

SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



The Deputy Sheriff Is Kidnapped in 1931

Robert Lester Brown, the Deputy Sheriff, was heading down First Street in Shakopee in 1931, heading to the post office. In his car was three of his children, Carl, 7, Gene, 4 (Gene’s son was David Brown of Shakopee), and Virginia Lou, who was 2 years old.

Deputy Sheriff Brown noticed a gray colored 1931 Ford coupe parked parallel to the West sidewalk of Lewis Street. The exhaust fumes gathered at the rear of the car, showing the car was running. No license plate was on the front of the car. Immediately suspicious, Brown stopped his car and went to the parked coupe, according to the *Shakopee Argus-Tribune*, October 15, 1931. (Continued on page 4)



Robert Lester Brown (1893-1976) was born in Shakopee, son of Louis Montrille Brown (1863-1924) and Genevieve Jennie Wood Brown (1872-1949) and grandparents were Judge Morse Brown (1823-1886) and Elizabeth Jane Woodbury, and Henry John Wood (1839-1924) and Mary Ann Woods (1838-1901.). On right is R.L. Brown’s wife, Daisy Belle Fulmer Brown (1897-1985).



Cause for Rejoicing Picture in the newspaper shows R.L. Brown, his wife, Daisy, and Cal (7), Gene (4) and Virginia Lou (2).

Presentations

Shakopee Heritage Society gives one-hour presentations at the Shakopee Community Center Šakpe Ti at 1255 Fuller Street South, Shakopee on the second Tuesday of each month from 1-2 pm. The presentations are free.

Jan. 13, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Mnisota Wakpá: The Minnesota River in Early Shakopee***

Feb. 10, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Home Sweet Home: Dwellings in Early Shakopee***

Mar. 10, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***On the Streets Where We Live: Streets in Early Shakopee***

Apr. 14, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives: Restaurants in Early Shakopee (Part 2)***

May 12, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***A Place to Belong: Civil War Veterans in Early Shakopee***

June 9, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Cata Wambli and the Dakota Alphabet: The Story of Rev. Samuel Pond***

July 14, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Thomas Holmes & Ety-shah Red Face William Quinn in Holmes Landing 1851***

Aug. 11, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***“We Were Here, Too!” African Americans in Early Shakopee***

Sep. 8, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***The Great Fire of 1879***

Oct. 13, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Hola! Latinos/Latinas and Hispanics in Early Shakopee***

Nov. 10, 2026 1 to 2 pm: ***Old Town, New Town: Shakopee in the Last 50 Years***

Jan. 11, 2027 1 to 2 pm: ***Ní hǎ and Kon'nichiwa! Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Early Shakopee***

Feb. 9, 2027 1 to 2 pm: ***Not So Great! Accidents, Drownings and Suicides in Early Shakopee***

Mar. 8, 2027 1 to 2 pm: ***Sheriffs, Detectives, and Police Officers in Early Shakopee***

Join the Shakopee Heritage Society!

\$20 per year, including 96 brochures, 4 newsletters, monthly presentations, and cemetery tour, downtown Shakopee tours, and more. To join, send a check, with your name, address, email, phone number to:

Shakopee Heritage Society
2109 Boulder Pointe
Shakopee, MN 55379
952-693-3865

Cemetery Cleaning at Valley Cemetery

9 am to Noon. Starting in May 2026, and happen every two weeks on Thursday. This is the 5th year that the Daughters of the American Revolution Keewaydin Chapter and the Shakopee Heritage Society have worked on cleaning the cemetery using D2, the cleaner. It's a great opportunity Bring a lawn chair! Contact David Schleper at 952 693 3865 if interested.

Cemetery Tours

Cemetery Tours happen 4 times a year at 4 cemeteries in the area on a Saturday from 10 am to Noon. People should bring a lawn chair. Contact David Schleper at 952 693 3865 if questions.

- **Valley Cemetery Tour:** May 16, 2026 10 to Noon
- **Catholic Cemetery Tour:** June 13, 2026 10 to Noon
- **Marystown Cemetery Tour:** June 27, 2026 10 to Noon
- **Calvary Cemetery Tour:** July 18, 2026

Downtown Shakopee Tour #1

April 25, 2026 Saturday from 10 am to Noon. Meet in front of the Library on Lewis Street. Bring a lawn chair.

Downtown Shakopee Tour #2

May 23, 2026 Saturday from 10 am to Noon. Meet in front of the old Central Elementary School. Bring a lawn chair.

Adult Night Out at the Museum



Night Out at the Museum

January 27th 5:00pm - 8:00pm

Why let kids have all the fun? Come join the Scott County Library and the Scott County Historical Society for an Adult Night Out at the Museum. Explore the museum's exhibit Scott County at Play: Toys, Games, and Exploration, 1850-2000, and listen to David Schleper with his presentation on Murder, Mayhem and Mystery in Early Shakopee! Discover your inner artist with art projects and enjoy some good food and conversation at this Adult Night Out.

This event is in partnership with Scott County Library. Registration begins January 6th (register through the library [here](#))

(Continued from Page 1)

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As Brown opened the car door, the driver of the coupe appeared around the corner of the Fred Beren's store and approached. Deputy Sheriff Brown asked about the absence front license plate, and the driver said, "I lost it." Brown lifted an old coat lying on the car floor and uncovered a pair of license plates, along with a box of 32-20 cartridges.

Asked about this, the stranger said that he had found the license plates and that he was going hunting. Brown then ordered the man to drive to a garage nearby to check on the license plates. As Brown got into the coupe, he noticed a twelve-inch hunting knife in a scabbard lying at the rear of the seat. When he tried to search the car, the stranger suddenly pulled out a six-shooter, which the gunman pulled from under his right arm pit.

Deputy Sheriff Brown grabbed the gun, and a scuffle started. Unable to take the revolver from the attacker, Brown succeeded in forcing a finger back of the trigger, thus preventing the gun from shooting. In the scuffle, Brown fell to the street as his terrified children watched and screamed.

The stranger grabbed Brown, and ordered into the gunman's car at the point of the gun. It was on the corner of Lewis and First Street at 7:55 a.m., and Brown was kidnapped! He was forced to drive the vehicle across the old Lewis Street Bridge.

Several citizens of Shakopee saw the scuffle at a distance, but it was not until the frightened children imparted the tale that the startling truth was known. People in Shakopee remembered "a man with a patch over his nose" loitering on First Street around 7:30 a.m. One man reported seeing him sitting in his car, then parked in front of the First National Bank, which was on First Avenue in downtown Shakopee at that time. Another citizen said he saw the same man trying to open the bank door, which was locked, and others told of seeing the man sitting on the step of a barber shop next door to the bank.

Sheriff A.F. Mesenbrink heard of the kidnapping, and hurried in pursuit. With him was J.J. Wermerskirchen. Other posses were mobilized, and soon twenty-five to thirty men were armed with guns and rifles, raced out on Highway No. 5.

Sheriff Arthur F. Mesenbrink

Mesenbrink was appointed by Scott County Commissioners in 1931 to fill the remaining term of Joseph Weckman. Mesenbrink served as Sheriff until October 1941.

In July of 1941, Governor Stassen issued an order to remove Mesenbrink from office. This order came as a result of a proceeding instigated by Rev. Olson of Jordan, charging Sheriff Mesenbrink with failure to enforce the gambling laws of Scott County. The governor held that Sheriff Mesenbrink allowed "open, flagrant and notorious" violation of Minnesota's gambling laws.

Mesenbrink died in 1971 at the age of 80.



Sheriff JP Wermerskirchen

J.P. (John Peter, also known as "Jack") Wermerskirchen was from a farming family and continued to farm throughout his lifetime. He served in the U.S Army and married Clara Radermacher. He served as a Deputy Sheriff under Sheriff Arthur Mesenbrink for 10 years. Upon Mesenbrink's forced removal from office J.P. Wermerskirchen was appointed acting Sheriff. During the following months, he increased efforts to close down the illegal gambling that had been going on in Shakopee for many years. In 1942, 35 slot machines were seized. The Sheriff announced that there were no more slot machines in Shakopee for the first time in 25 years. Wermerskirchen died in 1986 at the age of 93.

www.scottcountymn.gov/1520/History-of-Sheriffs-Office

A little more than an hour later, Daisy Belle Fulmer Brown, nervous and near exhaustion, received a telephone call. It was her husband, Deputy Sheriff Brown, calling from a Bloomington store, telling her, "I'm all right!"

Brown's trousers and shoes were muddy from walking across a field and through the woods. The forefinger of his right hand was severely cut from the gun trigger in the scuffle, and he carried a bruise on his forehead, although he had no idea how that happened.

Deputy Sheriff Brown's safe return was a real homecoming, and the atmosphere was changed from gloom and tenseness to happiness and serenity. Cal Brown, the oldest of the children, who saw his daddy attacked and taken, related the tale in minute to minute detail. He talked freely to reporters and friends, and when he became weary of all the strain, he calmly remarked, "I don't know any more."

Deputy Sheriff Brown remembered driving with the gunman, and when the speed was too slow, the gunman held his foot on the driver's foot, pressing the gasoline throttle to the floor. The gunman wanted to know if he was connected to the sheriff office, but Brown decided not to tell him. When he didn't get the information he wanted, the gunman said, "I've a notion to let you have it right now!"

"He finally found my badge and other means of identification. He took my badge and said he'd return it in a week or ten days. I told him if he was smart he'd keep it," said Brown. "As we raced along, he'd continually glance out the rear window and when he

noticed a car following us, he said, ‘If anybody tries to stop us, it’ll be just too bad for somebody I know.’”

Brown then told his captor it might be too bad for him if he did any shooting. At this remark, the gunman said, “I’ve done this before and I’d just as soon do more.” Apparently frightened at the thought of the outcome, or worried as to a means of disposing of his captive, the gunman decided to let the deputy sheriff go.

In his call at the county jail, Acy Hart denied having designs on the First National Bank. He said he had stopped to go to the Strunk’s Drug Store to purchased a pack of gum. He explained the presence of the gun, knife, and cartridges with the remark, “I had them in my room, so I just threw them in the car.”

Hart, who was born in Galva, Kansas, had been in the army for five years. He was station at Fort Dodge, Iowa, for three years, and then at Fort Snelling for the last two years. He was a major’s servant, but the major was absent from the post, and so Acy consequently had little to occupy his time.

A search of his room at Fort Snelling disclosed a bolt of expensive satin, a woman’s dress, several pairs of leggings, personal notes to the extent of \$325, a set of carpenter’s tools, a homemade blackjack, a thousand rounds of ammunition, and a snapshot album containing photographs of women.

Hart had spent six months in the guard house for violation of an army rule prohibiting absence without permission, and he denied any other time in any other penal institution. When asked about pulling a gun and forcing Brown to drive the car, Hart said, “I didn’t know who he was, and I thought he might have a gun and was going to pull fast one on me,” said Hart, using a southern accent, slow and easy. Hart said that he took Deputy Sheriff Brown with him because he was afraid to drive away without thinking he might be shot.

Stretched out on his cot in his cell, Hart wondered how long he’d have to be in this place. “It’s lonesome in a place of this size,” he said. Hart had been to Shakopee three or four times, while driving to Mankato. As for the extra license plates, Hart replied, “I’ve had the plates three days. I put them on when I got back to the Fort because I was afraid I’d lose my job there if they found out about the jam I was in.”

Acy Hart, in his 30s, and 5’5” tall and weighing 130 pounds, wore glasses and a patch over the bridge of his nose. He was held in connection of the kidnapping. He pleaded guilty to first degree assault in the district court, and was sentence to serve five to ten years at the St. Cloud reformatory.





Playing the Mandolin 1890 - 1920



At the close of the nineteenth century, a new and distinctive-sound caught the ears of Minnesota, including in Shakopee. The captivating sound came from a small, eight-stringed wooden instrument called the mandolin. According to Amy Kreitzer, between 1890 and 1920, “travelling concert artists, vaudeville performers, and local teachers inspired thousands of amateur musicians around the country to take up the instrument.” The people formed mandolin clubs, and shared their music with others in concerts and other places.

Between 1890 and 1920 the mandolin flourished in the Upper Midwest. In the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, more than 50 mandolin clubs were formed. There were women’s groups, men’s groups, children groups, and mixed groups. Their repertoire included opera arrangements, marches, overtures, waltzes, two-steps, gallops, mazurkas, polkas, quadrilles, character pieces, and programmatic works. The mandolin originated in Italy in the eighteenth century. The mandolin’s popularity stemmed from the ease to learn. The mandolins also could be purchased for less than \$10 in 1890s, and the lessons were inexpensive.

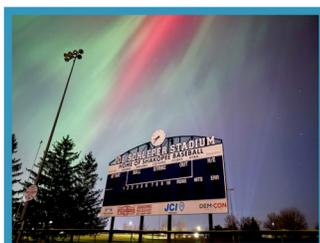
In Shakopee, a few mandolin clubs were formed. Two examples were located. The first one is from Rick Wolfe collection, and was taken probably in 1910. The man is the teacher, and five women are in the group. Three of the women are playing the mandolin, and one is playing the piano. The other woman is playing some kind of guitar.



The other example is from the Scott County Historical Society. It shows a group of both men and women in the mandolin club, probably in the parlor of a house. The teacher is in the middle front, surrounded by 29 men and women.

And that is the fun that people had at the turn of the century in Shakopee, Minnesota.

(Some information from Sweet Harmonies from Little Wooden Boxes: Mandolin Playing in Minneapolis and St. Paul by Amy Kreitzer, Minnesota History, 57/5, Spring 2001, p. 218-237.)



**Photographs ©
William J. Schleper
Photographer**



Shakopee Heritage Society
2109 Boulder Pointe
Shakopee, MN 55379

President: David R. Schleper

Past-President: Lois Wendt **Vice-President:** Joanne Musick

Treasurer: Liz Lundin **Secretary:** Donna Lane

Trustees: Sandy Olson, Dave Regan, Melissa Whiting

Talk to Us!

Facebook: **shakopeeheritage**

Web: **shakopeeheritage.org**

Email: **newsletter@shakopeeheritage.org**

Phone: **952-693-3865**

The Golden Rule

Buddhism:

Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.

Christianity:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Hinduism:

Treat others as you would yourself be treated.

Islam:

Do unto all men as you would wish to have done unto you.

Judaism:

What you yourself hate, do to no man.

Native American:

Live in harmony, for we are all related.

Sacred Earth:

Do as you will, as long as you harm no one.

Please joined the Shakopee Heritage Society meeting and Presentation on some of the cemetery tombstones from Noon to 2 pm at the Shakopee Library on January 24, 2026, please!