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Events



Twelfth Night Ball

When: January 5, 2007

Where: The Klub Haus

1079 Rice Street, St. Paul

Join us for our Annual Twelfth Night ball. Dancing and a full Victorian Dinner. Tickets will be available at the door or email info@northstarvsa.com your intentions.

Board Meeting:

When: Wednesday January 16th 7:30 pm

Where: Ms. Lundberg's residence

LHS Dance Practice

When: January 18th at 7:00 p.m.

Where: Triune Masonic Lodge

1898 Iglehart Ave.

St. Paul, MN

Cost: \$5.00 at the door

VSA members are welcome at the Living History Society of MN dance practices. Dances taught may include: the standard six step waltz, mazurka, polka, and the quadrille.

English Country Dance

Want to learn more about the country dances that we do at our balls?

Come join the fun at Tapestry Folk Dance center

When: Sunday Nights: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Where: Tapestry Folk Dance Center

3748 Minnehaha Ave.

Minneapolis, MN

Cost: \$5.00 per session \$6.00 per person on the First Sunday of the month.*

*First Sundays feature live music and start at 6:00 pm. All dances are taught, it's lively and fun! After a few sessions when our caller at the ball says "Cast Down!" you will know what he means! For information contact Mary Brown by e-mail (mebbieb10@cs.com)

This Month in History

January 1888

By Deborah Lundberg

On January 3, 1888 Marvin C. Stone patented the first wax drinking straw. In creating the new and improved drinking straw, Stone invented a process that has created items we currently use everyday.

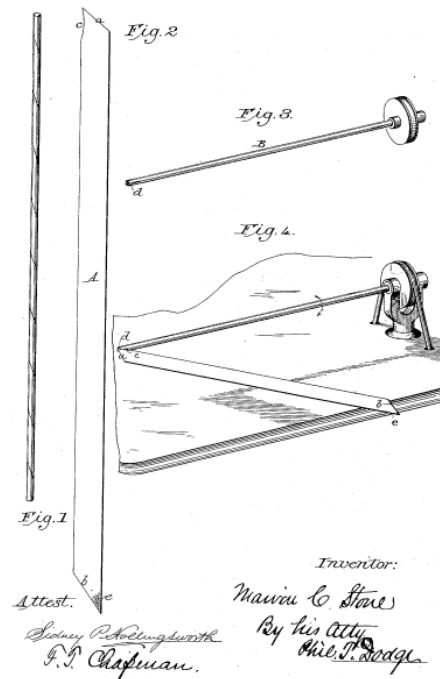
Traditionally straws were made out of hollow stems of different types of grasses or reeds, literally made out of "straw." Unfortunately natural straws were unsanitary, fragile and not always easy to come by. In the late 1880s, the paper drinking straw was patented in England, but that too had issues. It was a simple paper tube which was fragile and softened quickly in liquids.

Marvin C. Stone, of Washington DC, was a manufacturer of paper cigarette holders at Stone Industrial and he very much liked to sip his Mint Juleps. So Stone used his knowledge from his manufacturing company to invent a new and improved version of a straw. He made a tube out of sturdy manila paper by hand rolling it around a pencil, securing it with an adhesive and then coating it with paraffin wax. This rendered the straw water-proof and adapted it for use in the human mouth with out injury. One can only imagine the horrific paper cut wounds he saved hundreds of thousands of people from over the years.

According to the patent, Stone's new straw was superior to natural straws, "Having the advantages of greater strength and freedom from liability to crack or split." Yet Stone took pains to assure that his invention would still closely resemble the natural straws it was replacing thus making it more comfortable for people to change.

By Stones own words "The aim of my invention is to provide a cheap, durable, and

unobjectionable substitute for the natural straws commonly used for the administration of medicines, beverages & etc."



You can see one of Stone's straws at the left, and his spindle for hand-coiling the straws at the right

Initially Stone's straws were made by hand out of paper coiled and wound into a tube. Stone decided that the ideal straw was 8 1/2 inches long with a diameter just wide enough to prevent things like lemon seeds from being lodged in the tube. The straws were thin by today's standards thus it became popular for people to use 2 straw when drinking to reduce the effort needed to take each sip.

The simple drinking straw added an aura of mystery and excitement to the early soda fountain experience. Also the development of the straw jar was directly linked to the increased use and improvements to the drinking straw.

By 1890, Stone's factory was producing more straws than cigarette holders. In 1906, the first machine to wind straws was invented by the Stone's "Stone Straw Corporation", ending the hand-winding process. This machine was not only necessary to keep up with the growing demand for straws but also the demand for new applications of spiral-wound tubing.



In 1928, electrical engineers began to use spiral-wound tubes in the first mass produced radios. Spiral-wound tubing is now found everywhere - in electric motors, electrical apparatus, electronic devices, electronic components, aerospace, textile, automotive, fuses, batteries, transformers, pyrotechnics, medical packaging, product protection, and packaging applications including cardboard packaging tubes. All made by the same process invented by Stone.



Fashion plate 1888* from *Peterson's Magazine*

Letter from the Editor:

Dear VSA Northstar Chapter Members,

I have been a Director for the VSA Northstar Chapter for nearly two years now and the Editor of the Northstar Chapter Newsletter for about 14 months. It has been a very interesting time. There have been fun times and hard times. One of the struggles the board has faced is how to keep our Chapter alive when faced with a world that is stretched thin. The reality in today's age is that more is expected of us in our daily lives which place's items such as volunteering low on the to-do list.

I have also struggled with this. There were times I have had to back away from events and other times I have been involved with helping out. The one thing I could do consistently was put together these Newsletters.

In taking over as editor I wanted to do 2 things. The first was to create a venue for historical learning. It is one of the things I love and having a BA in History means that I can branch out from the normal "history" stuff and do some research into odd little items. I hope you have enjoyed reading these articles as much as I have in researching and writing them.

The second thing I wanted to do was create a communication tool so everyone had the same information on a monthly basis of what we, as the Victorian Society are doing. At the beginning of each Newsletter I have listed the events that the board has dreamed up for each of you to enjoy.

I feel that I am continuing to grow and am using this time as an opportunity to learn. My writing has improved and I have gained friends in the process. To be perfectly honest, dancing at the balls is fun but the best part of the Victorian Society is in the knowledge that I have gained.

In March is our next membership meeting where we will need to elect the following board positions: President, Secretary and 3 Directors.

What we need are people willing to commit to monthly meetings, who are willing to branch out of their comfort zone to try new and different things or who can bring experience and wisdom to our Victorian Society.

In reflecting over the last year I decided to write this letter to encourage each of you to think about joining the board. Take some time to branch out from your current life and do something that will not only improve the way you look at life but will help keep our Northstar Chapter alive.

And to be perfectly frank our Victorian Society only exists because of its members. We are and have been for a while, struggling to keep the Northstar Chapter alive. This year is no different. We had a very bad turnout for the membership meeting in 2007. If we have the same turnout in 2008, we may very well have to dissolve. So please, from the bottom of my heart. Talk to old members who have left for some reason or another and encourage them to join. Talk to potential new members who could bring new life to our chapter so that we can keep on moving forward in a positive direction and change with the flow of the future. Then we can truly enjoy the past!

Best Regards,
Deborah Lundberg
Northstar VSA Director
Northstar Newsletter Editor



Victorian wedding dress from "Peterson's Magazine" in 1888.



1888 Victorian Family
(Photo by Otto Herschan/Getty Images)

Notable Quotes

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." - *Western Union internal memo, 1876*

"Everything that can be invented has been invented." - *Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, Office of Patents 1888.*

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." - *Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895*

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" - *H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927*

"Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau." - *Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, 1929*