



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MINNETONKA HORSEMEN

Written by Ronald Vegemast

February 2016

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements and Notes	2
Introduction	3
Early Years and Onward	4
Early Competition	7
Minnetonka Ring and Related Formation of Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc.	8
End of an Era	13
Figures	16

Acknowledgements and Notes

Sun Newspapers granted permission to use the quotes related to Mr. Fred Korger and the picture Figure 16 of the separation between walking and bridle trails in Big Willow Park. Thank you Sun Newspapers.

This history could not have been as detailed without the material in 26 large albums of pictures, newspaper article clippings, and other printed material collected by the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. historians between 1969 and 1994. The author hopes that this treasure of several thousand pictures and hundreds of clippings and other printed documents eventually finds its way to some historical society archive where it will be available for research by others.

The author hereby expresses great appreciation for the input and detailed review and comment on five major revisions of this document by Julie Meyers-Lynch, Robert Vegemast and Elizabeth Vegemast-Heck. Julie Meyers-Lynch located the Horsemen's Association's historians records and made arrangements for the author to have unlimited access to that information. Most of the pictures included were selected by Robert Vegemast from the historians archive. Elizabeth Vegemast-Heck produced the map of Figure 1 and the sketch of Figure 2 and she scanned and typed captions for all of the Figures.

Every effort was made to attempt to be as accurate as possible in reporting the information in this history. This effort was only possible because of the availability of the historian's records. In some cases there was conflict between information from multiple sources about something, especially dates. Sometimes one or the other conflicting reports did not seem to correspond to other known information. In those cases, the information that seemed to best fit the overall story was used. Usually the information in the historian's albums was relied on to be the most accurate.

Names of riders were purposely omitted as there were far too many to list and none of them should have been left out. The author apologizes for including only some of the names of the many dependable, hard-working volunteers that made the Minnetonka Ring horse shows such a success. Thank you to all of the volunteers.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MINNETONKA HORSEMEN

INTRODUCTION

Simply stated, Minnetonka Horsemen was a group of horse riders that enjoyed each other's company doing something they really liked.

Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. was a formally organized non-profit corporation. It was a necessary entity when it was established and it was important. It should, however be viewed as a support group only for individuals that were all good friends through their horse riding relationship with each other, not because of anything else such as attending the same school or association with any other organization. They met each other through common friends.

Specific dates at which horse riding began or ended in Minnetonka cannot be established. Interest in riding and the number of horses kept in Minnetonka grew at a slow rate over a number of years. It is likely that the increase in riders along with the availability of wide open areas for free riding resulted in a significant level of ridership by the early 1960s. By the early 1980s, much of the wide open free areas were gone or difficult to reach so that free riding was no longer a major activity that kept interest in horses and riding alive in Minnetonka.

There was a major shift in riding interest generated by competitive riding in horse shows after the opening of the Minnetonka Horse Ring in 1973. The horse shows kept riding very active until a slow decline in the late 1990s.

This document is the record of a colorful little sliver of this additional kind of living in Minnetonka.

While Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. was a formal body, the term Minnetonka Horsemen is used throughout this short history to describe the people and activities prior to the establishment of the corporation as well as to the people and activities after the corporation existed.

Many in this group began riding at young ages and they hung out together through their high school years. Many of the group were still close friends in 2015 and they often reminisce about those past happy times when they meet. Some were still riding in areas of Western Hennepin County, Wright County and elsewhere in 2015.

The only scheduled times that they got together was at a specific time and place when horse shows were arranged, although not all of the riders chose to compete. All other group riding was ad hoc meetings to ride together, usually several times a week. Many of those were arranged at the last minute. In later years, they did get together for an annual year end banquet arranged by the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc.

EARLY YEARS AND ONWARD

There were probably always some riding horses in what is now Minnetonka from around 1850 on. By 1960 there were a significant number of riders spread throughout the city as there was an unusual combination of enough population density in and around wide areas of undeveloped land.

There was little development in Minnetonka prior to the beginning of World War II in 1941. At that time the City of St. Louis Park was largely undeveloped and the City of Hopkins was isolate and considered to be way out in the rural farming area. The Oak Knoll area had about seven commercial buildings. There was the Minnetonka Lutheran Church located on the northwest corner of Hopkins Cross Roads and Highway 12. This church was the center of many activities in the Oak Knoll area including being the precinct voting location. Oak Knoll looked like a small town way out of Minneapolis along a major highway (US 12). Some housing developments existed south of Oak Knoll along and around Ford Road.

There were other concentrations of commercial establishments prior to 1941. One of these concentrations was in the Minnetonka Mills area that dated from 1852 when a saw mill was placed in operation at a dam on Minnehaha Creek near the Burwell House. There was a concentration of business in the Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 101 area related to early housing developments around and south of the eastern end of Lake Minnetonka. There was also a commercial area in the Glen Lake area with a housing development related to the large number of jobs at a major State of Minnesota facility located there.

There was essentially no home construction during the war as neither the materials or man power were available. At the end of the war in 1945 there was a huge demand for new housing and development began in parts of Minnetonka. By 1950, the area east of Highway 73 between Cedar Lake Road and Highway 12 was developed. The Sherwood Forest development from the west side of County Highway 73 to Dwight Lane was largely built up.

The City of Hopkins had numerous employment opportunities with many industrial and commercial enterprises located there. People wanted to live close to their employment and the City of Hopkins was essentially fully developed before 1941. After 1945 people that were employed in Hopkins were customers for residential developers in areas west

and north of Hopkins up to Highway 7. Other developed areas were along Cedar Lake Road and on Mayflower Avenue.

Some of the early residents recognizing the large areas of open land acquired horses and began riding. Many of the families in this area had young children who watched their parents ride and also wanted to ride and so a significant population of horses and ponies were brought in. The number of horses and riders that became the Minnetonka Horsemen probably increased at a slow rate over several years. By about 1960 there were probably enough people living in and around the developing areas with horses together with the amount of open land to be the critical mass that allowed horse riding to catch on.

By the 1960s, there were many riders in the eastern more populated area of the city and there were still wide areas of undeveloped woodlands and unfarmed fields there.

People in that area often rode their horses in the area between US 12 (now I394) and Minnetonka Boulevard, and between Plymouth Road and Dwight Lane and a line from Dwight Lane east along West Hilloway Road to an imaginary northerly extension of what is now the eastern part of Cedar Pass.

There was another concentration of riders in the western part of Minnetonka on both sides of Highway 7 and primarily west of Williston Road.

Riders in both areas knew each other well and they would ride together frequently. They would often meet along the way and then would enjoy riding the trails together in the Big Willow and Hilloway Parks areas and the open area north of West Hilloway Road. At least one time, riders from the north eastern area of the city took their horses swimming in Shady Oak Lake. The very close relationship between these two concentrations of riders in Minnetonka should be looked at as if they were one group. New riders carried on the close relationship so that they were still like a single group up to the 1990s when horse ridership declined in Minnetonka.

There were two primary routes used by riders to travel between these areas. One primary route was from Hilloway Park or Cedar Lake Road to Plymouth Road, then west through an open, free riding area north of the BNSF railroad tracks between Plymouth Road and Oakland Road (later the Preston Woods Development). From there, riders used Stone Road to pass under I494, then south along a bridle trail (now part of the Minnetonka Trail System), to McGinty Road, along McGinty Road, then cross country to a point where the creek was crossed near the current Minnetonka trails system pedestrian bridge at about the location of the future Minnetonka Horse Ring.

The other primary route was from Big Willow Park along Burwell Drive, through Minnetonka Mills, then along the right-of-way of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad tracks (now part of a regional trail system) under I494 to Williston Road.

By 1956, there were bridle trails that were well established and four to six inches deep indicating fairly heavy use for at least several years. Primary trails were in the Big

Willow Park area that was just open undeveloped private land. There was a primary trail from Big Willow north across Cedar Lake Road to and through what is now Hilloway Park. About the middle of the north-south trail through Hilloway Park there was a side trail east to Byrnes Road, then up Byrnes Road nearly to the end where the trail branched off on the north side of the road east to what is now Sherwood Hills Road and then south. At that time the ridge that is the Sherwood Hills development continued south all the way down to Cedar Lake Road and the trail followed that ridge. That ridge was later mined for gravel by the Hedberg's and the Cedar Pass neighborhood is now there. The trail followed both sides of Cedar Lake Road and proceeded west into the Big Willow area. From what is now Big Willow Park there was a side trail through then undeveloped land to the Minnetonka Mills area (part of that is now Burwell Drive).

Major areas for free riding, and interconnecting free riding areas, along with some more significant bridle trails and geographic features are shown on Figure 1. There were other large open areas in which free riding was available that are not shown on Figure 1. The brown area on Figure 1 is the Hedberg's gravel mine area.

After the Minnetonka Horse Ring was completed, those without access to a horse trailer would use these trails to ride cross country to the Minnetonka horse ring when horse shows were scheduled there. Some of those riders would ride three or four miles to get to the ring.

It should be pointed out that there were others that were of a different type of riders. The Maxwell family that lived on Mayflower Avenue were competition riders in events that covered wide areas and not in a ring. The Maxwell's did however use the bridle trails.

By 1975, the riders loosely referred to as the Minnetonka Horsemen was made up mostly of young people in the 10 to 18 year old age group. Riders that got together to ride and play together with their horses tended to be around the same age rather than a group of persons of all ages.

Some hobby farms and some owners with larger lots boarded horses for many of the riders as a business. Isolated riders from throughout the city were able to get to know and to ride with other riders when they boarded their horse in or near one of these larger hobby farms. As a result, many riders knew most of the other riders in Minnetonka, including many of those from isolated locations.

Many other horses were kept at home particularly where those homeowners had oversize lots. Young riders in homes with horses were often assigned the responsibility to see that the horses were fed and watered twice every day of the year. This task involved getting up early to feed and water before leaving for the school bus. In some cases neighbors boarded their horses with someone with a large lot already taking care of a horse. In those cases the feeding and watering responsibilities were often shared and a horse would be taken care of when the family went off somewhere without the horse.

There were two favorite places at which to meet. One was at the Dairy Queen in Minnetonka Mills and the other was at a McDonald's restaurant that was located on the north side of Highway 7 about ½ mile west of Williston Road. Owners of both of these stores welcomed riders with their horses and even installed a horse hitching post for the riders. In 2015, the hitching rail in back of the Dairy Queen was still there as shown in Figure 3. The McDonald's restaurant was demolished for other commercial development.

Trail riders would spend countless hours during hot summer days cooling off and playing with their horses in Minnehaha Creek in the Big Willow Park area. Some of these riders are shown on their horses in Minnehaha Creek in 1991 in Figure 17.

Groups of riders would schedule a visit by a veterinarian or horse shoe specialist. The group would queue up to have their horses examined and treated, or reshod one at a time and the cost for the service would be lower for all as the specialist only needed to make one trip to provide the service rather than a visit to each individual separately.

EARLY COMPETITION

In addition to pure play, it was natural for the riders to informally compete with each other. Often this was a race along Byrnes Road as it was unpaved gravel at the time and it was a dead end street with few houses and therefore few cars.

At some unknown time, at least some Minnetonka Horsemen discovered formal, competitive events at horse shows. They began to practice and compete in these competitive events on suitable ground that provides good footing for a horse running fast and exercising tight maneuvers usually some kind of gravel brought in for competitive purposes. Some Minnetonka property owners went so far as to construct a simple fence around the prepared ground and that was called a horse ring. Figure 4 shows one of those private rings. A popular ring was constructed and maintained by the Masters family on north side of Cedar Lake Road at what is now Ella Lane.

Some of the events involved a single rider at a time in a race usually around and/or over obstacles while being timed. Usually timing was by stop watch. Lowest time won the competition.

Where available, the ring fence kept other horses and people from invading the space where a competitor was in action. Other competitions were with many riders in the ring at the same time performing untimed tests of rapport between rider and horse. All of these show events were designed to test the cooperative understanding between the rider and horse. There were always horses that were the best in physical capability, however, much of the time the rider with an inferior horse might win due to the superior control exercised over the horse by the rider. Layout of a typical horse ring is shown in Figure 2.

The seed of discovery of formal competitions are unknown, however, it may have been at horse show competitions some Minnetonka Horsemen saw at the state fair that occurred each year.

MINNETONKA RING AND RELATED FORMATION OF THE MINNETONKA HORSEMEN ASSOCIATION, INC.

Around 1967, Mr. Anthony Gasser gave the city a significant parcel of land between I494 and City Hall next to Minnehaha Creek. The gift agreement may have included the stipulation that the City provide suitable land and at least support the construction and maintenance of a horse ring there. Mr. Gasser died on September 13, 1985.

Whether stipulated or not, the City accepted the gift, spread suitable sand and allowed horse shows to be scheduled beginning around 1968 on land just off the south east corner of City Hall next to the swampy area where the Minnetonka Fire Department headquarters station is now located.

It was soon apparent that a formal structured organization of the Minnetonka Horsemen was needed. A formal, structured organization could provide central scheduling of horse shows; and the central, one place ability to direct, control and coordinate activities of a large group of volunteers for covering all the work required; and the central planning to insure that inefficient repetition of work be avoided. A clear recognized entity was needed to negotiate and enter into agreements with the city and other entities. A group of Minnetonka Horsemen organized a non-profit corporation, the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. to be the entity that was needed.

The Western Saddle Clubs Association (WSCA) is an organization of saddle clubs and not of individuals. The WSCA has rules and standards for the conduct of horse shows, and for a uniform set of rules for events at horse shows that all member saddle clubs must agree to. In those rules is a procedure for assigning points to riders that are in the top group of riders in each event at every horse show, Member saddle clubs all over Minnesota submit those points to the WSCA. At the end of the season, WSCA tallies the points earned and the number of times that a rider entered an event. A formula is then used to rank riders in each event regardless where they competed or how many times they competed in that event through the season. Trophies are awarded by the WSCA to the top riders across Minnesota in each event. Minnetonka riders that wanted WSCA to keep track of their success at competing in Minnetonka horse shows could only submit their points for evaluation if the rider belonged to a WSCA accepted member saddle club that would submit their points. Through the years, quite a large number of Minnetonka Horsemen riders were awarded WSCA trophies for being the best riders in the state in an event.

The Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. was a very active and influential member saddle club of the WSCA.

In 1994, the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. historian put together an album commemorating the 25th anniversary of the corporation indicating that it was formed in 1969. Archive records of the Minnesota Secretary of State show that a corporate certificate was issued for the Minnetonka Horsemen on October 9, 1969.

A newspaper article in the historian's 25th anniversary album states that at one time the corporation had more than 300 members. An annual family membership cost \$30.00. The article also said that the corporate organization had at some time conducted a census of horses and found 387 being kept within Minnetonka. There may have been a few more that were missed and some horses owned by Minnetonka Horsemen were boarded outside of the city.

By 2000, there were likely much fewer than 387 horses kept within the city. Many Minnetonka Horsemen riders had moved their horses to boarding facilities outside the city and more and more of them began competing as members of another saddle club. After removal of the Minnetonka Horse Ring in about 2003, there was little reason to continue the corporate existence. Once each year The Minnesota Secretary of State requires that corporations file a form indicating that they are continuing entities. After two years of no continuance filing the Secretary of State assumes that the corporation no longer exists and cancels the corporate certificate. The corporate certificate for the Minnetonka Horsemen was cancelled in 2008 indicating that the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. ceased all organized activity no later than sometime in 2006.

It was reported that the Minnetonka Park Board did not support the construction and maintenance of horse ring on City property. After intense lobbying by Major Stan Koch and Minnetonka Horsemen volunteers led by Mr. Fred Korger, at a March 1972 meeting, the Minnetonka City Council voted to give the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. land use and \$750 dollars for materials to construct a horse ring. The City also provided the electric service and bleachers for use by spectators.

During the summer and fall of 1972, Minnetonka Horsemen volunteers constructed a first class horse ring on property designated by the city located just south of Minnehaha Creek. The ring was larger than most, and included a sturdy fence, appropriate sand, an electronic timing system and a two story building with a public address system. The lower level of the building was used by volunteers to register entrants in show events and to pass out ribbons and trophies. Between competitions it was used to store the props needed for the competitive events such as the light weight plastic barrels. The upper floor was used by the event timer, the recorder and the public address announcer. The original building was replaced by volunteers of the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. with a larger structure constructed in 1984. The original building is shown in Figure 5, and the replacement building is shown in Figure 6. The ring was first used for a horse show in the spring of 1973.

The City provided some ring maintenance including providing the electrical energy used, watering the sand during the horse shows to keep down dust, mowing the grass around the ring and providing portable rest rooms.

Minnetonka Horsemen volunteers would walk the ring after they brought in replacement sand to remove rocks that might cause problems for the horses when they were competing (Figure 7). Volunteers periodically painted the fence (Figure 8), and they power raked the sand (Figure 9) before shows would begin. Other volunteers would remain after horse shows to pick up refuse left by competitors and spectators.

A food truck would come when horse shows were scheduled.

There was water for the horses to drink in the creek.

The construction and maintenance of the horse ring resulted in a facility that was as good as any anywhere and much better than most. The City of Minnetonka should be credited for the results of an outstanding joint effort with the horsemen whether required by any stipulation or not in the gift agreement between the City and Mr. Gasser.

Horse shows were scheduled for many Saturdays or Sundays from May to October. Most of the riders in the shows were from the City of Minnetonka and many of them would ride over to the ring on the mornings of show days and back home afterward at the end of the day's competitions.

There were 12 to 20 horse shows scheduled each year in the Minnetonka ring. Figure 10 shows that in 1992, there were 12 horse shows scheduled. Figure 11 shows a typical event line-up for a horse show. There were four age groups, age 10 and under, 11-13, 14-17, and 18 and over. Many riders in the 10 and under age group compete on ponies. Initially each entrant paid \$1.50 each event entered. That was later increased to \$2.00 and later to \$2.50.

Entry fees were used to pay for ribbons and trophies for event winners and for various expenses. Sometimes one of the tack stores or other businesses would contribute the cost of the ribbons and trophies.

There were riders from the City of Minnetonka and surrounding communities. Occasionally, there were riders from as far away as Montana, Idaho and Michigan. The distance competitors and some Minnetonka Horsemen had horse trailers that they simply parked for the weekend next to the ring. The riders would sleep in their trucks so as to be near their horses. A typical arrangement of horse trailers can be seen in the background of several figures included herein.

There are three types of events in a typical horse show – Western Pleasure, English Equestrian and Games. There are separate rules for the conduct of all three of these types of events. Some riders competed in one of these types of events and some competed in two or all three types. In games events, there is usually only one rider in the ring except for relay events. Most games events involved accurate timing.

Equestrian and Western Pleasure events are usually performed with all competitors in one age group in the ring at the same time.

Riders were required to wear a western style shirt and a western style hat for Western Pleasure events and English riding attire for Equestrian events or they would be disqualified.

As mentioned before in this history, all three types of the horse show event competitions were designed to favor riders that had the best control over their horses, not the riders with the fastest or otherwise better horses. One example of a game is the barrel race as shown in Figure 2. As shown, three barrels were arranged and the riders had to follow a defined course indicated by the line with arrows around the barrels. All distances were short so that the fastest horse only provided a small advantage. The point of this competition was to give that combination of horse and rider an advantage if they could get around the barrels in a tighter circle than other riders and therefore in less time (Figure 12).

Another competition involved all competing riders in the ring at the same time riding around next to the fence. The riders had to show an erect posture and show a high degree of control over the horse using only subtle movements. The public address announcer would tell them to change the gait of their horse. The judge would carefully evaluate the amount of movement needed by the rider to get the horse to respond as commanded. The horse and rider combination that required the least command movement by the rider to be understood and properly acted upon by the horse would win.

There were many other events at these horse shows including an obstacle course with a jump and three barrels to go around.

Judges were selected and invited to the horse shows by the show sponsor, often the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. The judges had long experience with horse show events and associated competitions. They were certified by the WSCA as having demonstrated their knowledge of horse show events and that they agreed they would evaluate riders based on WSCA rules. Judges would be in the ring during competitions so as to better observe the rider's performance.

Competitors were very serious about performing well. They wanted to win. That said, they, especially the large group from Minnetonka, would loudly cheer each other on. They would make suggestions to each other during practices. When competing, the horse rider always tried everything legal to win, however, just competing and being together was always far more important than winning.

There was a great deal of work involved in various activities related to the horse shows. Someone had to purchase and deliver the ribbons and trophies. Someone had to handle the checking account and perform the bookkeeping. Someone had to schedule all of the competitions for all age groups that were competing. Someone had to find and

schedule volunteers for all kinds of tasks during shows including handling the gate into the ring and queueing riders for entry into the ring. Someone had to handle the public address activities. Someone had to find and enlist judges for the shows. Someone had to handle and distribute advertising announcements of upcoming shows. Someone had to deal with all kinds of situations that happened during the show day such as a volunteer for an assigned task not showing up. At the end of the season someone had to make arrangements for the annual banquet including finding and scheduling a suitable venue, collecting money from attendees and paying all bills. All of these tasks were performed by volunteers with direction, control and coordination from the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. to schedule all tasks and perform work efficiently without duplication of effort. There were a significant group of reliable and hardworking volunteers that performed these services over many years. Many of them were officers and directors of the corporation. It is not possible to note any one or group of volunteers that contributed the most. Many of the significant volunteers are listed in the list of officers and directors of the corporation shown as Figure 14, however, it should be understood that there were many others that are not listed in this figure that will not receive the recognition that they deserve.

There was a historian included in the group of corporate officers. One or more volunteers served as historian and kept a separate, large volume of pictures and newspaper articles in one album for each year. This history would be far less complete if the information collected, organized and stored by the corporate historians was not available.

One of the corporate volunteers does stand out. An article in the November 14, 1979 *Sun Newspaper* says:

“Almost every kid in Minnetonka whose legs are long enough to reach a pair of stirrups knows Mr. Fred Korger – he is the one who promoted the riding ring near City Hall.”

And

“...he talked the cops into letting the horse club take responsibility for catching loose horses.”

Mr. Korger was the president of and a driving force for the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. for ten years. He resigned in 1979 when he and his horses moved to Vernal, Utah where there were many free riding opportunities that no longer existed in Minnetonka.

There is one other group that needs recognition, the parents of the young riders. For most young riders, parents had to provide the funds to keep, feed, shoe and provide veterinary services for the horses. Of more importance was the support for their children all day long for up to 20 Saturdays and Sundays each show season. The parents were there at shows with food and drink in coolers cheering their children on.

Sometimes a parent became an instant volunteer when some task related to the show needed to be taken care of. Parents got to know each other almost as well as their children knew each other.

It is hard to overstate the significance of the Minnetonka Horse Ring. Almost an entire generation of young riders had most of their riding experience competing in that ring as open areas for free riding within Minnetonka became almost none existent. Figure 18 shows a group of riders free riding in 1995 although they were riding in a Hennepin County Park Reserve. The ring spurred a new interest in riding in Minnetonka and it kept riding alive for years past the time when riding should have declined rapidly.

The Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. also gave back to the community. The proceeds from one horse show each season were contributed to Camp Courage. There were riders on a 24/7 basis available to the Minnetonka Police Department to assist in catching loose horses and to find their owners. Members gave free pony rides to young riders at City Hall during the city summer festival. Some members taught the girls in a Girl Scout troop the basics of riding.

The Minnesota State Fair sponsors horse show events every year during the fair. The WSCA also sponsors an annual horse show on the Minnesota State Fairgrounds every year about two weeks after the end of the state fair. Many Minnetonka Horsemen would compete in events at both shows. The state fair shows would be spread over a week or more so riders would rent a stall in which to house their horse. Some riders would decorate their stalls. An example of a stall decorated by a Minnetonka Horseman is shown in Figure 15.

Each year the Association would have a queen selection contest. The Association queen would then be entered into the WSCA queen contest.

END OF AN ERA

In later years, the activities at the Minnetonka Ring kept many Minnetonka Horsemen together and caused many horses to remain in the City. Peak activity at the ring probably occurred between 1973 and 1990. Few things in life are static however. Most things change and some things change rapidly. Changes came to Minnetonka that resulted in the demise of the Minnetonka Horsemen.

Ridgedale shopping Center and a great deal of other commercial and industrial development occurred. The area from Ridgedale down to West Hilloway Road was also fully developed shortly after Ridgedale opened so that the north end of Hilloway Park was the end of riding there. Sherwood Hills Road was constructed over the bridle path and the Hedberg Company began mining the area south of the Sherwood Hills development. The mine moved north so that the bridle trail no longer existed all the way from Cedar Lake Road to where it proceeded west from Sherwood Hills Road to

Byrnes Road. Sylvan Road was constructed over more than half of the bridle path between Big Willow and Hilloway Parks so that riders that wished to travel between those parks had to ride a good distance on a paved street with automobile traffic and houses on both sides of the street.

Barns were demolished and many hobby farms and larger lots where horses were kept at home were sold for development. In most cases, parents needed to sell their land for as high a price as possible as the funds from that sale was to be a major part of their retirement funds. Many of their children were at the stage of their life in which they simply could not match the prices that developers would pay. Land further out was less expensive so some riders moved out of Minnetonka to those areas, however, they would still compete at the Minnetonka Ring.

Hilloway Park was too small to be a roaming area destination for riders so that little riding was done north of Big Willow Park except by a few riders that still had horses at their homes in the Hilloway Park area.

The City of Minnetonka covered many of the bridle paths in both Big Willow and Hilloway Parks with improved walkways as part of the city's loop trail system. In the winter, some of these trails were left unplowed by the City. Cross country skiers began using the unplowed, improved trails and they had strong objections, made known to City officials, to sharing the trails with horses as they claimed that the horse hoof tracks impaired their ski tracks. The City encouraged riders to use alternative new trails, and they put up signs in Big Willow Park notifying riders of the separation between the Minnetonka Trails System trails and bridle trails. (See Figure 16).

Horse boarders stopped boarding horses and sold much of their land for development.

Prior to all of these changes, the primary interest in many of the riders was to get together and free ride and enjoy each others company. Most of the areas available for free riding had disappeared and riding between remaining available areas changed in a negative direction. It was natural for riders to begin losing interest in recreational riding. Many horses were sold or put out to some pasture if too old to sell.

In addition to free riding, there was always interest in the competitions at the City horse ring and that continued for many Minnetonka riders that had somewhere to keep their horse and get the horse to the competitions. Attendance at the ring competitions dropped off, however, as there were fewer horses in the city or at least owned by Minnetonka residents if kept outside the city. A majority of the participants at the competitions began to be from surrounding communities.

The agreement for the original gift of land may have had the stipulation that the City was to construct and maintain a horse ring on part of the land. Whether or not such a stipulation was included, the City did provide the land and did support construction and the City provided some of the required maintenance. A *Sun Newspaper* article in 2000 said that Karen Anderson, Minnetonka Mayor, and a former horse owner, approached

the Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. and said that City officials had noted the drop off of competitors at the ring and that many if not most were competitors from outside the City. She said that City officials noted that some other use for the horse ring land could benefit a much larger group of Minnetonka citizens than the ever smaller number of Minnetonka riders.

City officials claimed that they were unable to find a copy of the original land gift agreement with any stipulation wording, however, they believed that the City would not have accepted a stipulation that was open ended calling for perpetual maintenance of the ring forever. There were many in the horse community that wanted the horse ring kept, however, they could not provide a copy of the original agreement either. As a result, City officials decided that there were other uses for the land occupied by the ring that would be useful to a greater number of Minnetonka residents and so the ring was removed and replaced by a soccer field in about 2003.

With loss of the ring, interest in riding inside Minnetonka fell off rapidly. More and more riders either gave up riding or moved their horses to locations outside the City. There was no part of the original critical mass of the combination of both numbers of riders and large tracts of open land remaining.

The Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. was apparently no longer functioning in 2006.

In 2010, it was reported that there were only four riding horses still kept all in one location the City of Minnetonka.

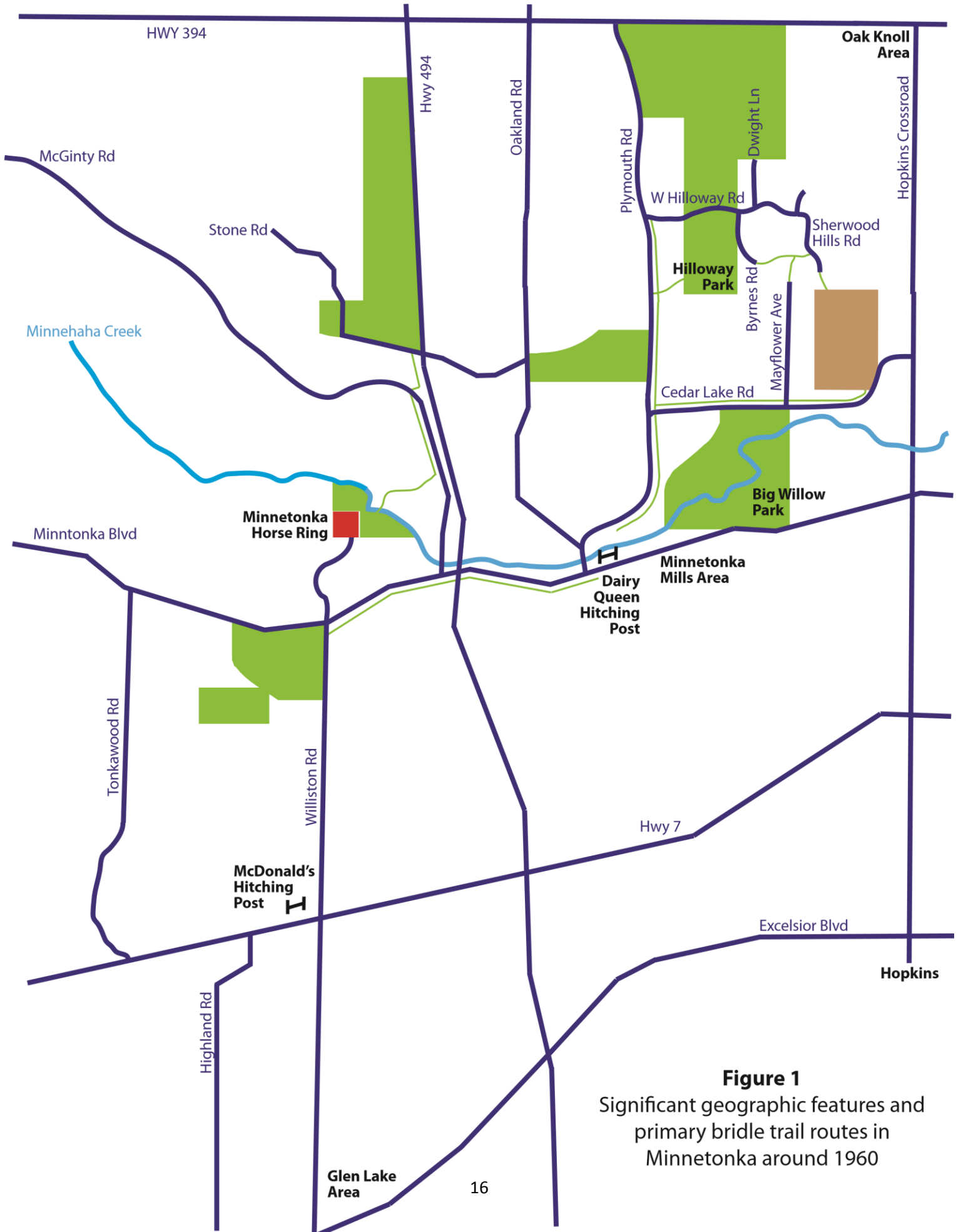


Figure 1
 Significant geographic features and
 primary bridle trail routes in
 Minnetonka around 1960

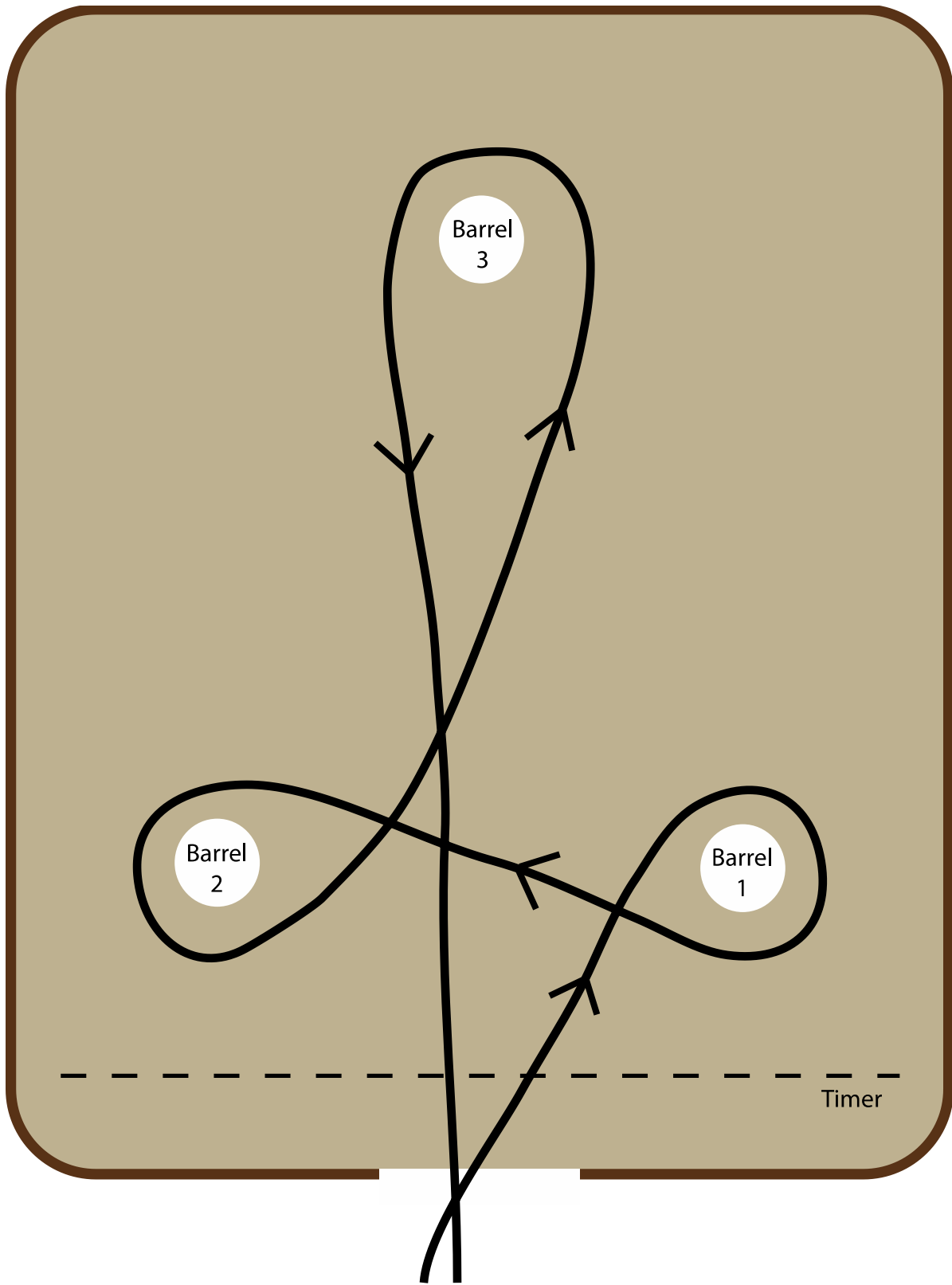


Figure 2 – Layout of a typical horse ring, and arrangement and route for a typical barrel race event at a horse show.



Figure 3 – The hitching post for horses in back of the Dairy Queen in Minnetonka Mills as it appeared in 2015. Note that by 2015, the area around the post was overgrown by trees and brush. This area was kept open through use by horses when bridle trail riding was still available into the middle to late 1970s.

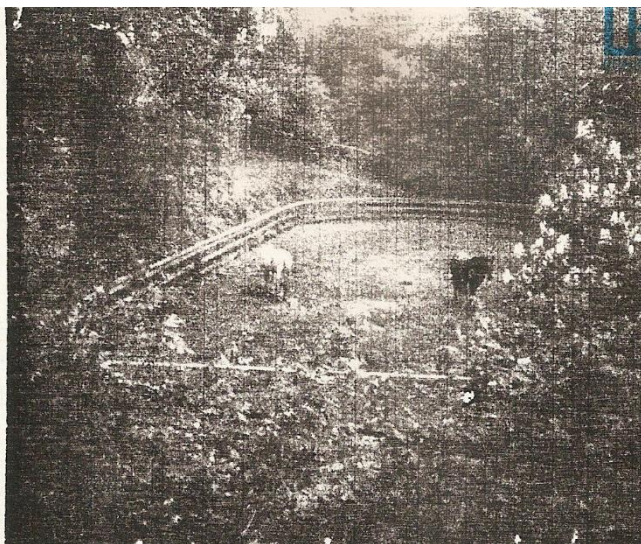


Figure 4 – A private horse ring on a hobby farm in Minnetonka in 1981.



Figure 5 – Original building at the Minnetonka Horse Ring. The lower level of the building was used to register participants in horse show events, to hand out ribbons and trophies at the end of an event, and to store props needed for various show events.



Figure 6 – Larger replacement horse ring building constructed by Minnetonka Horsemen volunteers in 1984.



Figure 7 – Volunteer picking up rocks from the ring in 1992.



Figure 8 – Volunteer repainting the ring fence in 1992.



Figure 9 – Power raking the horse ring sand before a show in 1992. The person standing on the rake device is ballast to keep the rake from jumping as it was pulled.

* * * * * 1992 MINNETONKA HORSEMEN SHOW SCHEDULE * * * * *

DATE	SHOW	JUDGE
SUNDAY MAY 3	MINNETONKA HORSEMEN FUN SHOW	DALE PALMATTER
SUNDAY MAY 17	WSCA OPEN SHOW	BENNY VAN CLEVE
SUNDAY MAY 31	WSCA OPEN SHOW	VAL VETOS
SUNDAY JUNE 7	WSCA OPEN SHOW	LE ROY PUMPER
SATURDAY JUNE 27	WSCA SUMMERFEST OPEN SHOW	DOUG JENSEN
SUNDAY JUNE 28	4-H WSCA OPEN SHOW	
SUNDAY JULY 12	ALL-GAME SHOW	GLEN LEIGHTON
SUNDAY JULY 26	WSCA OPEN SHOW	KEN JOHNSON
SUNDAY AUG. 2	WSCA OPEN SHOW	PHIL CALLAHAN
SUNDAY AUG. 16	WSCA OPEN SHOW (benefit show)	DUANE CHINANDER
SUNDAY SEPT. 13	WSCA OPEN SHOW	DICK OCHS
SUNDAY OCT. 4	WSCA FALL TROPHY SHOW	BENNY VAN CLEVE

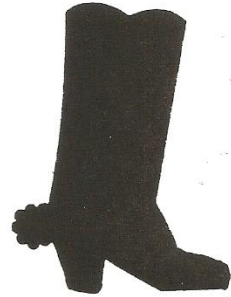
Figure 10 – Horse show schedule for 1992.

\$ SHOW

MINNETONKA HORSEMEN
 W.S.C.A. OPEN HORSE SHOW
 DATE: Sunday, September 16, 1990
 TIME: 9:00 a.m. - Minnetonka Ring
 JUDGE: Doug Jensen

\$ SHOW

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1] Showmanship at Halter (17 & under) | 18] Egg & Spoon |
| 2] Showmanship at Halter (18 & over) | 19] Pee Wee Pole Weaving* |
| 3] Open Halter | 20] Jr. Pole Weaving |
| 4] Lead Line (6 yrs. & under) | 21] Int. Pole Weaving |
| 5] Western Bareback Horsemanship | 22] Sr. Pole Weaving |
| 6] Pee Wee Pleasure (10 & under)* | 23] OPEN Key Race |
| 7] Jr. Western Pleasure | 24] Pee Wee Barrels* |
| 8] Int. Western Pleasure | 25] Jr. Barrels |
| 9] Sr. Western Pleasure | 26] Int. Barrels |
| 10] Pee Wee Horsemanship * | 27] Sr. Barrels |
| 11] Jr. Western Horsemanship | 28] Jr. Jumping Figure 8 |
| 12] Int. Western Horsemanship | 29] Int. Jumping Figure 8 |
| 13] Sr. Western Horsemanship | 30] Sr. Jumping Figure 8 |
| 14] English Pleasure (17 & under) | 31] OPEN 1-Barrel Pennant |
| 15] English Pleasure (18 & over) | 32] OPEN Ribbon Race |
| 16] Eng. Equit. (17 & under) | 33] OPEN Rescue Race |
| 17] Eng. Equit. (18 & over) | ** Game Trophies Awarded ** |
- ** Performance Trophies Awarded ** Electric timer - Digital Read-out
- Lunch Break -Queen's Ride to follow Lunch wagon & water on grounds



ENTRY FEE: \$2.50 -- \$5 double class -- \$1 office charge per rider

- ** 7 Hi-Point Trophies **
- 3 Pleasure Hi-Points
 - 3 Game Hi-Points
 - 1 Pee Wee Hi Point

1st - \$4
2nd - \$3
3rd - \$2
4th - \$1
5th - \$1
6th - \$1

AGE GROUPS: Pee Wee (10 & under)
 Jr. (13 & under)
 Int. (14 - 17)
 Sr. (18 & over)

*Pee Wee's cannot go in Lead Line or double enter PW & Jr. Classes

POINTS BASED ON HORSE & RIDER COMBINATION

INFORMATION CALL: 612-542-9408 or 476-4870

ENTRY BOOTH: 612-936-0449

Minnetonka Municipal Ring: in the Civic Center corner of Williston Road and Mtka. Blvd. (Co. Rd. 5.) -- Go through the Ice Arena parking lot

SHOW COMMITTEE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO COMBINE CLASSES

Figure 11 – Typical events scheduled for a horse show.



Figure 12 – Rider rounding a barrel in a barrel race event at a horse show.



Figure 13 – Finalist event entrants lined up center ring awaiting the judge's decisions summer 1989.

MINNETONKA HORSEMEN ASSOCIATION INC.,

1978 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Fred Korger
5504 Mayview Road
Minnetonka MN 55343
612/938-7090

VICE PRESIDENT

Seymour Glatzer
15074 Highland Trail
Minnetonka MN 55343
612/938-6501

SECRETARY

Lois Downs
2245 Winsdor Lake Dr.
Minnetonka MN 55343
612/545-5509

TREASURER

Patricia Nelson
2615 Mayflower Ave.
Minnetonka MN 55343
612/544-1138

HISTORIAN

Sheralyn Murman
14629 Lake Street Ext.
Minnetonka MN 55343
612/938-8951

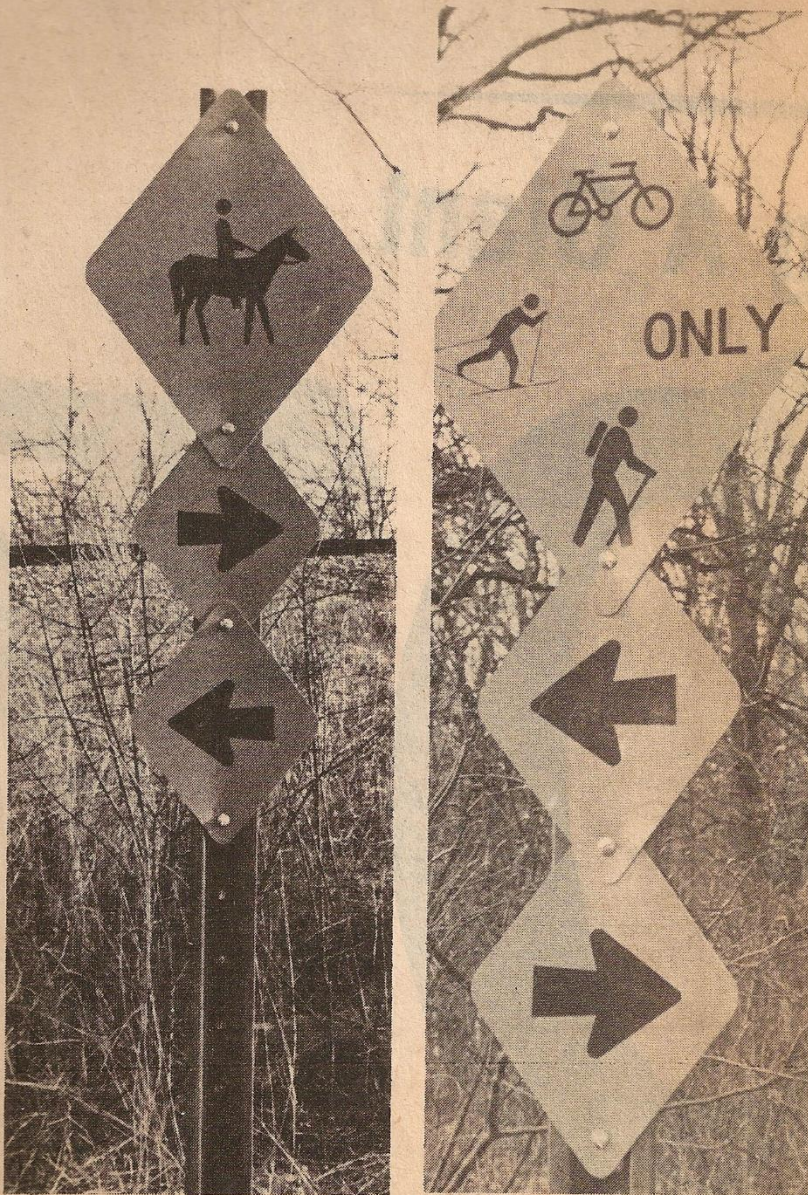
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carol Bensman	938
Robert Fillmore	938
Jeanne Granberg	473
Doreen Master	546
Hal D. Mathieu	938
Diane Meyers	544
Gerald Reents	544
Roberta Seefeldt	933
Diane Torrey	473

Figure 14 – List of Minnetonka Horsemen Association, Inc. officers, directors and committee personnel in 1978.



Figure 15 – Minnetonka horsemen’s stall decorations at a 1992 horse show on the state fairgrounds in mid-September, 1992.



SUN PHOTOS By ALYS BROCKWAY

FOR HORSES - that can't read bright orange and black signs are scattered throughout Big Willow Park. In the picture of the sign at left will the horse know he can go both ways? At right the same kind of logogram is designed for people who can ski, bike or backpack either way. A new set of rules for Park use are posted at the entrance of the parking area on Minnetonka Blvd.

Figure 16 – Signs installed by the City of Minnetonka directing horse riders to use new bridle path routes in Big Willow Park.



Figure 17 – Horsemen and their horses playing in Minnehaha Creek in 1991.



Figure 18 – Horsemen and their horses free riding in an open area in 1995. This group of riders was in a Hennepin County Park Reserve.