CALENDAR OF EVENTS:
FRIENDS EVENTS

Friday, October 7 through Sunday, October 9
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Friends Annual Book Sale
Snyder Auditorium
(Note: Friends Preview & Sale, Thursday, Oct. 6, 3:30-6:30pm)

Monday, October 24 (note: 4th Monday)
Regular Meeting, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Speaker: Kathryn Strand Koutsky & Linda Koutsky, “An Inside
Look at The Fine Art of Minnesota Cooking”
Join the authors for a tour of Minnesota’s foodie scene from the 1880s to
1980s.
Snyder Auditorium
Read more on page 4.

Monday, January 23, 2017
Regular Meeting, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Speaker: TBD
Snyder Auditorium

Monday, April 24, 2017
Regular Meeting, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Speaker: TBD
Snyder Auditorium

LIBRARY EXHIBITS & EVENTS

Now through Dec 31, 2016
AHL Exhibit: Fruit of the Vine: Coldhardy Grapes in Minnesota.

COVER IMAGE

This autumn image is taken from one of 237 catalogs of
Minnesota firms that have now been digitized cover-to-cover
(more on page 7, “New Life for Old Catalogs”). The cerulean
sky reflected in the standing water at the edge of the field also
reflects the perfect Minnesota autumn weather we are enjoying
today, drying out after an onslaught of rain across the Upper
Midwest.
Yikes! It’s “pondering time” again already! Why is it the older I get the quicker the weeks seem to go by? Must be a time warp or something.

Often I go to the Arboretum to ponder but today I’m in another favorite haunt, a local independent coffee shop. I love coffee shops and this one has good pondering potential—friendly people, big windows, wi-fi and coffee. And they don’t seem to mind when I use it as my personal office for hours.

I hope you had a great warm season. Ours was very enjoyable but I always look forward to the crisp sweatshirt days of autumn. We spent a lot of time sitting outside although were hindered after the mosquitoes figured out how to attack in waves with military precision. I heard it was the worst August for mosquitoes since 1980 but who’s counting? We made do with mosquito spray and citronella tiki torches and took pleasure in cheering on the neighborhood bats that swooped through the evening yard (Take THAT you blood-sucking mosquitoes!”). I love watching bats and their erratic, darting flights. We have seven native species in Minnesota and I assume ours are the more common Big Brown bats but they never stop to introduce themselves.

Libraries played a role in our summer, too. Judy has an ongoing interest in learning about U.S. presidents, often through reading books found at the Book Sale. A few years ago we went to Illinois to visit the Lincoln library and, later, to Iowa to see Hoover’s. This summer we road-tripped to Missouri and visited the Truman facilities in Independence and then into Kansas to Eisenhower’s in Abilene. Although we didn’t go into the areas where researchers can access the millions of documents held in them, just being in these significant facilities makes one appreciate all the more the value of libraries as repositories of history. It makes me proud to be part of a library support group.

Another objective of our trip was to explore some of the native prairie that Kansas is known for. We stayed four nights in Manhattan, a very pleasant small city situated near the north end of the Flint Hills region of Kansas, an immense 6-million-plus-acre tract stretching down into the Osage Hills of Oklahoma. Its underlying limestone layer is close to the surface so most of it was never plowed and remains as native prairie and grassland. Manhattan is home to Kansas State University and boasts the well-done Flint Hills Discovery Center, a small science museum dedicated to prairies and regional history. Just outside of town is the 8,700-acre KSU-run Konza research prairie, and an hour south is the 10,900-acre Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and visitor’s center, run by the National Park Service. We spent time at both but temperatures touched triple digits in the afternoons and limited our enthusiasm for prairie hiking. On the way home, we drove through the unique Loess Hills of western Iowa and stopped at Jim Brandenburg’s Touch-the-Sky Prairie near Luverne.

Visiting different habitats makes the Arboretum seem even more special. We have prairie grass and mowed grass. We have wild woods and planted trees. We have wetlands and man-made ponds. We have wildflowers and flower gardens. We have it all.

Oops! No room for a presidential message again. Maybe next time. Have a great autumn (and winter)! Hope to see you at the Book Sale!

Endless prairie, photograph courtesy of Paul Schlick
Speculum volatilium indo-orientalium et exotica ad vivum depictorum, by Joseph Gianni, Vienna, Austria, 1746.

This two-volume copy of a monastic manuscript is filled with hundreds of richly colored images of birds. A gift from the estate of frequent Arboretum visitor Ruth Reister, it is one of two copies commissioned by her (the other is housed in the Minneapolis Athenaeum). Ruth and her husband Ray had seen the original in the library of the famous hilltop Benedictine monastery, Melk Abbey, outside Vienna, Austria, and fell in love with it.

Beautifully produced by Minnesota photographer Cass Mackert, our copy is a pleasure to page through. Some of the birds seem a bit fanciful, and one wonders whether the monk was working from stuffed specimens, or possibly from third-hand descriptions.

The “Gianni bird book” fits well with our collection of rare ornithology works. Thank you to the trustees of the Reister estate for this beautiful gift - we believe Ruth would be happy to see it housed here.


The authors of AHL’s newest acquisition, Kathryn & Linda Koutsky, will be our speakers at the next Friends meeting (October 24). They’ll take us on a tour of Minnesota’s foodie scene from the 1880s to 1980s. During this period talented artists were hired by Minnesota food companies to paint many food-related items, from finished dishes to lush garden designs, kitchen appliances, etc., to tempt consumers into buying those products. This book is a celebration of that art, with old-time recipes a fun addition.

Thirty images from AHL’s historic seed and nursery catalog collection are included in this lavishly illustrated, informative book.

The dangling branch of apples that graces the cover originally appeared on the cover of the 1911 Farmer Seed & Nursery Co. catalog cover. Images from other Minnesota firms, including L.L. May; Northrup, King, & Co.; and Jewell Nursery, may look familiar to those who saw the Seed Stories exhibition featured in the Reedy Gallery five years ago. The Koutskys spent considerable time at the library selecting images from seed packets, seed catalogs, and nurserymen’s plate-books.

Kathryn Strand Koutsky and her daughter, Linda Koutsky, also wrote Minnesota Eats Out: An Illustrated History; Minnesota State Fair: An Illustrated History; and Minnesota Vacation Days: An Illustrated History. Kathryn is an award-winning designer and Linda is a book artist and graphic designer.

Tempt Me! will be available for sale and signing at the Friends meeting.

Authors Linda (l) & Kathy Koutsky
Pet goats munching on the lawn, sheep grazing during WWI, a 1950s state-of-the-art putting green, a tree house for Amy Carter, Jackie’s roses and Lady Bird’s first children’s garden, and now Michelle’s kitchen and pollinator garden. What do all of these have in common? They all reflect the passions and eccentricities of our presidents at one of the most exclusive addresses in the world – 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Marta McDowell’s *All the Presidents’ Gardens* examines the history of gardening trends in America as reflected in the White House gardens. The story begins with George Washington’s interest in collecting seeds and cuttings from the South, Europe, and the Caribbean. At Mount Vernon, Washington planted so many roses that it took twelve days each June just to pick the petals. He had an orangery built with south-facing windows and a heater for his citrus plants. He ordered 200 native trees from Bartram’s Philadelphia nursery. His experiences at Mount Vernon and his familiarity with European gardening books and European design served to guide Washington in the development of the city and land surrounding the White House.

Washington in the development of the city and land surrounding the White House.

What was planted at Mount Vernon or in the White House gardens soon influenced citizens. A Mary Washington rose (named after George Washington’s mother), or a Mamie Eisenhower pink chrysanthemum was a coveted addition to the home garden.

Having connections to the White House paid off. Garden writer and nurseryman Bernard McMahon supplied vegetable seeds for the White House gardens, and later Thomas Jefferson selected McMahon to grow seeds and roots collected by Lewis and Clark during their famous western expedition. Not all plant selections were a success. Hamilton’s plantings of columnar Lombardy poplar, so prominent in Europe, proved futile. They were a short-lived tree in America. Yet he also introduced the first ginkgo trees to be planted in America.

The author recounts some scandalous and dubious gardening practices. According to McDowell, “Mary Lincoln indulged in retail therapy...Her purchases for redoing the White House far exceeded the $20,000 allocated by Congress.” She had the gardener pad his expenses to cover her extravagance. This became known as the “manure fund.” Jack Kennedy’s obsession with a green lawn prompted the grounds workers to use green spray paint on any brown areas of grass. This book is not only rich in historical anecdotes, it contains images from historic seed catalogs and vintage photographs of the White House gardens, gardeners, and the children and pets that lived there.

Marta McDowell is also the author of *Beatrix Potter’s Gardening Life; Emily Dickinson’s Gardens; and A Garden Alphabetized*, featuring 26 essays by McDowell and 26 digital collages by artist Yolanda Fundora. McDowell is working on a new book with the working title *A Wilder Garden: The Plants and Places of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. --Christine Aho
Retirement News

Contribution of 74 Years

This summer we witnessed the end of an era with news that two of our long-time volunteers were retiring - Evy Sand and Jo Mihelich. Evy was both a volunteer and library staff member for a total of 42 years and Jo volunteered for 32 years.

Evy Sand

Evy Sand started as a volunteer for AHL in 1974, soon after the library opened. She developed the system for ordering and processing nursery and seed catalogs, with the goal of finding a retail source for every Arboretum plant. This helped immensely with the Library’s most frequently asked question, “Where can I buy one of those?” In the beginning, she used a Rolodex file to record incoming catalogs. In 1984, records for nearly 7,000 catalogs were moved to a database on the library’s first computer. (When volunteer Amy Owen was hired as library staff, this was her first project.)

Initially, when a new catalog was received, the previous year’s catalog would be offered to Arboretum staff or recycled. By the late 1970s, Evy, with librarian June Rogier’s consent, started to keep the older catalogs for their historical value.

Evy was a library staff member from 1978-1999. Among Evy’s many tasks was the constant challenge of identifying, requesting, and processing catalogs. Immediately after retiring, Evy returned to volunteering at the library, which she did Mondays and some Thursdays until this past summer. Her main task was helping to inventory and catalog the 72,000+ items in AHL’s nursery and seed catalog collection.

Evy was kept especially busy the past few years as AHL received multiple generous donations of seed and nursery catalogs. Evy checked each of the thousands of catalogs against a master list to determine whether it was already part of the collection. More than 2,000 catalogs were added from Longwood Gardens alone. Hundreds were added from each of the donations sent by the New York Botanical Garden’s Mertz Library, Morton Arboretum’s Sterling Morton Library, and Mike & Jean Heger’s Ambergate Gardens. In the process, catalogs were added from nearly 400 firms never before represented in the collection. Evy’s meticulous help in documenting and processing these was invaluable.

Working tirelessly on behalf of the Library for 42 years, Evy has played a major role in AHL’s history. We wish her all the best in her “second retirement”! I will miss my Monday partner! Thanks Evy for all your help. —Renee Jensen

Jo Mihelich

While writing Andrew Peterson and the Scandia Story (published in 1984), Jo asked AHL’s first librarian, June Rogier, to critique her writing. Jo volunteered many hours for the Arboretum during the seven years spent researching and writing her book. During that time she worked at the reception desk, the Children’s Learning Center, Frog Hollow, and on a variety of projects with the Auxiliary.

When I [Renee] started working at AHL in 1984, one of my assigned duties was working with the Book Preservation group of volunteers. Jo Mihelich had begun volunteering earlier that year and graciously agreed to co-chair with me. What a lucky break for me! We had to use a classroom in the Snyder building, which involved moving all our supplies (including bricks, cardboard, paper, and glue) once a month from a storage room in the basement to a 2nd floor classroom (and back again, of course). Our motto was “Happiness is completing a book box.” Later, Jo made acid-free folders for our historic collection of nursery and seed catalogs while telling us about her amazing life.
experiences. Jo’s work ethic is legendary! Never one to sit still, she was always looking for more efficient ways of making folders. As our unofficial photographer, Jo captured many Book Preservation sessions. Never missing a birthday of a fellow volunteer, she always made that day special. Jo retired this year, 2016, after 32 years of volunteering for AHL. The Book Preservation group, myself included, will miss her dearly.

Thank you, Jo! --Renee Jensen

New Life for Old Catalogs

Many of you have seen beautiful images from AHL’s historic seed and nursery catalog collection in exhibits and in these newsletters. Many are from catalogs published in the 1880s through 1910s.

With the exception of two spectacular b&w nursery catalogs from the 1600s, our oldest catalogs are pretty mundane, even unattractive, from an aesthetic viewpoint. The Double Zonal Geranium featured on our back cover [from the 1921 Hovey & Co. catalog] is one of the few color images to be found in our pre-1875 catalogs.

The content of these older catalogs, however, is of great importance for research. Seventy of AHL’s older catalogs, along with two rare books, will be traveling to California later this year to be digitized cover-to-cover by the Internet Archive <http://archive.org>, a non-profit digital library.

The records will then be “ingested” into the award-winning Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) <biodiversitylibrary.org>, a digital resource of materials on natural history. BHL received a grant that allows several libraries to contribute small amounts of content for this purpose. AHL is fortunate to be included in this project.

We frequently use material from BHL in our work. It is a privilege to contribute to the corpus of knowledge available online to researchers through this prestigious resource.

More on Hovey & Co.

Charles Mason Hovey (1810-1887), horticultural journalist, nurseryman, and president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, was only 22 when he and his older brother Phineas opened a one-acre nursery in Cambridge, MA, in 1832. An 1856 report in The Horticulturist magazine called the greatly expanded firm “one of the most extensive commercial establishments in the Union, one, indeed, that has exercised no inconsiderable influence on our country’s progress.”

The Hovey strawberry likely helped, as it was “generally regarded as the starting-point of American commercial strawberry-growing,” according to L. H. Bailey in his Cyclopedia of American Horticulture (1910, p778). AHL has seventeen of Hovey’s catalogs, dating as far back as 1848, as well as his illustrated 1853 book, The Fruits of America.

Display: Fruit of the Vine

Learn about grapes and winemaking in the new library exhibit Fruit of the Vine: Coldhardy Grapes in Minnesota. It is on display in the library from now through December 31.

HOURS ARE CHANGING!

The Arboretum has an exciting exhibit planned that will brighten our winter months. Bruce Munro: Winter Light at the Arboretum. The Snyder Building (including the Library) and the Oswald Visitor Center will close at 4 pm from Nov. 1, 2016 through April 9, 2017. The buildings (but not the library) will open again at 5 pm for Bruce Munro ticketholders.
Hovey’s Illustrated Catalogue of New Plants for 1870

This recently acquired catalog will be heading to California soon. See story on page 7, “New Life for Old Catalogs.” Also read “More About Hovey & Co.” on page 7.