

“When my family returned to Shakopee in 1946, we had to live with my mother’s parents until we found a place at the NYA camp. I was about 5 or 6 years old, so though some of my details might be fuzzy, but I wanted to tell my story.”

“Most of the buildings were single family units, but there was one large building in the middle shaped like a T. This was the unit that my family moved into. Bob and Betty Mertz were on the other end, and Cy and Millie Sames had the middle unit. There was a large, unheated room where the 3 homes came together. We used it for storage, and it is where my pet gopher hibernated in the winter,” said Donna.

“These homes were bare bones, a large rectangle that was divided into 4 rooms, with a small bathroom in the corner of the kitchen. It had a sink and a stool, only! There was no hot water. In fact, this led to a bad accident when I was about 9 years old. My Mom boiled water to wash dishes. I had to carry the water to the sink. As I changed the position of my hands in order to dump it into the sink, I dropped it, and the boiling water came back on me. I was severely burned from my chest to my legs. I spent many weeks lying on the couch. I couldn’t go to school. The only good thing was that I got many beautiful dolls from my friends!”

“This was a great place for a tom-girl to grow up. The buildings were not tall, so we played endless games of ‘Red Rover Come Over.’ The Minnesota River was just down the hill, and I spent many days down there fishing, finding turtle eggs (and bringing them up to a spot near a massive wall to watch them hatch), building forts, catching gophers, and playing in the woods.”

“My Dad, Don Miles, was the local Deputy Sheriff. Each Fourth of July, he would get fireworks and put on a show for the whole neighborhood. We also had the first TV set, and every Saturday night the house would be filled with neighbors to watch wrestling!”

“Just up the road was the empty Murphy’s house and landing. It always intrigued me, but I never explored it on my own. I wish I had! On the other side of camp

was the old Pond Grist Mill ruins. I did venture there and explore it, but I had no idea how historic it was.”

Donna Miles Lane is the secretary of the Shakopee Heritage Society, and so Donna continues to learn more about Shakopee.

“With many young families living here, there were many children. So I started babysitting starting when I was 9 years old,” said Donna. “They paid me 25 cents an hour, which seemed like a fortune to me!”

“Finally, sometime in the 1950s, the building were sold and removed from the site. The camp was eventually closed and we were able to buy a house on west 6th Avenue in Shakopee in the mid-fifties.”

“I had many happy memories of growing up at the NYA Camp!”

Donna Miles graduated from Shakopee High School, and on August 6, 1960, she married Donald Lane at St. Mark’s Catholic Church in Shakopee.



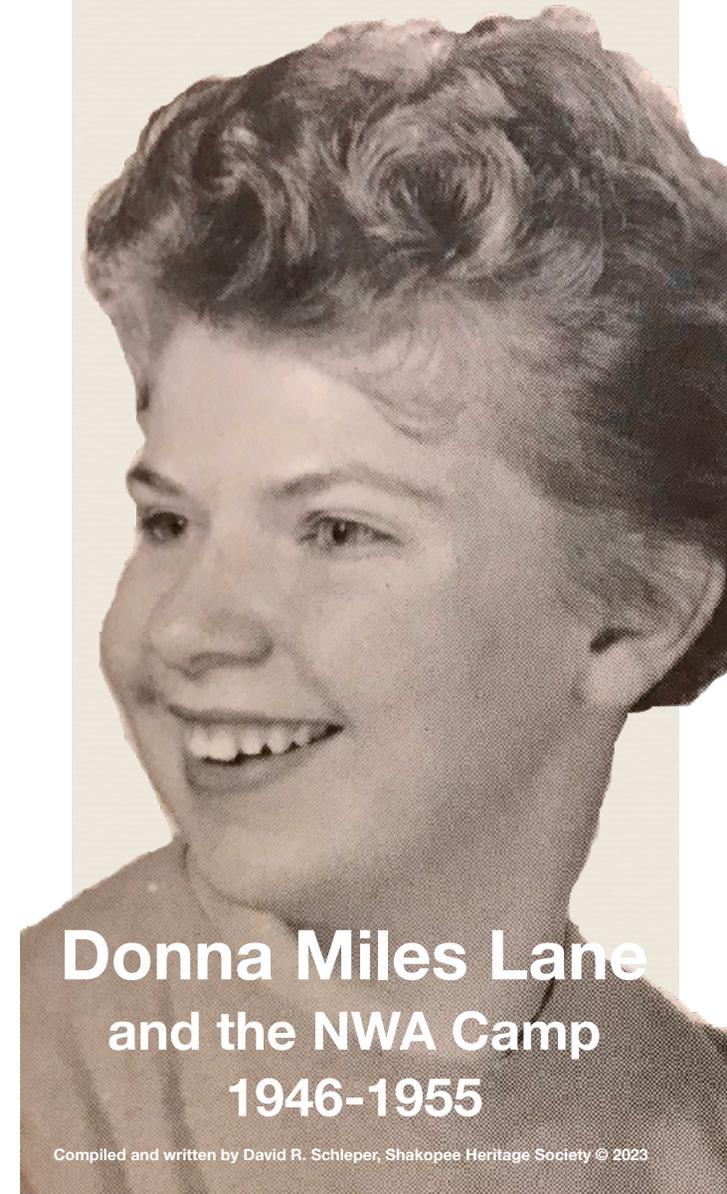
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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



**Donna Miles Lane**  
**and the NWA Camp**  
**1946-1955**



In the depth of the Depression, there was little work for young people, and no money to pursue an education.

Many people worried that long-term unemployment and borderline poverty would undermine young Americans' faith in democracy. Eleanor Roosevelt felt that "I live in real terror when I think we may be losing this generation. We have got to bring these young people into the active life of the community and make them feel that they are necessary" according to **The New York Times**, May 7, 1934.

Eleanor Roosevelt, working closely with educators and relief officials, pushed Frederick D. Roosevelt to address this problem. Although at first he did not want to develop programs for young people, this lobbying effort changed his mind. In June 1935, President Roosevelt signed an executive order establishing the National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal program designed specifically to address the problem of unemployment among Depression-era youth, according to Eleanor Roosevelt in **This I**

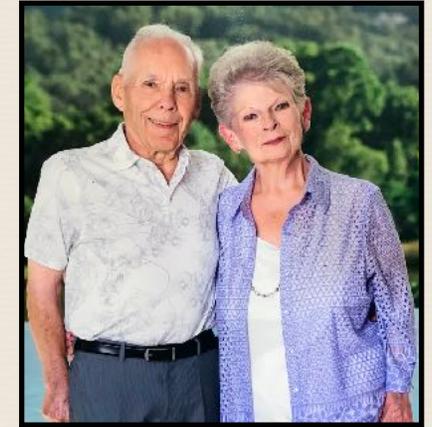
**Remember**, 1949, p. 162-163. While some were paid to remain in school, others were allowed to live in NYA camps where they were taught a trade.

In June of 1935 the six transient work camps located in the area, included one in the eastern part of Shakopee, next to Hwy. 101, where The Landing is located now. They were in operation from 1935 to 1939.

The Minnesota Highway Department purchased four farms comprising 520 acres of farmland adjacent to Shakopee in the Minnesota River Valley for \$46,000.



Donna Miles graduated from Shakopee High School, and married Donald Lane at St Mark's Catholic Church on August 6, 1960. Donna Miles Lane has been a long-time member of the Shakopee Heritage Society.



One of these farms was the Donovan farm east of Shakopee where the old Murphy house on the site was under renovation. This site—known as Camp #5—was to be the headquarters, the largest and best equipped. Eight buildings were built at the Murphy site, sufficient in size to house 200 to 250 men. Construction of the permanent camp at Shakopee was reported to be well under way, as 65 transient men were union carpenters, according to **The Shakopee Argus**, June 7, 1934.

The camps had medical and dental wards under the supervision of a doctor and two dentists. Every man was assigned to some camp duty such as messenger, first aid, gardening, landscaping, carpentry, kitchen, or many other occupations, said Betty Dols in the February/March 2009 **SCENE** called *Scott County's Depression Era Camps*. They raised their own vegetables and canned some for the winter. The transients also constructed a rather the winter. The transients also constructed a rather elaborate warming house at the ice skating rink in Shakopee north of First Avenue in October of 1935.

In March of 1938, a new federal project for a work-study program similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) continued in Shakopee, but with a non-military structure. Enrollees earned \$10 per month, plus room and board. They could study agriculture, cooking, auto mechanics, carpentry, forestry, welding, and other activities related to a campsite of 2,700 acres of wooded land.

Many young men learned a trade there. In 1939, the federal government added ground mechanics for the aviation industry to the curriculum. In 1940, construction of sea plane bases were added. In 1941 and 1942, young men were taught welding, machine shop, and radio to prepare them for work in defense plants, according to Betty Dols.

The NYA Center was officially closed on July 3, 1943, according to the **Shakopee Argus-Tribune**, July 1, 1943. On January 6, 1944, the Shakopee Independent School District was given all of the machinery, tools, and educational equipment, said the **Shakopee Argus-Tribune**, January 6, 1944.

In 1947, the City of Shakopee paid the state of Minnesota \$7,500 for the buildings and part of the acreage, which would become Shakopee's Memorial Park and The Landing, noted Betty Dols in the February/March 2009 from the **Scott County SCENE**.

According to Donna Miles Lane, "With the end of WWII in 1945, some of the buildings with shop equipment were leased to private industry. To help ease the housing shortage, some of the barracks were rented to war veterans and their families. And this is what happened to my family." Donna shared her story in the **Shakopee Heritage Society Newsletter**, Winter 2020.

