

# DAN PATCH Newsletter

*A Publication of the Dan Patch Historical Society*

Number 27

Spring 2008

## Dan Patch Days June 19-22, 2008

**T**he photo of Dan Patch on this years Dan Patch Days button comes from an envelop of the International Stock Food business. Below the picture of the horse is a pail with the letters ISF. The button is for sale by the Dan Patch Historical Society for \$3.00 at various location throughout the City of Savage and also by mail. The purchaser of the button is eligible to win a rendering of the button in wood intarsia or a historical blanket. The winner will be drawn following the history quiz show on the main stage between 6:15 and 6:45 PM on Saturday. In addition to the button, the

historical society sponsors the Find the Horseshoe contest. The cluemaster, a member of the society, hides the horseshoe on public property within the city of Savage and the clues depict local history. The finder of the horseshoe must have a button and wins \$100 and the opportunity to ride in the Dan Patch Day parade on Sunday at 1 PM. This is the 13th year of the horseshoe hunt and it is one of the most popular events of the celebration. The historical society will have a booth at the celebration in Community Park on Saturday, June 21 from 2 PM until dusk. Charles Leerhsen, author of the



newest book, "Crazy Good," on Dan Patch and Mr. Savage will be at the booth from 4 until 6 PM signing copies of the book published by Simon and Schuster. We also will have a team of horses and wagon in the parade.

***Check the Dan Patch Days, Inc website ([www.DanPatchDays.org](http://www.DanPatchDays.org)) for up to the minute details.***

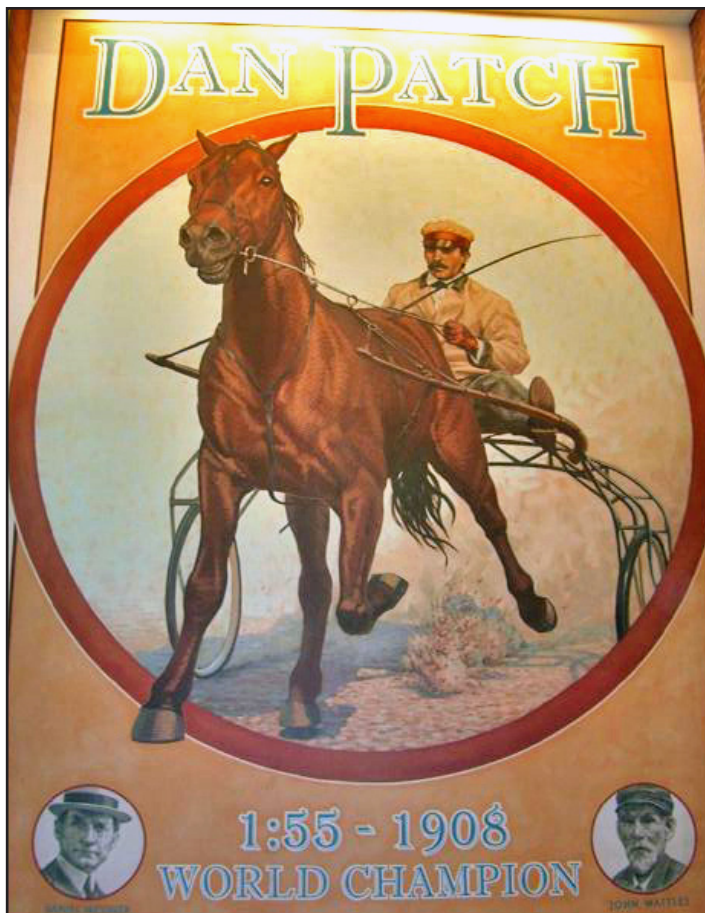
**Mission Statement:** The Dan Patch Historical Society was formed for the purpose of collection, preservation and dissemination of historical knowledge and artifacts about the horse, Dan Patch, and its owner, M. W. Savage.

**[www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com)**

## Harness Track Opens in Minnesota



**R**unning Aces Harness Park is a  $\frac{5}{8}$  mile state of the art purpose built harness racetrack that opened on April 11, 2008. Members of the Dan Patch Historical Society were represented at the ribbon cutting ceremony and the official first harness race. We were presented with the program of the first race and have it displayed in our Heritage Room at the library. As you enter the beautiful building you are greeted by a huge mural of Dan Patch. In addition to the track they will have a 50 table card room opening in July.



## “Crazy Good” is the Newest Dan Patch Book



**“B**efore Seabiscuit, there was Dan Patch” is the quote from the cover of the newest book written about Dan Patch and Mr. Savage and published in May by Simon and Schuster of

NY written by Charles Leerhsen. *“Crazy Good”* gets a rave review from Publishers Weekly and a 6000 word excerpt in the May 19 issue of Sports Illustrated. The author, executive editor for Sport Illustrated magazine, has written three best selling biographies: *“Trump, Surviving the Top”* with Donald Trump, *“Press on! Adventures of a Good Life,”* with pioneer aviator Chuck Yeager and *“The Last Good Life”* with entertainment mogul Brandon Tartikoff.

In the book he tells that 100 years ago the most famous athlete in America was a horse. Dan was more than a sports star, he was a cultural icon. At a time when the highest paid baseball player, Ty Cobb, was making \$12,000, Dan was earning over a million. In this book Charles Leerhsen travels through their world to bring back to life this fascinating story of triumph and treachery in small town America and big-city racetracks. He delivers a mesmerizing look into a strange corner of American sports and folk history. Some members of the Dan Patch Historical provided research for the author when he visited Savage and the surrounding area.

## Hoof Beats Rewind

**R**ecently an interesting donation was made to the DPHS: An original 1955 Hoof Beats magazine. Hoof Beats was published monthly by The United States Trotting Association and a yearly subscription could be had for a mere \$2.00. This January edition contained Ken McCarr's Recollections of... International Stock Food Farm...The Fabulous Home of Dan Patch. Ken's father Ned was a trainer at the M.W. Savage owned farm and he worked not only with Dan but also with Dazzle Patch, and he was the driver for the world champion pacing team of Minor Heir and George Gano.

Mr. McCarr writes his story as if painting a picture and your taken back some 90 plus years and are given an intimate portrait to life in a very special place and time. Ken shares great memories as a youth on the stock farm and begins with a picture of him at seven years old with an 82-pound catfish caught on the farm by the blacksmith. He continues with how "Dan Patch, the premier of the farm...had a gentle disposition" and he speaks of the "pride in a small boy, sitting on the lap of George Plummer, holding the reins of the fastest horse in the world while old Dan jogged over the dirt streets of Savage." Did he pace past the depot?

Ken McCarr is quite descriptive of the architectural beauty of the Taj Mahal. Detailing the one of a kind covered half-mile track with nearly 1500 windows, the main barn and which horse was stalled where in the five wings. He writes of heavy snows and high winds, the brook meandering through the grounds and "the

playful antics of the young foals" in the pasture skirting the river. Sadly, he also tells of flooding, fires, busy maintenance men, and sections of the track blown down and dismantled.

With pictures and prose you are placed front and center in the timers stand to witness the stars of the show: Harry Hersey on Minor Heir, Frankie Bowman on George Gano and perhaps even glimpse the superstar himself as they are put thru their fast workouts to prepare for the exhibition season. Of course Dan traveled first class in his own white rail car. "The center panel on the sides of the cars carried life size paintings of the champion in full racing regalia."

McCarr depicts dramatically Savage's experimental attempt to hitch the valuable stallions Minor Heir and George Gano side by side to become a premier pacing team. He chronicles their rise, achieving the world's record of 2:02 in the mile, and ultimately a breakdown of Minor Heir, which led to surgery and failed medical treatment. "Minor Heir was retired...pass(ed) through several ownerships and the great little horse was practically forgotten when he died in Tennessee."

McCarr's favorite horse on the farm was Dazzle Patch as he was "broken, trained and developed" by his father Ned. "Dazzle Patch was meant to be the son to succeed an illustrious sire." And while he had moments of "blinding speed" and "fast quarters", he never reached the level of greatness of his father. In Dan's twilight years when Dazzle was three, fairgoers in Hamline, Minn. were treated to an exhibit of

the "king and the prince...huge crowds passed through the tent (to) pay homage to the worlds fastest horse."

Fate intervened and Dazzle was sold to Canadian interests and moved north. Mortality intervened and "the death of (the legendary) Dan Patch signaled the downfall of the mighty breeding establishment...Savage passed...the day after...horses left the farm for new homes and later on the farm was taken over for dairy cattle. The barn was destroyed by fire and the grandeur of the famous farm was no more."

The words that Mr. McCarr used to conclude his article in 1955 still ring true, you need only to re-work the math: "Practically all vestiges of the famous Minnesota nursery have disappeared but memories are still clear after 40 years. Anyone that visited the home of Dan Patch never forgot the experience."

**Editors Note:** *Please stop by the Heritage Room of the Savage Public Library and enjoy this donated artifact as well as many other interesting items concerning M.W. Savage and Dan Patch. The Dan Patch Historical Society is always pleased to accept donated items of historical value relating to M.W., Dan and their exploits and we thank Doreen Davis for her contribution.*

## Winterfest

The Savage Chamber of Commerce and the City of Savage held its first annual Winterfest on November 28, 2007. A downtown street was blocked off for horse and wagon rides and the official lighting of the community Christmas tree. The society as a member of the chamber participated in the snowman contest with a snowman made of previous DP Days buttons. The Mayor of Savage (historical society board member Tom Brennan) and Mr. and Mrs. Savage (aka councilmember Abbott and his wife) dressed in period attire and wandered through the crowd. The society had a booth and gave out free gelato.

## Wake Up Savage

The Dan Patch Historical Society hosted a Wake Up Savage at the heritage Room at the library. Over 20 members of the Savage Chamber of Commerce came to hear members of the society describe what is in the room and to learn more about DPHS. A drawing was held for a poster of the new book and a free membership for one year in the society. Our membership in the Savage Chamber of Commerce has helped us with visibility and getting our word out.

## 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*



# Welcome our New Members!

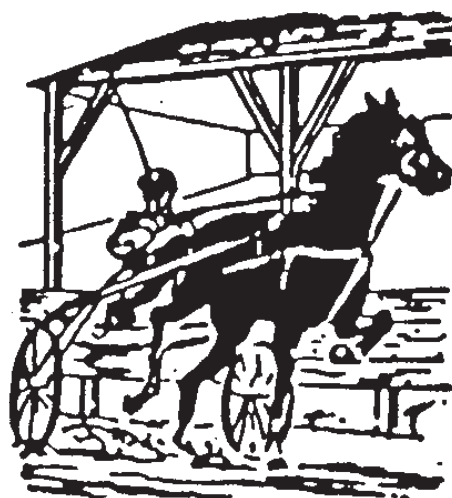
## New Members

Mark Bayuk, St. Paul, MN  
Tom "Digger" Anderson, Savage, MN  
Blake & Kristi Erickson, Savage, MN

## Donations

- 🔊 Dan Patch Coaster Wagon donated  
by Terry Briskie, Apopka, Florida
- 🔊 Hoofbeats Magazine, 1955 donated  
by Doreen Davis, Brooksville, Florida

## Dan Patch Historical Society



## ANNUAL MEETING

July 22, 2008 at 7PM  
at the Depot

## Items for Sale

- 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....\$24.95
- Dan Patch Electric Railroad Book...\$15 (non-members) \$12 (members)



Items available through the website, [www.DanPatch.com](http://www.DanPatch.com), or call 952-890-1669. Shipping & handling apply.

## From the President



I received my annual letter from Bob and Thelma Glaspie from Oxford, Indiana with their update on activities there. They call the Messner Barn in Oxford their historic jewel. It is open by appointment and for their Dan Patch Days celebration that is held in September. I have been there and if you are in the area stop and see what they have in birthplace of Dan Patch.

Local TV Channel 11 reporter Scott Soroka spent time at my shop taping material for a special that they aired before the opening of the harness racing track. The TV clip about Dan Patch, Mr. Savage and our city is on our website for those who missed it. Check us out at [www.danpatch.com](http://www.danpatch.com) We are always grateful to Next Level Café for hosting our website and to Greg Lind our webmaster. We hear many good comments about our site.

See you at Dan Patch Days or stop in anytime at my shop,

**Jens**

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

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

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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**