

BHS NEWSLETTER

B L O O M I N G T O N H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y

ARTISTRY Celebrates 70 Years

VISIT US!

- Wednesday
1-5 pm
- Thursday
1-8 pm
- Saturday
1-5 pm
- And by ap-
pointment



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This summer, 2025, Bloomington Civic Theatre, the theatrical roots of Artistry, is celebrating 70 years of theatrical productions!

Bloomington Civic Theatre (BCT) was founded in 1955 and became a non-profit organization after a small group of people including Donna Utecht, Jim Logan and others, decided to form a community theatre group. They wanted to bring good theatre to the growing Bloomington community. Their first performance was "The Curious Savage" which was performed on the stage of the old Bloomington High School at 10025 Penn Ave.

BCT was an all-volunteer organization in the early years. They used any stage available to them including schools in Bloomington and Richfield, Normandale Community College and several churches.

Bloomington Art Center (BAC) was established in 1976 as part of the Bloomington Bicentennial Futures Project. Diane Darr was instrumental in its success. This non-profit operated in a city-owned building at 10206 Penn Ave., right next door to the Old Town Hall Museum. Art classes were offered, gallery space was available, and Nine Mile Creek Theatre and Gallery Players gave productions.

Following the completion of the new Bloomington Civic Plaza, BCT and BAC both moved into that space as their permanent homes. There were two theatres, gallery and art spaces available. BCT was able to grow and expand, offering theatrical experiences for the entire Southwest Metro area.

In 2009, BCT and BAC merged to become the Bloomington Theatre and Art Center. In 2015, the organization took on an exciting new name, ARTISTRY. Today, Artistry presents musicals in the Schneider theater and small shows in the Black Box Theatre. Shows feature local and professional performers and musicians. BCT is alive and well, and happy to be part of Artistry. Happy 70th Anniversary!

Credits: Diane Darr, Hennepin County History, Footnotes, Sun Current, Mel Kirkpatrick, Donna Utecht (scrap book), Fine Arts Council.



BAA: The Story of Youth Sports in Bloomington

Bloomington Athletic Association has been around for over 70 years. Incorporated in 1954, the first baseball season was held in 1955 according to the Bloomington Sun and the Minneapolis Star. BAA is a volunteer-run nonprofit that has been providing sports opportunities for Bloomington youth for decades.

Arnie Johnson was one of the founders of the organization and is known as the "Father of BAA." His goal was to provide youth sports opportunities at an affordable cost and open to all.



The very first season, 60 boys went out for baseball. Fifteen years later the number of youth in the program had grown to over 7,000. In 1955, boys baseball was played in fields at the Sophomore Annex (Bloomington Consolidated School) just south of Creekside Elementary on Penn Avenue.

What makes BAA unique is that everyone plays regardless of ability. Unlike other youth sports programs, there are no tryouts. Volunteers are an important part of the success of the program. In 1966, a minimum of six adults were needed for each game: Coaches, umpires, scorekeepers. Mothers made up most of the scorekeeper crew.

Enrollment fees in 1966 were just \$2.50 each, which paid for equipment and insurance. Fundraisers were held to raise money for additional equipment. The Bloomington Parks and Recreation Division stored equipment and provided facility scheduling. BAA had access to the school gyms and fields as well as parks.

Although BAA started with baseball, football was the second sport added. According to the Bloomington Sun Suburbanite, Minnesota Vikings player Milt Sunde played football in the BAA program in its early days. Other sports were added over the years, including basketball, hockey and soccer.

Girls' sports were not initially included in BAA because they were covered under the Park Board. In the early 1960s, girls' softball and floor hockey were added to BAA programs. A strong proponent of that was Betty Lokken, who is known as the "Mother of BAA."

BAA continues to thrive today, providing sports opportunities for Bloomington youth.

Credits: BAA Website, Bloomington Sun Suburbanite and Sun Current, Minneapolis Tribune and Star.

What's New?



Information and photos of artifacts in our collection are being uploaded each week to the MNCollections website. Check out what's being cataloged each week through the link on our website. We're cataloging new donations, and have entered boxes of toys, enamelware and dishes this August. This new software was funded through a grant from the State of Minnesota Arts and Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society Bloomington Historical Society.

Step up your involvement: Join the BHS Board Nov. 2

It's so easy! Just send a quick email to Rose Underhill at Bloomitarian@gmail.com, or talk to her in person at the museum on Wednesdays. Nominations due by October 1st in order to be printed on our Annual Meeting Ballot.

Each year your BHS leadership group changes. New people and new ideas keep the Bloomington Historical Society moving forward to meet the needs of our community. The twelve members on the Board of Directors serve for two-year terms.

For 2026 there are a couple openings on the Board. We are grateful to Fran Stachour for her ten years of service on our board. She has served as our secretary, and served two terms as our President. She is also active with the Bloomington Honors Veterans initiative. Though she remains an active volunteer she is stepping down at this time because it is recommended that non-profit board members serve no more than ten consecutive years. (Rest assured this is NOT a lifetime commitment!)

Please consider offering your time and talents on the Board of Directors for a two-year term. Or, perhaps you know someone who enjoys Bloomington History and would be a good fit. Responsibilities include a meeting once a month, and some additional volunteer time for the organization. Volunteer opportunities are flexible depending on the skills and interests of individual members.

We're looking forward to having YOU on the team! Our annual meeting this year is Sunday, November 2.

COMING SOON!

New display cases will soon be installed for us at Bloomington Civic Plaza. Watch for our first display about the Bloomington Civic Theatre.

2026 MEMBERSHIP DONATION

Members fund our programs. Renew or Join today!

See our website for online giving options.

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE/ZIP CODE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

_____ Individual \$ 30.00

_____ Family \$ 50.00

Additional donation: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to:
Bloomington Historical Society

Mail to: Bloomington Historical Society
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431

_____ YES, I'd love to volunteer at the Old Town Hall Museum. I'm available: (circle)

Tuesday afternoon Wednesday afternoon

Thursday afternoon Thursday evening

Saturday afternoon Other: _____

Interested in serving as a board member.

BLOOMINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1964, the Bloomington Historical Society is dedicated to the discovery, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the City of Bloomington.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and hold in the public trust the many artifacts, photographic images, memorabilia and life stories of the people who have lived in Bloomington.

The organization is run entirely by volunteers and we depend entirely upon your donations for our operations, programs and displays. We are grateful for your ongoing support.

Old Town Hall Museum

Penn Avenue at Old Shakopee Road
Open Wed., Thurs. and Sat. 1 to 5 pm.
Additional open hours by appointment



Bloomington Historical Society
1800 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431