

Pioneer Park, Buffalo Valley tell stories of two dreams

This ramble is a curiosity-satisfier on two counts: (1) How is Annandale's dream, to build a nostalgic "pioneer park" that will be one of the real biggies, coming along? (2) What does Buffalo's defunct but beautiful Buffalo Valley Ski Area look like today?

First, Annandale: Its dream of a Minnesota Pioneer Park to recall the pioneer West sprang into life a year ago, for us at least, when Nobel Shaddock, retired Annandale lawyer and civic organizer, showed us through the place.

It was about half done and looked promising.

Shaddock wasn't there when we arrived this time, south of Hwy. 55 and just southeast of town. Lowell Christopherson told us that Shaddock was in North Dakota picking up a compact old jal, which he plans to truck back for the park.

Christopherson had been a Maple Lake construction carpenter until a loader bucket fell and injured him. He signed on as Minnesota Pioneer Park supervisor—a lucky break for the park. He supervises construction still going on; has crafted a pioneer cobbler's bench, a hobby horse and much else; picked up a couple of white goats and two colorful and friendly ducks, and keeps an eye on everything.

Visiting children feed the livestock, but all four animals show a preference for Christopherson whenever he comes by.

What struck our eye upon arrival was how farm and town layouts have grown, improved and taken on a green and gardened look, a kind of fitness. The town street has been given a sturdy boardwalk and a new town hall has been moved in from Corinna, four miles north, to fill in the closed end of a main street. There's been a paint job all around and much interior improvement.

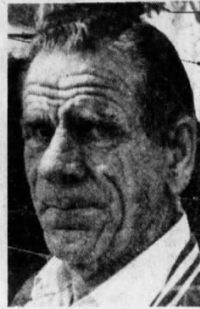
The farm layout also has a finished look. The sturdily built sod hut with its rectangular corners now has an appropriately weathered wooden roof, windows and primitive furnishings.

The farmhouse now has a summer kitchen "L" holding a wood stove, copper boiler, irons and other equipment.

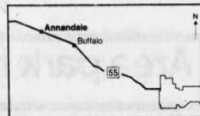
A Lake Superior north-shore property owner has donated an old log cabin and \$1,000 to move it to Annandale for log-by-log reassembly. That's in the future.

You'll find more than 100 vintage tools and equipment and gifts from Crown Iron Works Co., Minneapolis, in the town blacksmith shop along with other artifacts.

A dentist's building contains complete equipment down to patients' tooth diagrams, donated by the



Lowell Christopherson



family of dentist Arthur C. Wedin, who practiced in Hector, Minn., from 1917 to 1974.

My father's dentist had signed the Wedin dental-association certificate.

Framed in the Corinna Hall is an old "Duplicate Statement of Appropriations of the War Department, Fiscal Year 1863-64" signed by "Hon. E.M. Stanton, Secretary of War." Among many items: "Targets and Batteries for Artillery Exercise," "Furniture for Hospital for Cadets at West Point."

Christopherson said Minnesota Pioneer Park has a secretary, Nancy Maidencamp, who can play an old pipe organ on display.

The park stages other demonstrations—making molasses and such. It will be open today through Saturday before the winter season closes in.

Stopping at Buffalo to check out the old Buffalo Valley Ski Area, we drove out around the west side of Buffalo Lake to find out whether we went the dream. The ski area was started in 1966 by a firm that used its heavy air-compressing machines for sandblasting in summer and snowmaking in winter. The firm had made an aerial search to find a locale handy to Minneapolis.

The area ran about five years. It had all kinds of pitches for "practice" skiing and enjoyed reasonable patronage, mostly local, but its runs weren't long enough to draw skiers from very far away. The upkeep was expensive. Bankruptcy set in. There was a sheriff's sale, and the chalet stood there. Driving up the pretty valley, Buf-

falo Lake visible back to the right in the distance, we found the big barn chalet standing as usual close by its silo, formerly inhabited by the ski patrol. Chalet and silo looked rough on the outside, but there were new casement windows in the chalet.

We parked on the old parking spot and around front found Don and Mary Schmidt. Don said that a little less than a year ago, climaxing a long search for a country place around the Twin Cities, they had fallen in love with the Buffalo Valley view. They bought the barn, the silo and the area's 57 acres covering both sides of the valley.

The barn-chalet, when they bought it, had been badly vandalized—windows smashed, a handsome hearthstone broken inside, pine-paneled walls profaned.

Don works for Honeywell in Hopkins. They have two children, Jon, 7, and Bryon, 3. Mary and Don are spending their spare time working hard on remodeling and restoration. They showed us through the roomy interior. Much has been roughed out—bedrooms, dens, living space with unbelievable views. The old skiers' deck, overlooking the valley, needs a little straightening.

The Schmidts don't ski. Last winter they let neighborhood boys rig a small rope tow in the valley. The boys volunteered to teach the Schmidt children to ski. The Schmidts don't plan to start any real-estate development. "We want to keep the valley the way it is," Don said.

So all is not lost. Occasionally a nostalgic skier stops by, introduces himself and reminisces about the good old days.

"Ride the Glass," a fiberglass skateboard facility that was previewed outside at Ridgewood Mall and then at the Minnesota State Fair, now is installed in an Indoor Fiberglass Skateboard Park at 9005 Hamilton Rd. in Eden Prairie. It contains a slalom run, freestyle areas, more difficult "half-pipe" and "giant-bowl" and a 22-foot-diameter "giant pipe" for the biggest challenge. An open tournament is planned for mid-November.

Meet a talented group of people who won Creative Activities Ribbons in the 1977 Minnesota State Fair and see their works of needlecraft, garment making and handicraft. They'll be on hand 2 p.m. today at the Hennepin County Historical Society Museum, 2303 3rd Av. S. Questions answered.

Wood Lake Nature Center, 735 Lake Shore Dr., Richfield: Fall Migration—watch the birds on their way south and see how the season change affects "odd-hour" crea-