

# Ridge Historical Society

# Newsletter

APRIL - MAY, 2001

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## Ridge Historical Celebrates 30th Year

by David Daruszka, President

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Ridge Historical Society. RHS was not the first historical society in the community, as it was preceded by the Morgan Park Historical Society. What happened to MPHS? My guess is that, like most volunteer organizations that fail to thrive, it expired from lack of interest. What one generation cherishes, another relegates to the dustbin of history.

As we enter our 30th year, Ridge Historical Society faces many challenges. Membership is aging and the numbers remain static. This calls for an effort to reach out to the community and communicate what RHS does and why it is an important asset to its current and future residents.

Each current member is encouraged to make a personal effort to recruit at least one new member. Members are the Society's source of volunteers as well as being the principal source of financial support.

Another was to begin an outreach campaign that takes the RHS message to the community. This is a project I have personally undertaken. There will soon be an audiovisual program about RHS and the history of the Ridge communities. It will be offered to various community organizations, together with a speaker who will promote membership in RHS as a way to keep the rich history of our community alive.

I would like to thank our long-time members for their support and generosity that has brought RHS to its 30th anniversary. Ridge Historical must now focus efforts on ensuring that it will be around to celebrate the next 30 years.

The Ridge Historical Society website is  
[www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org).

Recent additions concern landmark train stations  
in the community and view the work in  
progress, restoring  
the 111th Street station

Two stories about World War II pilots ran on the front page of the February-March issue of the RIIS Newsletter. One related to what was then a future program to be addressed by Fred Olivi, the other to a past program that featured a script about the Navy dive bomber, Ted Speropulos. The accompanying photograph of a young man dressed in pilot's garb was mistakenly captioned as Fred Olivi. It was really a portrait of a young and vital Ted Speropulos. A red-faced editor's apologies are extended to both families, especially that of the late Ted Speropulos.



## "Chicago Bungalow" Gains Recognition as an Architectural Style

Recognizing the significance of the "Chicago Bungalow" as a historic housing style, the City in partnership with the Chicago Architecture Foundation has created the Chicago Bungalow Association. Its purpose is to assist homeowners with historically sensitive rehabs and upgrades.

Those related to such structures can apply for inclusion of the property in a registry of historic bungalows, thus becoming eligible for low cost loans for purchase, for restoration and expansion, for free architectural assistance, for expedited building permits and for grants for energy efficient technologies.

RHS Board member Mati Maldre is the official photographer for The Architecture Foundation's major bungalow exhibit, tour and symposium during this year, 2001. RIIS can supply an official bungalow information packet and more information is available on the [website](http://www.chicagobungalow.org) [www.chicagobungalow.org](http://www.chicagobungalow.org) or by phone: (312) 642-9900

## RHS Involved in Holocaust Memorial Program

A Living History program featuring Joseph Hausner, a Holocaust survivor of infamous Auschwitz, Dachau and Kaufering concentration camps, will be the speaker Wednesday, April 25 at Beverly Art Center, 2153 W. 111th Street. The program is jointly sponsored by Ridge Historical Society and Beverly Art Center. Mr. Hausner will present his program twice that day, known as Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day): in the morning for children and at 1:00 p.m. for a general adult audience.

Mr. Hausner was a 16-year old Hungarian boy when he was arrested and taken to Auschwitz. All other members of his family perished in the Holocaust.

After liberation by the U.S. Army, Mr. Hausner emigrated to Latin America where he spent more than 30 years working for National Cash Register and then became a partner in Arthur Andersen & Co. Now retired and living in Chicago, Mr. Hausner is active in Northwestern University's Institute for Learning in Retirement, where he began writing his own story and has led courses in music appreciation, the history of Latin America, history of the Balkans and other topics. He is author of *Surviving the Cold Crematorium*.

Tickets for the Holocaust Memorial Day program are \$4 for students and \$5 for adults. For tickets or further information call (773) 445-3838 or 881-1675. Readers are asked to mention this Living History program to teachers and friends, and suggest a notice in your church bulletin.

## Morgan Family Initiatives Launched Community by Paul Petraitis

The Morgans of Upwood fame, were the largest landholding family in southern Cook County. Only Stephen Douglas around Lake Calumet and the Andrews brothers along the Calumet River, east of Blue Island, came close. (The Andrews family bible is on exhibit at RHS in the costume room.)

The Morgans transported the world of the English gentry to the Illinois prairie, injecting a significant element of Brit culture amidst German and Irish farmers and the American wild west stage coach types, putting up fences in the wilderness.

Their nearest neighbor was Richard Bingle who located on the Ridge in 1841, the very end of a three-year period of hard times in the midwest when Chicago lost population. The failure of many midwest state banks had caused the so-called panic of 1837, bringing a halt to work on much needed internal improvements like the Illinois-Michigan canal.

The Bingle house later became the William Morgan residence and for years was the groundskeeper house for Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

The Morgans, originally from Surrey, England (where Elton John and Eric Clapton and other gentry currently maintain substantial mansions) made their money in the diamond mines of South Africa. They had a household staff and hired a tutor for their children.

They embraced the local shepherd economy that

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

The presence of a return envelope in your NEWSLETTER indicates that your membership renewal to *Ridge Historical Society* has not been received. The envelope and the membership form makes it convenient to do so. Please indicate your support and endorsement of the good things RHS is doing by adopting this easy way to renew.

had its early center in nearby Blue Island which, for a time, surpassed Chicago in the production of wool.

After draining the swamps along 95th Street and rerouting the Vincennes Road around their farm, the Morgans, along with Frederick Dyer of Underground Railroad fame, built a substantial stone sheepcote into the ridge to protect their flocks.

None of their neighbors could afford such luxury, and the flocks of those without the means to construct a huge barn, suffered poaching by wolves.

Wolf hunts, organized by Morgan and Andrews families, pretty well rid Worl Ridge (a wooded bluff near 115th and Racine) of these varmints by 1870. These forays resembled Surrey fox hunts.

Soon all large game that had been in the area was gone: deer, bear, panthers, lynx, beaver and mink. Interestingly, coyotes are currently making a comeback in the forest preserves and around Harbor Point International golf course on Lake Calumet.

(For further reading on local pioneers consult Andrea's *History of Cook County*, two copies of which are at Driscoll House.)

## LOCAL INDIAN LORE

Before Mike Stachnik left Ridge Historical Society he and I began compiling facts on local Indians. Tribes associated with the Chicago/Calumet area include the Illinois, Pottawatomies, Miami, Ottawa, Chippewa (Ojibwa), Mascoutin, Fox and Winnebago. As historians tell us, Indian history and geography is confusing because they had no concept of personal property and the tribes led a peripatetic lifestyle, following game south during winter months.

Major villages, occupied nearly year around, could be found just south of St. Francis Hospital in Blue Island, at the north end of the Ridge in Dan Ryan Woods and on "Acme Bend" near 127th and Michigan Avenue. The dozens of summer camps that dotted the area were usually sited on wooded ridges.

Let's we think that history happens someplace else, it should be recalled that it was in our very neighborhood that Pottawatomie War Chief Main Poc (who had his villages south of Blue Island) assembled his "troops" here preparatory to the Ft. Dearborn massacre.

(For further reading try R. David Edmunds' epic titled "*The Pottawatomies: Keepers of the Fire*".)

As we disassemble the RHS World War II exhibit, thanks are extended to all the veterans, their families and many private collectors who made this important exhibit possible. In the future we will be working with history teachers to develop a World War II "History Pack" and accompanying curriculum.

## COOKBOOKS and HISTORY

By Harold T. Wolff, RHS Registrar

We've all seen the movie: The mortgage is being foreclosed, the farm/resort/orphanage is going to be shuttered and the loveable old couple who have owned the place their whole lives is going to be dispossessed. At this point the Mickey Rooney character, or maybe it's a Judy Garland character, rushes center stage and yells to ecstatic response, "Hey, gang, let's put out a cookbook!"

Awright, awright, I've been watching the Junior Service Guild channel on cable TV too much and what the youths usually want is to put on a show.

But for many churches, civic organizations and even PTAs, the 20th century's classic response to the need for a fundraising vehicle was the community-based cookbook.

As registrar during Ridge Historical Society's ongoing project to catalog nearly 30 years of acquisitions I have come up with six specimens of culinary do-it-yourself guides which may not amount to even a quarter of what has been published by Beverly/Morgan Park institutions over the years.

Members may question whether such Baedekers through the epicurean topography are rightly the province of a historical society. The Chicago Historical Society collects them, and if we accept Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's dictum, "we are what we eat," we must be prepared to respond to scholars' inquiries as to the changing dietary preferences of our communities.

The six cookbooks in the RHS collection date from 1904 to 1986, some elaborately printed and bound, others mimeographed sheets between covers of wallpaper samples. All have recipes from local cooks, although some of the later ones appear to have been interlarded with some inserted by publishers specializing in this kind of fundraiser, formulas for salves, for removing stains and other household hints.

Examples follow:

The Ridge Cook Book, dated 1904 and compiled by the Woman's Guild of the (Episcopal) Church of the Mediator in Morgan Park. The cover on our two copies depicts a colonial gentleman and bears the inscription "Without ye door let sorrow lie, And if for cold it hapt to die, Weile bury't in a Christmas pye and evermore be Merrie." Perhaps nothing in it will indicate more forcefully the differences between their time and ours than Susan K. Wilder's recipe for a peanut butter sandwich: "Grind well roasted peanuts through finest grater or meat chopper: add salt to taste and enough melted butter to form a paste that can be easily spread."

Space does not permit quotation from others in the RHS collection but they were compiled by the Ridge Service Guild, The Beverly Hills Woman's Club, the Ruth Circle of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, The Vanderpoel PTA-LSC Cookbook,

The Castle Centennial Cookbook published by the Women's Alliance of Beverly Unitarian Church. In this book, quiches have their own section.

RHS would welcome more cookbooks in its collection if readers would donate them. Chicago Historical Society has a cookbook from Bethany Union Church, for example, but RHS does not.

Other publications which Ridge Historical covets for its collection include:

Issues of Chicago History, any year, the magazine of the Chicago Historical Society.

Issues of Hillcrest, a local magazine that appeared in 1929 and 1930.

Issues of Ridge Record, a turn-of-the-century local newspaper.

A.T. Andreas' History of Chicago in three volumes.

Monsignor Harry Koenig's History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago (two volumes) and the companion history of the institutions of the Archdiocese (two volumes).

Any biography of a local resident or history of a local institution.

Any genealogies of local families, including those simply put together on typewriter or word processor.

### ITEM OF GENERAL INTEREST

*The last meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Morgan Park was held April 22, 1914. The previous day the village had been annexed by the city of Chicago. Village president at the time of the annexation was Fred L. Kimmey.*

### ANNUAL MEETING and DINNER

Dave Daruszka named President

The Ridge Historical Society annual meeting, February 11, included election of officers for the year ahead: Dave Daruszka, president; Eileen Klees, vice-president; Kate Eaton, secretary; Bill Sandstrom, treasurer.

Board members elected to serve until 2003 are Dave Daruszka, Kate Eaton, Cindy Fielding, Grace Kuikman, Linda Lamberty, Rosemarie Lebensorger and Mati Maldre.

All 60 members present were delighted with the site for the dinner and meeting, the Dr. German House, and with the warm welcome of German House owners, Cindy and Don Fielding. RHS especially appreciated the Fieldings foregoing their usual fees, and lending their expertise to make it a memorable event.

With a professional level slide presentation, Dave Daruszka illustrated the history of railroading in the Ridge communities, and included highlights of Metra's five-year project to rehab commuter stations in the neighborhood. Metra uses Illinois First program funds for the buildings' overhaul. The 111th Street station is a highly visible example of Metra's intentions. The rehab project was announced after the city designated the stations as landmarks.

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Elmer H. Johnson, Editor  
NewslEttEr

Ridge  
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Society

DATED MATERIAL — FIRST CLASS MAIL

## **NAGASAKI BOMBING PROGRAM WELL RECEIVED**

RHS's first attempt at a fundraiser in an off-site location was a financial success with splendid attendance figures.

The speaker was Fred Olivi, co-pilot of "Bockscar," the plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki. As he spoke he was backed by a large projected photo of his fellow crew members designed by David Daruszka. Olivi explained the action shown in a film on the loading of the atomic bombs, and signed copies of his book, *"Decision at Nagasaki: The Mission that Almost Failed."*

The program was a finale to the Historical Society's 10-month emphasis on World War II programming and exhibits. Many veterans attended and more than half the audience returned to RHS's Driscoll House headquarters for a viewing of the exhibit and for refreshments.

Ridge Historical Society extends thanks to Washington and Jane Smith Home for making its auditorium available for this program and particularly to Gary Johansson, its Executive Director, for the excellent arrangements. "It will be the Home's gift to the Society," is the way he put it.

### THINGS to COME

RHS Board Meeting: April 2. 4 p.m.  
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PROGRAM  
at Beverly Art Center  
Student Program: 10 a.m.  
General Public Program: 1 p.m.

Members' meeting & program: May 6. 2:30 p.m.  
RHS Board Meeting: May 7. 4 p.m.

### **RHS Becomes a "DELEGATE AGENCY" of Chicago**

RHS has recently been designated a Delegate Agency of the City of Chicago. That official status means that this Society is recognized by the Department of Housing as a source of information to owners of historic homes, related to rehabbing or restoration. Questions about permits, landmark ordinances, or house histories can be directed to Paul Petraitis at (773) 881-1675 or to his home (773) 264-6898.

**VISIT the RHS WEBSITE**  
[www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org)

to learn about Ridge Historical activities, exhibits, Harold Wolff's house articles and Dave Daruska's ongoing documentation of the 111th Street Rock Island Metra station restoration.

**JUST ADDED:** our new e-mail address:  
[ridge\\_history@hotmail.com](mailto:ridge_history@hotmail.com)