

# History

The mission of the Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation is to improve the quality of life through effective family grantmaking, honoring the legacy of its founders and investing in social change. Since 1957, the Andersen Foundation has supported a broad range of organizations reflecting the diverse interests of its founders.

| TIMELINE  |  |
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|   | <p><b>1957</b> The Andersen Foundation held its first meeting at 11 a.m. on December 10, 1957 at 255 Eagle Street in Saint Paul, Minnesota.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>1959</b> The H. B. Fuller Company college scholarship program, then administered by the Andersen Foundation, was established for children of employees at H. B. Fuller and subsidiary companies.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>Ongoing</b> For decades, the Andersen Foundation awarded grants for programs in the arts and humanities, communications, education, the environment, human services, and libraries.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>2007</b> The Andersen Foundation celebrated its 50th anniversary with grant recipients, board members and friends, and the first recipient of an H.B. Fuller Company college scholarship.</p> <p><b>2009</b> Through a strategic planning process, the Andersen Foundation developed its Legacy, Social Change, and Trustee-Directed grantmaking programs.</p> <p><b>2013</b> The Andersen Foundation received the 2013 Responsive Philanthropy Award from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and MAP for Nonprofits.</p> <p><b>2024</b> The Andersen Foundation became a Signature Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation.</p> |

# Our Founders

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## Elmer L. Andersen

A respected industrialist, politician, environmentalist, publisher, humanitarian, and lover of the arts, Elmer L. Andersen deftly wove multiple careers, interests, and causes into a tapestry of good works that spanned nearly all his life. From humble beginnings he rose to contribute, most would agree, more than any other individual to Minnesota's excellent quality of life.

As a Minnesota state senator and governor, he championed progressive legislation in education, social services, fair employment, fair housing, metropolitan planning, and the environment. Notably, he steered passage of the Taconite Amendment, reviving the economy of the Mesabi Iron Range. In 1957, he led passage of the Fair Employment Practices Act, making Minnesota the fifth state to do so. Thanks to his leadership, Minnesota set a new bar for providing services to children with disabilities when it became the first state to mandate special education for exceptional students in public schools. The State of Minnesota's Human Services Building is named in his honor.

As a business executive, he built H. B. Fuller Company from a small, regional company with less than \$200,000 in annual sales into an international Fortune 500 company renowned for its good citizenship and progressive employee programs. He was Chairman and CEO of ECM Publishers, Inc. and, into his nineties, wrote weekly editorials for its several newspapers in central Minnesota.

As a community leader, he served as director and officer of numerous local and national organizations. Notably, he was chairman of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, president of the Minnesota Historical Society, president and chairman of the Bush Foundation, and co-founder of the Elmer L. & Eleanor J. Andersen Foundation, which has supported worthy causes for more than sixty years.

Because of the breadth of his knowledge, abilities, and interests, Elmer L. Andersen was able to foster collaboration between the business, government, and nonprofit sectors to create a legacy of accomplishments benefiting the environment in perpetuity. He spearheaded the establishment of Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota's sole national park, and several state parks. He was responsible for the establishment of the Andersen Horticultural Library at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and the Minnesota Environmental Trust Fund, which provides for the constitutional dedication of Minnesota Lottery proceeds to the environment. He was involved in conservation activities on the North Shore of Lake Superior that resulted in benefits for business, government, and environmental interests.

In the 1990s, he donated his personal collection of more than 12,500 rare books to the University of Minnesota. The collection, along with many others, is housed in the Elmer L. Andersen Library and is used by students and scholars from around the world. Elmer L. Andersen credited much of his success to the steadfast love and devotion of his wife of over 70 years, Eleanor J. Andersen. She was a dedicated partner in all of his endeavors.

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# Our Founders

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## Eleanor J. Andersen

Eleanor J. Andersen was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the first child of Swedish immigrant parents. She maintained a deep, lifelong closeness with her family and many friends.

Mrs. Andersen grew up speaking Swedish before she spoke English. She maintained a correspondence in Swedish with her parents' families in Sweden, visiting them several times—and once traversing the Atlantic on the *Lusitania*. A speed skater as a girl, she also enjoyed music, later attending music school and teaching piano privately. She began to attend concerts at Northrup Auditorium in 1929, and her enjoyment of music and support of concerts endured throughout her life, as did her love of reading.

She attended Minnesota College and completed a University of Minnesota undergraduate history degree in 1939 with a minor in music. After her marriage on September 1, 1932, she was a constant, wise intellectual partner to her husband, and clearly, she was the great love of his life. During each of her husband's phases in business, government, and organizational leadership, she assisted him so much that he often said he accomplished what he did in his life because she was his wife.

Mrs. Andersen served as first lady of the State of Minnesota from 1961 to 1963. Throughout her life, she accepted with quiet strength the rigors of her role as the wife of a man very involved in his business career and in community activities. Even so, to the end of her life, she also retained her individual identity and the freedom to politely speak her mind. Together, she and her husband shared particular interests in education, libraries, local plants and animals, and the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

The Andersens kept decades-old friendships and club memberships from their years in St. Anthony Park, and they also maintained close ties with Mr. Andersen's family outside Minnesota. On her own, Mrs. Andersen was an active board member of the Children's Home Society, a board member and historian for the Schubert Club, and a board member of ECM Publishers. Additionally, she was a member of the Weavers Guild from its earliest years and became an accomplished weaver. She also valued her membership in the educational service sorority PEO.

Throughout her life, everyone who knew Mrs. Andersen remarked on her dignified manner, her unflinching courtesy, her Swedish blue eyes, and her beautiful, graceful appearance.

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