

Ridge Historical Society

A Green Dot Means
DUES are DUE

Newsletter

APRIL - MAY 2000

10621 SEELEY AVENUE • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60643 • (773) 881-1675 • Pat McGrail, President • (773) 238-6196

ALL ABOUT OTTO

While hippies and maharishis made headlines in the 1960s, Illinois had one of the most buttoned-down governors in its history. He was a good son, a stalwart husband to an alcoholic wife and a loving father to his adopted children. He was also a well-respected judge, a reformist governor and namesake of a famous report that honestly addressed America's race problems for the first time. Why did his career end in a Federal prison?

Local resident Bill Barnhart will be the featured speaker at the RHS April 2 meeting. His topic will be Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, Jr. With former Illinois Representative Gene Schlickman, Barnhart recently authored the first biography of the late governor: "Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights."

The presentation will tell of Kerner's connections to Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak, his World War II service with General William Westmoreland, his service in judicial and executive branches of government, and his entanglement with shady race track interests.

A short business meeting at 2:30 p.m. will precede the presentation. All members are welcome to attend.

City Council Ponders Landmark Status for Beverly Home

"Landmark" designation is being considered by the Chicago City Council for a home at 2314 W. 111th Place. It is a rare-in-Chicago pattern book home. Built in 1882, its plan was one from among those published in a Palliser's pattern book. Such books were basically catalogs of house styles for which blueprints could be purchased from the publisher.

The house, brought to the attention of Chicago's Commission on Historical Landmarks by Architectural Researcher Harold Wolff, was built in 1882 for Rev. Johan Alexis Edgren, a theology professor at Union Baptist Theological Seminary, located on the site now occupied by Morgan Park Academy. That seminary evolved into the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and was the element around which the University was founded by William Rainey Harper.

The catalog was officially known as Palliser's American Cottage Homes, and was considered the most influential pattern book of the 19th Century.

Rev. Edgren purchased the land in 1882 from the Blue Island Land and Development Co. The price of only



\$1 was predicated on an agreement to erect and occupy a dwelling on the premises before January 1, 1883.

The house is also an excellent example of Stick Style architecture, a system consisting of sheathing and siding attached to stud framing which also carries the chosen interior surface material. It is usually a neat and unembellished covering of the basic supporting frame of the structure.

Factual material and photograph drawn from an article in the Feb. 2000 issue of The Villager.

"UP FRONT and BACK HOME" World War II Exhibit

Complementary to the Historical Society's Wednesday morning World War II story-telling sessions described elsewhere in this issue is the summer-long exhibit at RHS titled "Up Front and Back Home". The RHS archives contain some WW II uniforms and other memorabilia, but RHS hopes to borrow additional items: especially photographs, and particularly those that illustrate the wartime effect on Beverly/Morgan Park area and its people.

Please write to Ridge Historical, or leave suggestions on the RHS telephone extension #1 for Paul Petraitis, or #2 for Sue Delves or Jim Smenos.

Bruce Walker of Wheaton, (formerly of 10245 S. Charles) a 1943 graduate of MPHS, has agreed to

advise Ridge Historical on presenting some days for reminiscence, as well as an opening event in June. He is also willing to help locate people who went from this area to become servicemen or women. Several years ago Walker gave leadership to a War Years Reunion at DePauw University, Greencastle, Ind.

FIRST PERSON STORY SESSIONS from WORLD WAR II

Did you know that there was an internment camp for Japanese-Americans in Chicago's South Suburbs during World War II?

Did you know that a local family participated in a national magazine's wartime editorial series on how to feed a family of four on \$12.50 a week?

These and other fascinating recollections were discussed at the first session of RHS's Storytellers project. The storytelling takes place at Ridge Historical Society each Wednesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Six people were present at the initial meeting in early March.

For a one-time fee of \$5 participants have help recording their memories on paper or as tape recordings. RHS has assembled member historians and journalists to help the public and RHS members exchange and document World War II experiences and knowledge from the home front as well as from the European and Pacific theaters. RHS members and non-members alike are welcome at the Wednesday morning sessions.

COMMITTEES ADDRESS RHS REORGANIZATION

Reorganization of Ridge Historical Society continues with three basic committees focusing on different areas needing attention.

The Planning Committee, Dave Daruszka, chair, is devoting its attention to goals and projects for a new publications committee. It initially formed a housing committee charged with supervising the maintenance and use of the physical properties.

The Archiving Committee is dealing with three separate cataloging systems and a mountain of papers that have never been cataloged. The latter are the committee's first priority followed by merger of the three cataloging systems. They expect to add a Windows data base to the attic computer, thus providing access to the catalog system from either of the two upper floors of Driscoll House. Eileen Klees and Linda Lamberty co-chair the Archiving Committee which meets at 2 p.m. Tuesdays and 10 a.m. Thursdays. Historian Maureen Gilligan recently joined that committee.

The Costumes Committee meets Tuesdays at 9 a.m. with Pat McGrail as chair. So far 69 costumes have been cataloged in a recently established card file. Committee members are mending the costumes as well as recording facts about them.

Doris Moulton chairs what is known as the **Objects Committee**. Their activity has centered on grouping types of historic objects (lamps, cameras, toys, for

Calendar of Events

Sunday April 2	General Meeting & Program, 2:30 p.m.
Monday April 3	RHS Board Meeting, 4 p.m.
Sunday April 23	Driscoll House closed for Easter
Monday May 1	RHS Board Meeting, 4 p.m.
Sunday May 28	World War II Exhibit opens
Monday May 29	Memorial Day parade features RHS float
Sunday June 4	General Meeting and Program, 2:30 p.m.
Monday June 5	RHS Board Meeting, 4 p.m.

example) with cataloging being the objective of future activity. The committee meets Thursdays at 7 p.m.

Each of the committees welcomes new members and will respond to telephone messages left at Driscoll House, (773) 881-1675.

WORKSHOP DEVOTED TO PROPERTIES MAINTENANCE & USE

As part of the RHS reorganization program, the Society's planning committee held a workshop that lasted much of a recent Saturday. Committee Chair, Dave Daruszka presided. Sixteen committee members attended and the session was open to all RHS members.

The morning session focused on structural maintenance of Driscoll House and grounds. For the afternoon the group separated into three groups for brainstorming about uses of the house.

Maintenance needs cited were deemed to exceed the current \$3300 annual maintenance budget, requiring another estimated \$5000 to \$10,000 each year for the next five years. There was consensus that 20 percent of the RHS budget should be earmarked annually for Driscoll House maintenance. A housing committee was established to monitor and address these physical problems. Bill Sandstrom and Doris Moulton will co-chair the new committee with Lois Grayston and Linda Lamberty as committee members. They will have an initial meeting March 28 and will welcome other RHS members willing to join.

The three "brainstorming" groups meeting in the afternoon were each charged to "come up with three or more possible (even wild) ideas for use of the house". Broad categories for usage included all current functions: RHS headquarters, meetings, social and public events, programs, exhibit galleries, housing for archives, a library and a museum.

Additional suggestions included pros and cons on maintaining the costumes collection and display; sponsoring an historic homes tour in the fall, sponsoring

a landscape showcase house contest, providing a specific space for a public research library and a designated reading area.

Installation of a photographic dark room was discussed as well as shifting the use of a number of the existing rooms. The issue of continuing a tenant/caretaker on premises was discussed but went unresolved.

The meeting was deemed productive by those attending. They look forward to action that will turn many of the concepts into realities.

Making Your VACATION TRAVEL PAY OFF FOR RHS

RHS members and friends are asked to include in their summer vacation or business travel a stop at historical society headquarters or meeting places in towns where they visit. Pick up brochures. Talk to the people on duty. Ask about their programs and activities.

Ideas and printed matter you can glean from such visits can be useful as RHS reorganization plans progress. One board member took this action with visits to the historical societies in Geneva, St. Charles and Batavia, Ill. and returned with several good purloined suggestions and interesting print material.

Tribune Feature Article PUTS FOCUS ON RIDGE

The Ridge and the history of the community is the focus of a Chicago Tribune Magazine article published in its January 30 issue. Rick Kogan, the by-lined author of the article, caught Linda Lamberty and Sue Delves at Ridge Historical Society during his visit there, quotes them liberally, and in addition, lifts some of Paul Petraitis' words from an earlier issue of Newsletter.

In quoting Sue Delves, the article offers a good explanation of "The Ridge" both geographically and culturally. It does well in articulating the nature of the collection to be found at Ridge Historical, the scope of types of people and groups who are drawn to the place and who find much here that addresses their specific interests. Visitors range from scholars to grade school children.

Paul Petraitis, executive director, is quoted as seeing the collection as history on a community level — the story of local events which are as important to record as those which draw national headlines.

RHS Collection Adds More LOCAL AUTHOR'S WORK

As a recent gift from Anne Leonard Books, RHS has received the 1947 publication titled "Baby Care From Birth to Birthday" by Edmund G. Lawler, M.D. Dr. Lawler was then chairman of the Pediatric Department of Little Company of Mary Hospital.

The Anne Leonard gift also includes "Burn, Killer, Burn" which was published in 1962 and gave author Paul Crump sufficient attention to have his murder conviction reviewed, leading to his release.

A gift from Sue Delves is titled "Walter Burley Griffin in America": a book of photographs with essay by

Mati Maldre, a catalog and selected bibliography by Paul Kruty.

Morgan Park High School senior **Samantha Macola** has donated her winning entry in the 1999 Chicago Metro History Fair: a poster triptych of Morgan Park Academy's military years which featured her great uncle, Robert Sinclair Innes, as an Academy student. Ms. Macola is the granddaughter of Harry and Dorothy Innes Youngquist.

Bequest Enriches RHS Collections

Ridge Historical Society will soon receive a coverlet, hand woven in 1854, a 54-piece collection of silver teaspoons and a silver coffee service as a bequest from the late **Evelyn (Mrs. Edward M.) Durkee**. Mrs. Durkee was a long-time resident of the community and a member of Holy Nativity Church.

From the DIRECTOR'S DESK by Paul Petraitis

RHS Receives Treasure from Woman's Club

As I write this I hold in my hands one of the greatest local histories ever published: John H. Volp's 300-page *The First Hundred Years* a history of the Blue Island Ridge from 1835 to 1935.

This treasure trove of information came to us from the Morgan Park Woman's Club who, I am happy to announce, are in the process of donating their archives to Ridge Historical Society. Club members Pat McGrail and Julie DeHaan invited me to talk to their March meeting and made their announcement of the Club's gift at the end of the afternoon.

Their 100+ years of community involvement is an inspiration, and their files will prove to be an invaluable addition to the RHS collection.

Please DO YOUR DUES

Year 2000 paid membership of RHS currently stands at 135 members. Membership cards for about 75 of these people have been mailed, with those who have paid quite recently yet to receive theirs.

Look to the address panel of this Newsletter for a green dot. If green is there it is a reminder that your dues have not been received. Green dotters will also find a membership envelope enclosed for added convenience in coming up to date with your dues payment.

Membership dues levels are \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, \$50 for a Contributor, \$100 for a Patron, and \$500 for a Guarantor. Due it now!

RHS MISSION STATEMENT (a reminder)

The mission of Ridge Historical Society is to preserve and interpret the distinct history of the Morgan Park, Beverly Hills and Washington Heights communities. Through its collections and activities, the Society will advocate educational programs and research that explore the community in relationship to the social and cultural history of the United States.

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Newsletter
Elmer H. Johnson, Editor

10621 SEELEY AVENUE
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