

# Ridge Historical Society

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

# Newsletter

Aug 2001

10621 SEELEY AVENUE • CHICAGO, ILL. 60643 • (773) 881-1675 • David Daruszka, President (773) 233-8788

## *Life of Late Arthur Baer Culminates as Champion of Beverly*

The June 10 meeting of the Ridge Historical Society was treated to a review of the life of Arthur A. Baer, November 1896 - November 1975. The speaker was Bill Barnhart of the Chicago Tribune who had previously presented the same material to a meeting of The Chicago Literary Club. Mr. Barnhart credits Ridge Historical Society archives as the source for much of his information.

Arthur's father, Herman Baer, was a major influence in Arthur's life. Herman and his wife operated a general store at 103rd Street and Vincennes, which Herman started when he was 24 years old. Herman was born in East Prussia and his wife in Bohemia. Their religious belief and practice is described as conservatively Jewish.

Arthur was recognized early on for his talent for writing. A student at Calumet High School, he wrote the school song. As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago from 1915 to 1918 (now recognized as a "distinguished alum") he wrote for the student newspaper and then, in 1917, became editor of the *Daily Maroon*. Many of his writings championed women's rights.

During summer months Arthur worked in a logging camp. He belonged to Phi Beta Gamma, a literary fraternity. His university experience was followed by a stint in the U.S. Navy until 1919.

Mustered out, he found work on the editorial staff of *Dial*, a magazine published in New York City. A principal responsibility was writing book reviews.

Desiring to return to Chicago, he couldn't find an editorial job here and went to work for Swift & Co. in its advertising department.

He left Swift to assume management of the family store which prospered under his leadership. In 1929 Arthur was invited to be a director of Beverly Bank, was made a vice president of the bank, and in 1944 became its president. The Baer store was sold in 1960 and Arthur stayed with the bank.

Late in the 1960s or early 70s Pat Stanton proposed to the Catholic churches of the area a program he called "Beverly Now." He was soon invited to make his proposal to Protestant churches in the area as well. Arthur Baer invited Stanton to his office for a visit, and the revitalization of BAPA was one product of those conversations. At the same time, Baer was



helping create Beverly Art Center, built for \$156,000. BAC opened in 1969.

Mr. Baer also encouraged and financed the restoration of the Beverly Literary Association. Before there was a Beverly Art Center Mr. Baer helped sponsor community concerts.

It was concluded that one of Arthur Baer's major abilities was to recognize talent in other people and encourage its development and productivity in any way that he could.

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

AUGUST 6 • RHS Board Meeting: 4 p.m.

AUGUST 12 • Ice Cream Social: 2 to 5 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 10 • RHS Board Meeting: 7 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 15 • Annual Garage Sale: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 30 • Members' Meeting & Program: 2:30 p.m.  
featuring Ellen Skerrett

## Volunteers for Ice Cream Social

Additional volunteers are needed for August 12 from 2 to 5 p.m. to help with the 2001 version of the annual Ice Cream Social at Ridge Historic House. Please contact Kate Eaton, (773) 233-9806 if you can be available to help that day.

## GOOD STUFF Great Deals

by Kate Eaton

Some things can't be bought in stores — like stuff that goes out of style although you still like it. Or a candlestick holder to match the lone survivor of a pair your great-aunt gave you.

For things like these and prices that won't make you flinch, join friends and neighbors anytime Saturday, September 15, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Ridge Historical Society annual Garage Sale. The best excess stuff in the neighborhood will be on display and sold at bargain prices.

On the other side of the picture, Chairman of the sale, Gen Graf, will accept donations of your treasures-for-sale before September 15. The exquisite junk your relatives have given you for Christmas and birthdays has a viable and valuable outlet. Unload it to the RHS Garage Sale and be assured it has served a worthy reason for being.

To donate, leave a message for Gen Graf at Driscoll House, 881-1675. And to get the best deal you may make all year, come to Ridge Historical Society, 10621 Seeley Avenue, on Saturday, September 15, for the annual RHS Garage Sale!

### New RHS Treasure: 1854 Coverlet

by Harold T. Wolff

Among the more interesting recent acquisitions of the Ridge Historical Society is the Heilbronn Coverlet, a small (2 x 2 1/2 yards) bed covering received last year from the estate of the late Evelyn Durkee. The coverlet is laid out in red, white and blue bands of various widths, across which pass designs of birds, snowflakes and the like. It appears to be of the double-weave type, which means that the colors on one side reverse the colors of the other.

The basis for our information is an inscription woven into one corner: "FANCY COVERLET WOVEN by G. HEILBRONN, LANCASTER O. 1854." Standard reference works reveal that G. Heilbronn was a professional weaver active in Basil and Lancaster, Fairfield County, Ohio from the late 1830s to the 1850s. This is a short distance southeast of Columbus, the state capital.

Indications are that this coverlet was almost certainly produced on a Jacquard loom, an ingenious device invented by Joseph Jacquard in France at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. For this he received a small pension from Napoleon, and had his prototype loom smashed by outraged employees of weavers, who feared the device would end their jobs.

But the loom was so essential to the demand for woven goods that its use spread rapidly, and it arrived in America by 1820.

The Jacquard loom was a semi-mechanical device in which the harness — the thread-holders whose raised or lowered position as the shuttle was passed between their threads, determined the pattern produced — were controlled by punch cards mounted on a revolving mechanical roller. (In histories of electronic data processing, the Jacquard loom is invariably cited as one of the ancestors of modern automata.) Thus,

our Heilbronn coverlet was the output of a small but sophisticated manufacturing operation that was the "state of the art" for the mid-Nineteenth Century.

It would be tempting to speculate that the Society's coverlet came west with the pioneers of the Ridge in mid-Nineteenth Century. However it shows no signs of fading (it may not have been washed since it was made) and so little wear, even on the fringe, that this remarkable bed covering almost certainly spent all of its 147-year life in chests or trunks, and presumably our pioneers only hauled things to Illinois that they intended to use.

Nevertheless it has survived to us as a remarkable example of the technology of the 1850's and we are grateful to the testator for leaving it to us.

### RHS Ice Cream Social

August 12, 2 p.m.

The 2001 version of the RHS annual Ice Cream Social at Driscoll House is adding 50-cent pony rides for children. The Sunday, August 12 Social is from 2 to 5 p.m. with pony rides offered from 2:30 to 4:30. Parents and grandparents are advised to bring their cameras to record the mounted riders from their families. Home baked cookies and cakes, from board members, will supplement the ice cream.

Admission to the entire event is \$3 for children and \$5 for adults. Any who becomes a new member of Ridge Historical Society during the Social will be admitted free!

Colorful posters and flyers promoting the event, printed by RHS President Dave Daruszka, may be seen throughout the community.

### FROM the DIRECTOR'S DESK by Paul Petraitis

Run right out and pick up the July/August 2001 issue of *Midwest Living* (after you have finished this *Newsletter* and mailed your donation to RHS). Beverly's Grace Kuikman takes the editors for a tour of Beverly, pointing out the "fantastic homes and gardens" that make our area one of "the most interesting little neighborhood gems in the entire city of Chicago." Driscoll House appears in the background of a delightful shot of a mother and daughter biking along Longwood Drive. The editors explain that the neighborhood was once "a region of peach orchards and blooming peony fields."

Please let RHS know if you have any old fruit trees on your property — orchards of all kinds abounded here in the old days: the Ingleharts, Wilcoxes and Morgans all had substantial orchards. Ridge Historical is especially interested in any red peony blooming locally because word has been passed down that in 1844 Queen Victoria gave one of her ladies-in-waiting a red peony root as a going-away present. The lady was Mrs. Thomas Morgan who was enroute to the "interior of America."

The flower took root at 92nd and Pleasant and later at 108th and Hoyne. This story, originally published in the *South End Reporter* in 1943, reminds us that history isn't all brick and mortar.

Readers of the last issue have called to request more details on the first local wedding referred to there: the 1845 wedding between Cyrus Jackson and Sarah Bingle.

Jackson's parents lived along the Vincennes Road, north of Kyle's Tavern (83rd Street). They came here from New York, as did the Bingles. Daguerreotypes of the Bingles (probably taken back east as the technique had just reached Chicago in 1845) are part of the exhibit. Also on display is a "mercury glass"

## RHS Board Addresses Finances

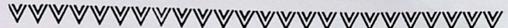
by Dave Daruszka, President

The Executive Board of the Ridge Historical Society met recently regarding the financial condition of the organization. Based on the RHS current balance and projected income it recommended layoffs of the Executive Director and Registrar until October 1. The action was approved at the July 9 Board meeting. Reinstatement depends on fund-raising to cover salaries for the remainder of the year and projections into the future. RHS has reached this unfortunate point due to events beyond our control and lack of timely action to ensure future financial well being.

RHS derives operating income from an endowment fund, from the proceeds of our programs, membership dues and various donations. The system may not be adequate to maintain the museum or fund future growth. We will face more maintenance expense similar to the roof repairs performed this spring. Future planning must include budgeting future upkeep of Driscoll House if it is to continue as RHS headquarters

As a volunteer organization we have fallen short of recruiting enough people to perform tasks such as archiving our collection. Thus it was necessary to pay a Registrar to begin a lengthy process of creating a computer database of our collection. The time and cost exceeded our initial estimates. While there are many great ideas and possibilities for raising funds, we are short the number of hands to plan and successfully execute them. A dedicated cadre of Board members continues to see solutions to our funding needs, but this is a long-term process.

Our mission as a society is not only collecting and preserving history, but also interpreting it and making it available to the public. We have reached a turning point that threatens our mission. During coming months we will be appealing to our members to help keep the Ridge Historical Society a vital and vibrant part of the community. If there is anything you can do, financially or by volunteering time and expertise, please step forward now. RHS needs your help.



Volunteers are needed to help with the annual Ice Cream Social, scheduled this year for Sunday, August 12 from 2 to 5 p.m. Please contact Kate Eaton at (773) 233-9806 if you are available.



It is with deepest sorrow that we inform members of the death of Mrs. Ruth Wilson, a long-time docent at RHS. While part of the Beverly neighborhood she was also active in Bethany Union Church, Ridge Camera Club and the League of Women Voters.

Condolences to the family may be addressed to Ray Quisenberry, 216 W. Coventry Place, Mt. Prospect, IL. 60056-1006.



**Ron Hoeller and Linda Lamberty among the original growth oaks in West Pullman Park, once known as Andrews Woods**

paperweight, said to have once graced the William Morgan table.

Also displayed is the "Andrews Bible" whose full story is just now coming together. The work is being done with the help of RHS Researcher Linda Lamberty working with David Andrews' great-great-great grandson, Ronald Hoeller of Bolingbrook.

Donated by Sylvia McNamara of South Wood Street, the bible, with pressed leaves intact, made the trip from Pennsylvania to Calumet Township in 1835 when brothers David and William came west to buy land. East Morgan Park's Ada Park was former Andrews property, as was Cedar Park Cemetery, Eisenhower High School and West Pullman Park where the accompanying photograph was taken.

## Community Churches Subject of September 30 RHS Program

How Protestants and Catholics used local churches to define themselves, create community and leave their imprint on Chicago is the topic of the Sunday, September 30 RHS members' meeting beginning at 2:30 p.m. The program will be presented by Ellen Skerrett, Beverly area author, historian and research scholar with the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is editor of *At the Crossroads: Old St. Patrick's and the Chicago Irish* and co-author of *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods*.

For the RHS meeting Ms. Skerrett will focus on the religious history of Beverly Hills/Morgan Park as well as other parts of Chicago. She will explain how sacred places built and owned by New England Yankees, Swedes, Irish, French Canadians and African-Americans reflect the diversity of the neighborhoods' religious infrastructure and provide historical perspective on the evolution of Morgan Park and Beverly Hills.

Currently Ms. Skerrett is at work on an examination of Hull House and its neighborhood in the early 20th Century and is a contributing editor to a forthcoming book about Chicago bungalows, edited by Beverly residents Domininc A. Pacyga and Charles Shanabruck.

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