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Otter Tail County

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fertile 13th township**



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United Way of Otter Tail & Wadena Counties



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OTC
Otter Tail County

Spring 2024

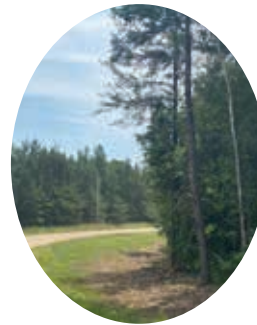
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Otter Tail County
Magazine

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Otter Tales



The winter that never was. I am aware of both sides of the fence. Some will say this is the best winter ever and just as many will say it was terrible not to have the snow and cold. Great if you don't go south to escape a normal winter but not great if you own snowmobiles, skis or ice houses. If you are a recent transplant to the state, you really could call us out on all the stories about our tough winters. They think we are just making it all up to keep our image of tough people who wear snowshoes and puffy coats for five months, but true Minnesotans know this winter was not the norm, and rest assured — payback is coming.

As you can see, the big hairy beast that lives with me really enjoys a good fire in the wood stove like me. The lake water calls for a few swims soon, so he really needs to lose his coat of armor. Getting a hair cut is not his favorite thing, but he definitely runs faster without a puffy coat ... and snowshoes.

This spring issue of **OTC** will not disappoint. Our history piece on Erhard is the template of what all towns in Otter Tail County are made of...true grit and willingness to endure hardships to start a new life in America. I wish that spirit was contagious in these troubled times — we might not have the division we seem to have now.

Next up is a trip to Panama that you can take in from your lazy boy ... might have felt a little better if it was still minus 20, but always a great escape. Of course, no issue is complete without a special recipe to try and with fishing opener just around the corner, it features, you guessed it, Walleye.

We also have some very timely information on surviving Allergy season and what to watch for in our yards with the effects of the mild winter.

Spring brings all the chores of yard cleanup, docks, boats, getting the deck furniture out but don't forget to take the nice sunny walks in the fresh air ... can't wait!

— Ed Pawlenty, **OTC** Publisher

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Erhard

“planted” in Otter Tail County's fertile 13th township

STORY BY BECKY TIGHE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SANDY BRUMMER, ARLINDA TOLLEFSON, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/PUBLIC DOMAIN, ROJEAN THORSON, ANNETTE WESTBY, OTTER TAIL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND BECKY TIGHE

Hunger for land brings settlers to Erhards Grove

The years 1860-1862 brought conflict between white settlers and Ojibway people. Historian John W. Mason (p. 110) commented: "Otter Tail County's first (1860) ... U.S. census credited the county with a population of 240 (grouped largely around Otter Tail City and Waseata/"Dayton Hollow"). But, he noted: "History fails to record what became of the inhabitants listed in 1860, but (certainly almost all) of them disappeared in the fall of 1862. (From about) 1862-1866 ... the county was nearly depopulated of white residents." With the Civil War's end, President Lincoln's Homestead Act of May 20, 1862 offering free land effective January 1, 1863, and a railroad planned, Otter Tail County settlement resumed.



John W. Mason

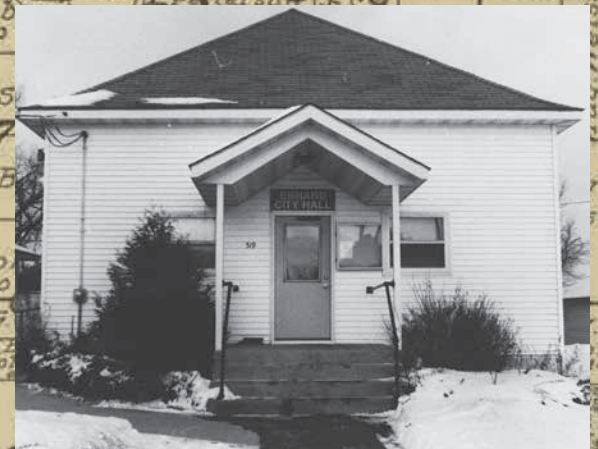
Oddly, Mason's mentions of a "village of Erhard" (section 28, township 13, range 43) "platted by L.R. Lothrop for Sven and Elisabeth Syverson and recorded in the office of deeds July 25, 1882" seems to contradict the assertion that Erhard was platted by Alexander E. Erhard. History confirms it was named for him.

"The petition for the organization ... was dated July 2, 1870. ... Of sixteen names attached, ... (almost) every one ... (was) Scandinavian and nearly impossible to decipher," (complained historian Mason). "The only names which (he could read were): C.A. Evans, C.D. Reck, Petre Daves, Wiljam Daves, Cristofson Anderson, Ole Olson, Alexander E. Erhard and Petter Knobel. The first election was held at the house of A.E. Erhard." (Scandinavian names clearly frustrated the historian.)



Abraham Lincoln

Fertile and well-watered, the township is bounded on the north by the Pelican River, on the west by Trondhjem, on the south by Elizabeth and on the east, by Maplewood. There were 32 small lakes but after some years, Mason noted, few remained. Sandberg lake was largest, Lake Knobel second largest, and 32 minor lakes. The Pelican River furnished "excellent drainage" for farmland.



Historic District #278 schoolhouse, later moved to Erhard and labeled "town hall"
Photo courtesy of OTCHS

1912 Erhards Grove Township plat map (Public Domain)



Pioneer Halvor Taraldson Bagstevold donated land for a church and cemetery. He was born Oct. 26, 1825, in Sandsvaer, Norway and

died Oct. 22, 1875. Although he didn't live to see the church completed, his grave was the first in the cemetery.

The first Bagstevold Lutheran Congregation church (right) was built in 1875, and burned down on July 27, 1903.

The congregation immediately voted to rebuild. The second church building (middle right), was moved to Erhard in 1928 to one-acre site donated by Christina Lee. Rev. Ovri served as pastor 1889-1929.

In 1962, the name was changed to Grace Lutheran Church.

In 2005, the congregation moved to a new facility just north of the old church building (bottom right).

Grace Lutheran has a long tradition of service in Erhard and in the surrounding communities.



above: Sunday School children



right: 1942 Bagstevold Ladies Aid & Officers front row l-r: Mrs. Axness, Mrs. Wissbrod, Mrs. Herb Weiss, Mrs. G.B. Gunderson, Mrs. Alma Grina, Mrs. A.O. Solum, Helen Nelson, Mrs. Estrem

The language barrier

Mason's comical frustration with Scandinavian names affected the way he recorded them. In his history of Otter Tail County, Bagstevold Lutheran Congregation of Erhard became the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, which met at "Boxtwold." Its newly appointed trustees' names took on new forms: Per Maugen became "Peter Haugen;" Sven Sebbe, "Sven Sabbe;" and Andreas Nilson Skalstad, "Andrew Nelson." Minor errors, but amusing. (page 403)



Great Northern Railway steam locomotive, shown here at a neighboring depot

Railroads, roads and a bridge

The Great Northern Railway was built 1881-82, providing local farmers an "outlet" to Fergus Falls, the "county seat of justice." Erhard was the only station in Erhard township. The 1916 township officers were: supervisor: Edward Bruestle; chairmen, Nils Skalstad and John Kowalski; clerk, P.M. Knoll; treasurer, A.O. Solum; assessor, Christ Kittelson; justice, J.S. Sammons; constable, M.E. Lee.

Money for the Pelican River bridge (1897) was included in the "first significant appropriation" from the state to Otter Tail County. The funds for "concentrated work" on several roads made them "the best in the county." (Mason 278, 280)

Early Erhard history & businesses

by Dalyce Gilbertson Leabo

The first settler to arrive in Erhard was Alexander Erhard in May of 1869. He named the town. Conrad Bruestle arrived next and the German Sha family in 1869. German Sha helped organize the first school district in Otter Tail County, District 17, one mile east of Erhard. Alexander E. Erhard signed the petitions to form both Elizabeth and Erhards Grove Townships in 1870. Erhards Grove township petition was signed July 2, 1870, and organized September 24, 1870. The branch of Northern Pacific Railway was built through the township in 1881 & 1882. The first train operated through Erhard in 1882 and ran from Fergus Falls to Pelican Rapids.

In 1897 Knute Thompson had a hardware store in Erhard. In 1904, Ed Sha, son of German Sha, worked at the elevator company. Horses were used to elevate the grain to the top bins. There were stalls for the horses in the elevator. About 1903, a Fairbanks Morse gasoline engine was installed to replace the horses. The first bank became a reality in 1913. Ed Thompson was chosen as cashier.

The Erhard Band was organized in 1909. Senior band master was Even E. Granrud. There were 23 members (all men).

The band was active about 22 years. A baseball team was formed, called Pioneer. The baseball diamond was usually in pastures of two farmers in those days. Uniforms were unheard of. Tallies were written in pencil.

There was a Vernon Tweet garage with an auto mechanic named Carl Swanson. Magnus Pederson ran the Blacksmith shop. Erickson Helleckson Hardware & Lumber was run by Erwin and Ida Gilbertson. Telephone service came in the early 1900s; rural free mail delivery started August 1, 1905. There were Jager's grocery store, three general stores, three garages and gas stations, Polly's Cafe, the post office and a grain elevator.



E.W. Leeper Store northeast of Erhard



*above: Erhard elevators and depot (far right),
Erhard sawmill wood yard (foreground)
below: Erhard village viewed from sawmill, circa 1908*



John Vaglo, Pelican Rapids, and German Sha, Christ Anderson and J.S. Sammons, all of Erhards Grove, were on the 1910 township board. Ernie Zimmerman had a repair shop/gas station in 1943. Electricity and telephones were present in the 1940s. Olaf Gilbertson managed the Erhard elevator in the 60s; Bill Teberg was assistant manager. Alpha Sha was telephone operator in the 50s. The 1950 population was over 100. Herb Weiss managed the creamery. Albert Solum was depot agent. [German Sha was Dalyce (Gilbertson) Leabo's great-grandfather. Ed Sha was her grandfather. Olaf Gilbertson was her father.]



Peterson's Creamery



Students at District #17 in 1943

Back row l-r: Llewellyn Bengtson, Marie Norgren, Helen Beckman, Selma Johnson, Lorraine Norgren, Eugene Baglein, Leonard Sundblad, Ervin Wahl, Floyd Haarstick
 Next row l-r: Colleen Wahl, Betty Hanson, Lillian Beckman, Donald Sundblad, Ray Sundblad, Norris Gilbertson, Delores Bengtson, Bobby Gilbertson, Irene Sundblad, Valdine Weiss, Marilyn Jorgenson, Orville Beckman, Kenneth Beckman, Melvin Bengtson, Wallace Jorgenson



Samuelson's Service Station, circa 1940s-1950s



Erhard Depot, 1983



Wally Worden, catcher, and Orville Nettetstad, pitcher

Orville was a talented pitcher. He played ball in Erhard and Grand Forks, then was called up to a professional team. Unfortunately, he broke his wrist while home from spring training, thus ending his career.



Al Solum and his "Whiz Kids" 1933-1934
 back, l-r: Bee Herthel, Milton Thompson, Emery Zimmerman, Albert Solum (manager), Carl Sundblad, Orville Nettetstad, Chester Nettetstad, John Moen.
 front, l-r: George Thompson, Lester Thompson, Wally Worden, Harley Worden, Russell Scheer, Larry Wandersee



Hannah Kempfer, 1923



Hannah (right) and brother John, circa 1884



Hannah Kempfer (far right), teacher at District #187

Hannah Kempfer: teacher, legislator

Miracle one: spared from death. On December 22, 1880, aboard an English ship, an unmarried woman, abandoned by the father, planned to throw her baby into the ocean. Too sick to walk, she asks another woman to do it. "To her I owe my life," wrote Hannah, the baby in question.

Miracle two: Pastor Oftedale held church services aboard ships docked in Stavanger, Norway, and offered to keep Hannah at a children's home he ran. Instead, her mother gives her up for adoption.

Miracle three: Adopted! Pastor Oftedale visited Ole and Martha Jenson, a local couple whose baby girl just died. The couple decided to adopt her, and she became Johannah Josephine Jenson ('God has added grace').

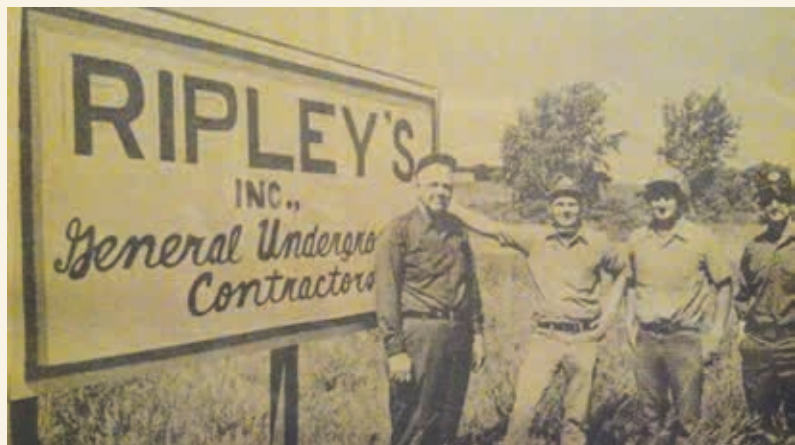
Lured by free land in 1885, the Jensons emigrated to Minnesota, but found that homestead land was all taken. They "squatted" on land by the railroad in Erhard, where they live in poverty. At age 12, Hannah was sent to Fergus Falls to find work to support her family, who were unable to adapt to pioneer life. Studying, or working whenever school is out, Hannah survived, became a respected teacher in Friberg Township (1898-1908), and married Charles Kempfer in 1903. They never had children of their own, but fostered 11 orphans.

In 1923, she was one of the first four women to be elected to the Minnesota Legislature, and the first from a rural district. She served nine terms in the Minnesota House, and was the first woman to serve as the honorary Speaker of the House of Representatives (appointed on January 28, 1925.) As a legislator, she championed the rights of children and fought for the conservation of natural resources.

[Many of the details in the above story were taken from a book, *Hannah Kempfer: An Immigrant Girl* by Linda Frances Lein, published by Annika Publications, Fergus Falls, MN: ISBN: 0-9670516-6-5. Though out of print, it can be requested from a library.]

After 55 years, Ripley's does business in 6 states

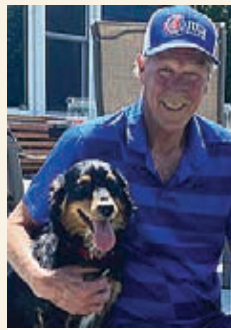
Not having spent time in Erhard Township, I was clueless about Ripley's. The company seemed important to everyone, so I called. In moments, a friendly voice came on the line. Mr. David Ripley told me that he and his dad, Gerald Ripley Sr., co-founded the company in 1969. Their specialty is fiber-optic cable, and they do business in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin. Still a family business headquartered on 5 acres just north of Erhard, Ripley's Inc. now employs 100 people, including four generations of family. In our brief chat, we agreed on two points: the scenery is stunning and farm folk make great employees. To quote Mr. Ripley, "when you hire a farmer, you know he knows how to work!"



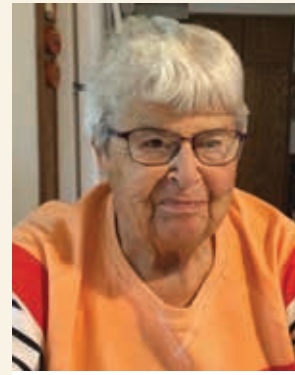
Ripley's 1979 l-r: Gerald Sr., David, Craig and John Ripley

ERHARD: next-door heroes & good neighbors

- Hannah Kempfer, a respected teacher who brought honor to Erhard (1880-1943)
- Sheila Ouren, a telephone operator who ran a home switchboard 88 hrs a week for 2 years
- Helen Ripley, a home canner named to the Sure-Jell Hall of Fame in 2000
- Vernon Haarstick, a mail carrier who wore out 23 cars in 35 years delivering mail
- Gary Stadum, a man who accepted being elected mayor when he wasn't running for the position!
- Wallace Grunewald, a cattle hauler, wood cutter, and mayor (1986-1994 & 1998-2006)
- Adrian Westergard, a championship speller, paratrooper, and Lake Region Electric employee
- Llewellyn Bengtson, Erhard baseball player, Korean War vet, and plumber by trade
- Ida Lemberger, a catcher of frogs, sending some into orbit for NASA's Gemini 8 research study
- Ripley's Inc. a homegrown family business that employs 100 people
- Minnesota Warehouse Furniture, a store that draws "fans" of Amish furniture to town



Gary Stadum,
mayor of Erhard
since 2020



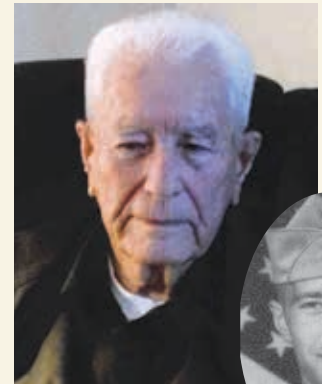
Sheila Ouren



Helen Ripley



Ida Lemberger



Llewellyn "Lew"
Bengtson



Wallace "Wally"
Grunewald



Adrian Westergard



Vernon Haarstick



Wally Grunewald cut down this tree on the Ron Ouren farm that took three men with arms outstretched to reach around it



Ripley's Inc.



George Thompson, relief mail carrier, created a truck "snowmobile" with skis in front and tracks in the back.



above: Erhard lakes
top right: bike and hiking trails
right: vibrant autumn scenes



Beauty meets recreation

- Drive the rolling hills on 59 from Erhard to Elizabeth. Always scenic, they're stunning in fall colors. Other natural beauties include the Pelican River, Leaf Mountain Hills, Maplewood State Park and Heart of the Lakes trail.
- Recreation: Erhard city park includes softball fields, playground, picnic shelter gazebo, and garden. Pickle ball will be ready for summer!
- Visit the Veteran's Memorial to meditate and pay your respects.
- At Grace Lutheran Church there's Adam's Garden to enjoy.



left: Erhard Veterans Memorial

below: Veterans Memorial Committee



Erhard

Mayor: Gary Stadum

Population: 148

Location: 46° 29' 01" N
96° 05' 47" W

Elevation: 1,286 feet

Area: .57 sq. mi.

Land: .55 sq. mi.

Water: .01 sq. mi.



l-r: Adam's Garden, skating rink, and community park



Annual 4th of July celebration & parade!



Christmas events, old and new



Special thanks to Sandy Brummer for generously sharing so much historical information and locating interesting vintage photos



Becky Tighe, formerly of Battle Lake, lives in Hawley, MN, near her "middle" son, daughter-in-law, and their four tall sons. Affectionate greetings to Battle Lake friends and former neighbors.



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We Welcome You to Enjoy Our Art!

New walking tour on Fergus Falls campus of M State tells the forgotten stories of artists and their creations

STORY BY JACKI MAETHNER

PHOTOS BY TYSDAL PHOTOGRAPHY

More than 400 pieces of art are displayed at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls, but until now there was a danger that the stories of these works and the artists who created them would be lost.

Thanks to a grant from the Lake Region Arts Council, Fergus Area College Foundation has created a "tour" of 28 of the most-recognized pieces of campus art – "In Every Season" is a tour that can be taken on a walk about campus or virtually, making the collection accessible to art lovers everywhere.

"Students and visitors to our campus see our amazing collection of art every day, but until now much of the history of the college's permanent collection has been a mystery," said Jacki Maethner, FACF's interim executive director. "With the new campus art tour and website, we are preserving those stories for everyone to enjoy."

Research for the tour unearthed forgotten history: A large Charles Beck mural now in the campus library was nearly repurposed as a fish house; Spartan roamed from his original perch on campus; and a local businessman's study in Mexico inspired statues displayed on campus.

M State's art collection includes works of art in every medium. The inspiration for the collection dates back to the 1960s, when Beck began teaching art at what was then Fergus Falls Community College. Beck began the permanent collection by adding student work and purchasing the work of regional artists exhibited at the college. When he retired in 1987, long-time English faculty member Warren Olsen assumed the role of art collection curator, expanding the collection with commissioned works and public funding, along with gifts through FACF.

The collection is currently curated by Lori Charest, a member of the M State Fine Arts faculty, and includes nearly 180 pieces by Beck, making it the largest regional collection of Beck's work.

Through the new walking tour, visitors to the campus will be able to scan a QR code adjacent to featured art to read about each piece's history and its creator. Art lovers everywhere can access the info at:

<https://ineveryseason.facfmstate.org/>

This self-guided art tour is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through grants from Lake Region Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund.



Mystic Trumpeter by artist Kirk Williams

Collaborative Mosaic by student artists



Wall Carving by artist Charles Beck

For more information about the project, contact Jacki Maethner at Fergus Area College Foundation: Jacki.maethner@minnesota.edu or 218-736-1509



Jacki Maethner is Interim Executive Director of the Fergus Area College Foundation. After 20+ years in the financial industry, she decided her volunteer duties were the most rewarding and thus transitioned to working in the non-profit world. She is passionate about raising funds to enhance and encourage students to seek higher education.





The Lakeside Gourmet

BY SANDRA THIMGAN
PHOTO BY DAN THIMGAN

Minnesota means fishing...and preparing those trophies of the sky blue waters!

Walleye Cakes with Remoulade Sauce

1-pound skinless walleye (or any whitefish), roughly chopped
½ cup panko bread crumbs
2 T. minced fresh parsley
2 T. green onions, minced
4 eggs
1 tsp. dry mustard
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 T. fresh lemon juice
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
½ tsp. kosher salt
Additional 1 cup panko for shaping

Chilling is very important so the delicate cakes don't fall apart. The eggs will tighten the cakes further during cooking. Combine fish pieces, panko, parsley and green onions; set aside. Whisk together eggs, mustard, Worcestershire, lemon juice, cayenne, and salt. Combine fish mixture with wet ingredients using your hands to keep the fish intact. Form cakes with a ¼ cup measure. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet covered with 1 cup panko crumbs. Gently press cakes into crumbs and sprinkle tops with more crumbs. Chill for one hour. Fry cakes in 2 T. oil over medium-high heat in a non-stick pan. Don't crowd the pan, cook in batches if necessary. Handle the cakes with care when turning. Fry until golden brown, about 4-5 minutes per side. Drain on paper towels.

Remoulade Sauce

½ cup red bell pepper, chopped
¼ cup green onions, chopped
¼ cup Dijon mustard
¼ cup mayonnaise
2 T. fresh parsley, chopped
2 T. honey or agave syrup
1 T. fresh lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Put all ingredients into food processor and run until vegetables are finely chopped. Season with salt and pepper, chill until ready to serve.

Chasing the mighty walleye, the feisty sunfish or the elusive northern pike is synonymous with a Minnesota summer. We revere and worship the walleye.

But, perhaps, instead of the usual fish fry, you are seeking a new way to prepare your catch. And, just in case your "luck ran out," all of these recipes are delicious with any whitefish such as tilapia or cod.



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Sandra Thimgan lives on Silver Lake with her husband/photographer/taster, Daniel.





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Nip spring allergies in the bud

Pollen problems? These tips can help.

by Brian Brennan, MD

Lake Region Healthcare Allergy & Immunology Allergist

Photos courtesy of Lake Region Healthcare

Springtime can bring a sense of rejuvenation and beauty as nature awakens from its winter slumber. However, the mild weather this winter has kicked Spring allergies into gear early for many people. As Spring approaches and the trees begin to release pollen into the air, it can bring on sneezing, runny nose, coughing, itchy eyes, and scratchy throat. For individuals with dust mite and outdoor mold allergies, this season can be accompanied by a range of uncomfortable symptoms. But the proliferation of early pollen and allergens in the air doesn't have to mean misery for those prone to hay fever.

Pollen

In Minnesota, trees usually begin pollinating in April and often continue through May. However, we will occasionally experience an earlier tree-pollen season than this when strong southerly winds carry tree pollen from Oklahoma and Texas in March and sometimes even late February! Grasses usually begin to pollinate in May and will continue through June.

Dust Mites

Dust mites are microscopic creatures that thrive in warm and humid environments. As temperatures rise in Spring, so does the activity of these tiny allergens. Dust mites are commonly found in bedding, upholstered furniture, and carpets, making them pervasive in indoor spaces. Individuals sensitive to dust mite allergens may experience symptoms such as sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, itchy or watery eyes, and even skin reactions.

Outdoor Mold

Outdoor mold spores, another common Springtime allergen, are released into the air as the weather warms up. Outdoor mold grows on dirt and decaying plant material and becomes airborne during windy weather and Spring fieldwork. Mold allergy symptoms can include nasal congestion, coughing, wheezing, and throat irritation. Those with mold allergies may find their symptoms exacerbated during Spring when mold spore counts are higher.



Avoiding Exposure

The most effective protection can be avoiding exposure to the substances that trigger your allergic reactions. Staying indoors when pollen counts are high, wearing a protective mask, and washing your clothes and rinsing off your body when you come inside can help limit or avoid allergens. Keep your doors and windows shut during the Spring months to keep allergens out.

Using allergen-proof bedding and maintaining optimal indoor humidity levels can also be effective for those allergic to dust mites. When it comes to outdoor mold exposure, avoiding activities that stir up mold spores, such as gardening or mowing the lawn, can be beneficial. Wearing sunglasses and keeping windows closed during high pollen and mold seasons can help minimize exposure. Avoiding exposure isn't always possible, but when you can it's an effective and natural way to minimize the effects.

Natural Remedies

Sometimes a simple saline flush or saline irrigation of your nasal passages (putting salt water into one nostril and draining it out the other) can provide fairly effective improvement of allergy symptoms. Be sure to boil the water first or use distilled or sterile water.

Medications

In addition to environmental modifications, allergy medications such as antihistamines, nasal corticosteroids, and decongestants can provide relief from symptoms. Allergy testing can be helpful in identifying which types of pollens, molds or dust trigger your symptoms to better help you avoid and manage your allergic reactions. Regardless of the trigger, being intentional about watching pollen counts, staying indoors when you can, and showering after you've been outdoors are good prevention practices. Allergy injections, which involve gradually exposing the individual to small amounts of allergens to desensitize the immune system, are another option for long-term management for patients for whom allergen avoidance and medications fail to provide adequate relief.



Brian Brennan, MD, joined Lake Region Healthcare's Fergus Falls Clinic in the Allergy & Immunology Department in 2022. He is an experienced Allergist with a 30+ year history of working in clinical medicine.

Most recently he has worked as an Allergist at Stevens Community Medical Center in Morris. He owned and operated Brennan Allergy Clinic in Sioux Falls from 2012 to 2016 and has served as active medical staff at Avera and Sanford in Sioux Falls for many years.

He received his medical degree at Rutgers University in New Jersey and completed his Fellowship in Allergy & Immunology at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. Dr. Brennan specializes in diagnosing and treating conditions such as hay fever, sinus trouble, asthma, food allergies, eczema, and hives. He is board certified in Allergy/Immunology.

His hobbies include enjoying outdoor activities together with his wife, such as biking, walking, kayaking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and bird watching.

Spring is the Season for Tree Health Care!

BY ERIK EUTENEUER

PHOTOS COURTESY ERIK EUTENEUER & CARR'S TREE SERVICE



Minnesota has experienced an unusual winter this year and we've received many questions about what that means for the trees in our state. Here are a few things that could have happened, along with some tree care tips that will help you and your trees get the most out of the 2024 growing season.

With the lack of snowfall over the winter, we're heading into an unnaturally dry spring, especially if the trends continue. Add that on top of the dry summer/fall of 2023 and many trees are feeling the stress. With forecasts of highs well above freezing, don't hesitate to get the hose out to water valuable trees, especially trees planted within the last couple of years. Using a soaker hose, spiraling out from the trunk to cover the drip line is ideal. Trees often have roots growing out as far as their branches, so don't focus all the water near the trunk.

The temperature fluctuations may have also caused stress by the topsoil thawing, becoming saturated, then refreezing. Time will tell what effects this may have, but it's always important to keep a low impact in the root zone area to avoid soil compaction and damage to roots near the surface.

Other suggestions in the root zone include removing the fallen leaves. Some fungal disorders are held within the decaying leaves from the previous year.

Adding a layer of mulch around the tree is a great plan if it is done properly. Thickness of the mulch layer should be between 2-3 inches and be kept 2-3 inches back from the trunk, looking more like a doughnut than a volcano. Diameter of the mulch circle varies depending on the size of the tree. A 2-foot radius is adequate for newly-planted trees, and large mature trees will benefit from a 5-10 foot ring of mulch.

Before the leaves obscure the view, hanging and damaged branches can be easily addressed. It's also a good time to perform structural pruning on smaller trees to encourage a strong form as they grow. Some of these tasks should be performed by

a certified arborist to make sure trees are being pruned properly.

Plant Health Care (PHC) season is almost here and there is a short window for some treatments, such as treating Spruce trees for needle cast diseases such as *Rhizosphaera*, where interior needles turn brown and fall off. Carr's Tree Service can apply fungicide treatments while new needles are growing to protect them from infection.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to spread throughout the state as well. A mild winter and infested firewood moving throughout the state won't help matters. Valuable Ash trees can be protected from EAB! Our team of consulting arborists would love to assist you in a plan that will help keep your trees healthy for years to come.

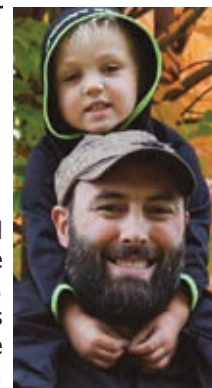
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Erik Euteneuer is an ISA Certified Arborist with 21 years at Carr's Tree Service based in Ottertail, Minnesota. When he's not working, Erik enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and 3 boys.

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Travel Destination:

Cruisin' to Panama

BY PAM LARSON

PHOTOS BY PAM & LARRY LARSON

Bahama Pines on lagoon at Half Moon Cay, Bahamas

When taking a journey, sometimes travelers want to experience sights and adventures slowly and thoroughly along the way. Other times, the speed of the trip is an important factor in the success of the venture. As far back as the 1500s, Spanish explorer Vasco Nuñez de Balboa realized that a narrow strip of land separated the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Creating a water passage through the Isthmus of Panama would remove 8,000 miles from the 12,000-mile voyage around South America. Some of those 12,000 miles were through the unpredictable and stormy Strait of Magellan on the southern end of South America. It took until 1914 to complete the international waterway known as the Panama Canal and make Balboa's vision come to fruition.



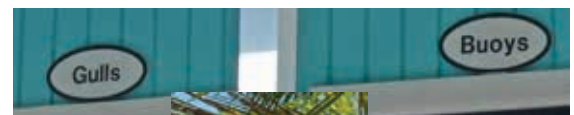
Today, a trip to the canal is often accompanied by leisure cruising through the Caribbean Sea. That was our experience, with the first stop in **The Bahamas**. The Bahamas consist of 700 tropical islands, but only about 30 of them are inhabited—people have lived on the islands since

around the 4th century. In the 16th century, pirates such as Blackbeard and Calico Jack were drawn there to loot cargo trading ships. From 1718 to 1973, the islands were under British rule and then gained independence, becoming a popular tourist destination.

The sea grape plant is a tropical tree often found near the ocean in Caribbean countries. Since it can be easily pruned and trained, it is often used in landscaping. The sea grapes aren't in the same family as regular grapes but are members of the buckwheat family, which also includes rhubarb. They are edible, with an acidic, sweet flavor and often used in jams.



Half Moon Cay scenes, clockwise: restroom humor on nature walk, hibiscus, palm trees and bougainvillea, sting ray



Our next port was **Aruba**, a small Dutch island located a few miles north of Venezuela in the southern Caribbean. Aruba is famous for its white-sand beaches and temperate climate. Because it is located just below the hurricane belt, the climate is dry with very little rain. It was surprising to see cacti growing beside palm trees! On one side of Aruba are gorgeous white sand beaches and crystal-clear water. On the other side are rugged, rocky terrain, black sand beaches, caves, natural bridges, and pools created by the rough surf.



left: Aruba Ostrich Farm

Ostriches are not native to Aruba. The farm began raising ostriches for sale, which didn't work out, but has found success as a tourist attraction.



above — Aruba scenes, l-r:
Plumeria and palm trees
Cactus
Divi Divi tree
Mexican Lilac



Aruba Natural Bridge in Arikok National Park, formed of coral limestone

The California Lighthouse, known by locals as Faro, stands on a limestone plateau on the northwestern tip of the island and is the tallest structure in Aruba. This lighthouse got its name from a British steamship, S.S. California, which sank in 1891, before the lighthouse's completion in 1916. The lighthouse was specifically erected to prevent similar tragedies.



Willemstad is the capital and largest city of **Curaçao**, an island in the southern Caribbean Sea that forms a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It is a melting pot of cultures, history, and art, with influences from Europe, Africa, and South America.

Curaçao was home to as many as 100 plantations that grew sugar cane, aloe and indigo. Slaves provided labor to work the plantations. When slavery was abolished, the free slaves were given land near their former masters to build homes and grow some crops. Since the slaves had no education or skills to support themselves, they still worked for the plantation owners. Their 'kunuku' (plantation) homes were small two-room dwellings with a living room and bedroom. The kitchen and bathroom

below: Willemstad waterfront





top left: 'Kunuku' or plantation house
above: Guide demonstrating bringing water to wash clothes at a Kunuku house
left: Cacti walled bathroom



top right: Stunning blue water
above left: Brown-throated parakeet
above right: Playa Kenepa Grandi Beach in Shete Boka National Park
left: Free-roaming pig

were separate buildings. They used native materials that were available to them. For example, their fences were three layered rows of cacti to keep out wandering animals. The people were creative and resourceful—qualities that were the backbone of Curaçao's development.

The **Shete Boka National Park** is an area in Curaçao covering almost 10 kilometers of the rocky, wave-exposed north coast. Waves crash along the shore, carving bays into the limestone and coral cliffs. The many bays and inlets are nesting grounds for three species of sea turtles.

Curaçao has many stunning white sand beaches. The shallow water with the white sandy bottom is what creates the stunning blue-colored water. There is snorkeling, kayaking, bird watching, and even swimming with free-roaming pigs!

The **Curaçao Rif Mangrove Park** is a natural mangrove forest along the coastline of

Willemstad. Mangrove trees are called 'the nursery of the sea' and grow mainly in coastal saline or brackish water. They are specially adapted to take in extra oxygen and to remove salt, which allow them to tolerate conditions that would kill most plants. It is the birthplace of many fish. Birds find their nesting place amongst the shelter of the trees. Mangrove forests form a natural barrier to the coastline and provide protection from tropical storms and hurricanes.



Waves pounding against coral rock formations, Shete Boka National Park



above: Mangrove tree roots



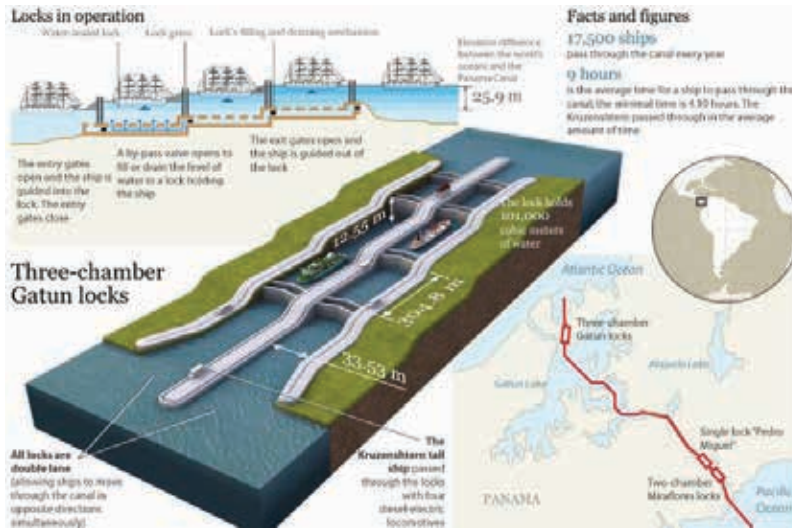
left: Green Heron



Atlantic Bridge at Panama Canal, Colon, Panama

Finally, the **Panama Canal** crossing day arrived. The decks were crowded at sunrise and we were greeted by servers with trays of Panama rolls (raised buns filled with custard and fruit). There were many ships waiting for their turn to enter the canal. We saw many birds, and even a crocodile swimming in the canal! A lot of history came together for us to experience that day.

The first attempt to build a canal across Panama was made by the French in the late 1800's. The team was led by Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, who also built the Suez Canal in Egypt. They originally planned for a sea-level canal like the Suez Canal, but faced many challenges, such as a mountainous terrain and the spread of yellow fever



Panama Canal graphic from <wonderfulengineering.com>



Entering the first lock on the Atlantic side of the canal

and malaria by the ever-present mosquitoes. Eventually, De Lesseps realized the task was nearly impossible and decided a lock canal would be necessary, since the sea level of the Pacific Ocean is 85 feet above the Atlantic Ocean. However, by that time, funding was exhausted and the French discontinued construction in 1888.

In 1904, the United States took over the project. The effort was improved by the elimination of disease-carrying mosquitoes under the guidance of chief sanitary officer Dr. William Gorgas. Chief engineer John Stevens devised innovative techniques and spurred the crucial redesign from a sea-level to a lock canal. His successor, Lt. Col. George Washington Goethals, stepped up excavation efforts of the **Culebra Cut**, a stubborn 9-mile mountain range, and oversaw the building of the dams and locks. The Panama Canal officially opened on August 15,



Panama City waterfront on the Pacific side of Panama Canal



Sharing space in the locks. The locks are very expensive to operate, so they are always full

1914, although the planned grand ceremony was downgraded due to the outbreak of WWI. Completed at a cost of more than \$350 million, it was the most expensive construction project in U.S. history to that point. Oversight of the world-famous Panama Canal was transferred from the United States to Panama in 1999.

Since then, the canal has been expanded, doubling its capacity by constructing two new series of wider and deeper locks to accommodate today's super-ships. The original locks were not removed; to maximize capacity both sets of locks are operated.



left: 'Mules' run on tracks on both sides of the canals. They do not pull the ships through, but they keep the ships from hitting the sides of the canal using ropes. For some ships, there is not a lot of extra space!



*left: Deactivated canal lighthouse
below: Examples of the mountains that had to be removed in the Culebra Cut*



Groundbreaking for the enormous project, called Panamax, was held in September 2007 and the expanded canal was opened on June 26, 2016.

Several dozen lighthouses were constructed to help guide ships through the Canal. Fortunately, it was not necessary to remove any historic lighthouses to construct the new locks and channels. Most of these structures remain, but the Canal Authority has replaced them with skeletal towers. The deactivated lighthouses are painted black, making them somewhat harder to spot.

The Panama Canal is over 50 miles long, connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the north of Panama with the Pacific Ocean to the south. Most of the Canal is on the level of **Gatún Lake**, a large reservoir fed by the **Río Chagres**. The lake surface is about 85 feet above sea level. The **Miraflores** and **Pedro Miguel Locks** raise ships from the Pacific to this level, and the **Gatún Locks** lower them to the Atlantic. The Culebra Cut, the narrow section passing through the mountains of the isthmus, is between the Pedro Miguel Locks and Gatún Lake. A ship's passage through the Canal takes about 9 hours.

Some cruises traverse the entire canal. Our ship stopped at Gatún Lake, where we boarded an excursion boat that took us all the way to the Pacific Ocean. At **Panama City**, Panama, we took a bus for 1.5 hours back to Colon, Panama, to reboard our ship.



We got so close to the side of the lock that Larry could touch the cement

right: The last lock before the Pacific Ocean. This is the original lock from the construction in 1914



Our final port was **Puerto Limón, Costa Rica**. Our excursion took us to the **Veragua Rainforest** where there are educational and conservation programs. Located less than one hour from the historic Caribbean town of Puerto Limón, the park has marvelous views of the mountains of the **Talamanca Range**. We saw special amphibian, reptile and butterfly exhibits. The aerial tram ride through the rainforest canopy was an immersive experience of that ecosystem. Hiking on the rainforest floor was one of my favorite parts of the trip.



A view that never grows old...sunset on the ocean



Certificate from our tour guide Geronimo for completing the transit of the Panama Canal



A Blue Morpho Butterfly liked the rim of my hat, probably because I did not use insect repellent

Veragua Rainforest Scenes

below, l-r: Central American Whiptail Lizard, Golden Shrimp Plant and Strawberry Poison Dart Frog



Crested Caracara bird at one of the locks



right: Not the clearest photo, but this Rufous Motmot bird was the best discovery on our hike. It was said to be rarer than spotting a toucan. Other hikers were taking photos of my camera screen, just to get a glimpse of it.

View from our gondola on the rainforest aerial tram ride



The Panama Canal is one of the largest and most difficult engineering projects ever undertaken. All journeys between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans have been shortened by thousands of nautical miles by going through the canal. It was marvelous to experience the full length of that accomplishment.



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