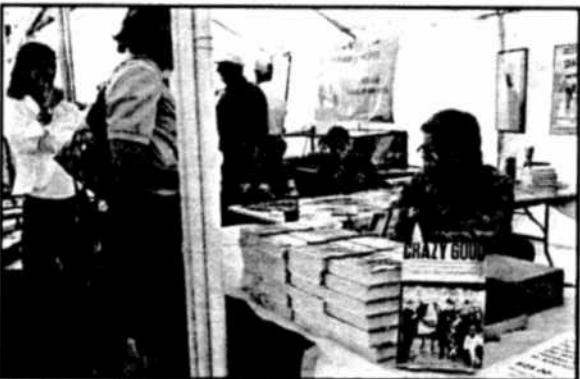
The only items commercially made were the wheel sets and the couplings, cost \$25.00, and the horse and people figures. The rest of the car was constructed of raw materials and designed by the builder.

The information about Mr. Baumann and the RR car was provided by Diane Kleinsteiber of Watertown, WI, a longtime member of the DPHS. She had a booth on Dan Patch at the Wisconsin State Fair and comes every year to Dan Patch Days. This year she was in period costume.



## DAN PATCH DAYS 2008

Dan Patch Days in Savage, MN continues to get better and bigger. We create an annual collectors button to sell, host a horseshoe hunt before the event and have a booth at the event on Saturday. The winner of the button drawing was Tom Peterson, Burnsville, MN who received an intarsia of the button donated by Jim Ryan and the winner of the Savage blanket donated by Jens Bohn was Shirley Haley, Neosho, MO. The winner of the horseshoe hunt was Walter and Ann Mirsch. This year there were two added attractions. Charles Leehrsen who wrote the book *Crazy Good* was there selling and autographing books and we had a history quiz on stage. We had three members of the audience answer historical questions. They could ask a friend or someone from the audience to help them. The first place winner was Megan Klein who received a membership in the DPHS and the book *Crazy Good*. Second and third place winners respectively were Dave Neper and Lee Bernick. What a fun way to get out our history message!



Visit our website  
**[www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com)**  
 for more information  
 about our organization!

### 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*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



With this issue of our newsletter we introduce a new header which gives us a different look. We thank Tausha Chamberland, one of our board members for the design.

all of the board members for the great job that they do. Everyone pitches in and helps in their own way. They are what makes this organization so successful. Thanks too to our members from all over the country who faithfully pay their dues to help us pay for what we do. We appreciate those who donate items to us. Many of them are noteworthy as we do not purchase items for our collection and rely on donations to make our displays interesting.

On July 22, 2008 the Dan Patch Historical Society held its annual meeting at the Savage Depot. Nancy Allen, Tausha Chamberland, Janet Williams and I were reelected to the board for three year terms. The same officers were also reelected. At the meeting I thanked

In appreciation,

*Jens*

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

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Gregory P. Lind (exp. 3/08)  
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**Check our website:  
[www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com)**

**VISIT:  
Heritage Room  
Savage Public Library  
13090 Alabama Avenue  
Savage, MN 55378**

