

Ridge Historical Society

The Ridge Historical Society website is
www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org

Board Meetings: 2nd Wednesday
of April & May at 7:30 p.m.

Newsletter

APRIL - MAY, 2002

10621 SEELEY AVENUE · CHICAGO, ILL. 60643 · (773) 881-1675 ·

GENE DELVES, PRESIDENT

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Sunday, April 14, 2:30 p.m.

(Free to RHS members, \$3 for others)

Gurdon Saltenstall Hubbard, whose achievements are central to the pioneer era locally and in the south suburbs, will be the focus of the continuing Petraitis Lecture Series.

You have heard of Hubbard's Trail. This program will detail the importance of Hubbard laying out Vincennes Road, uniting the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley. Paul will trace the road's various early paths, running the length of the Ridge from 91st Street through Blue Island. Hubbard is credited as father of four towns and the four counties: Iroquois, Will, Kankakee and Vermillion. At first a fur trader and frontiersman, he transformed into an accomplished entrepreneur and statesman.

Sunday, May 5, 2:30 p.m. (note: first Sunday)

"Geology of the Ridge" is the topic for the Paul Petraitis lecture for May. He will explore how the Ridge was formed and the way weather and drainage continue to shape the land today.

Monday, May 6, 9:45 a.m.

A Spring wildflower walk through Dan Ryan Woods will assemble at 9142 Winchester Ave. and be led on a leisurely stroll by Sue and Gene Delves. The native plants should be at their finest as the group proceeds down the steep hill to 88th and Longwood, beside the winding flagstone walk along the streambed and westward to the dry pond near 89th and Leavitt. The group should see tooth, waterleaf, carpets of white trout lilies, violet, red trillium, Canadian ginger, bluebells, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, yellow violet, and possibly wild hyacinth. The tour cannot be done in the rain so a rain date would have to be arranged. Those not able to walk the distance can meet others along the route by pre-arrangement.

Please call the Delves (773) 445-5806, to indicate interest.

If you find a membership envelope in this current Newsletter it suggests that RHS has not received your dues for 2002. If you have questions related to your membership payment, please contact Membership Chair Lisa Jaburek. (773) 238-2377.

RHS ELECTS OFFICERS & BOARD

The February 10 Annual Meeting of the Ridge Historical Society included the election of officers and eight Board members to serve two year terms and three Board members to fill one year vacancies. Officers elected are as follows:

Eugene Delves, President
Eileen Klees, Vice President; Bill Barnhart, Secretary; Julie DeHaan, Corresponding and Membership Secretary; Bill Sandstrom, Treasurer; Sue Delves, Historian; Pat McGrail, Curator

Continuing Board Members (until 2003): Kate Eaton, Cindy Fielding, Grace Kuikman, Linda Lamberty, Mati Maldre, and filling one year vacancies: Joyce Black, Carol Belshaw and Steve Zang.

Board Members until 2004: Bill Barnhart, Eugene Delves, Lisa Jaburek, Walt Kelly, Eileen Klees, Lori McGunn, Maureen Shields, Jim Smenos.

Board Members Emeritus: John Baily, Nancy Byrne, Julie DeHaan, Sue Delves, Lois Grayston, Doris Moulton, Joan Wynne Murphy, Bill Sandstrom, Carl Spencer, Audrey Sullivan, Linda Lane, Pat McGrail.

New President Anticipates RHS Future

I am the new kid on the block as your president at RHS, but I have been around for awhile. I grew up here in the 19th Ward, believing as a child that the 19th Ward was the center of the Universe and that Alderman Duffy was right up there with Mayor Kelly and President Roosevelt. RHS has always been "Sue's thing", although, in truth she is the newer of the two of us kids, having lived in these parts only since 1957. But I am excited about getting more involved and am greatly honored to now be serving as your president.

At my first meeting on March 13, 2002, it was quite apparent to me that to establish ourselves as a jewel among historical societies, we need more members and, of course, more money. I am enjoying recruiting members among people whom I see regularly. ("Of course I'll join. Nobody ever asked me before.") So let's all get busy and every week sign up at least one new member. That will not only broaden our fame, but also our fortune. —Gene Delves



The Chicago Female College
114th Place & Lothair Avenue
circa the 1890's

The photographer was Henry Ralph Koopman II. The print from which this is reproduced was made from Koopman's glass negative by Paul Petraitis.

On the left, the young ladies and their guests have spread out in the shade of the trees, while at the right a group of children are playing around a hammock. The east door of the building is open, indicating the source of their refreshment. The building was designed by Burnham and Root in 1874 — the first year of their partnership.

Henry Ralph Koopman II established the first photographic studio in Roseland in 1884 at 11106 S. Michigan Ave.



The son of a Dutch preacher, he had been educated in Paterson, New Jersey and was married, with two children. Following the Pullman strike (1894), he founded the Roseland Chamber of Commerce and was active in the Calumet Historical Society. He retired from photography in 1914 to raise Rhode Island reds. (*Those are chickens, you city folks*).

The glass negative from which this print was made is one of four surviving from Koopman's work. It has long been in Paul Petraitis' possession, unidentified, until he realized what it depicts. —Harold T. Wolff

Sarah, married Cyrus Jackson in 1845 and another daughter, Emma, married William Morgan (a son of Thomas) in 1856.



Emma Bingle
(Mrs. William Morgan)

Printed by Mati Maldre from a Daguerrotype negative by Mer Madsen

There were three Jackson daughters: Flora married George W. Bailey (son of Bennet Bailey); Cornelia married Frank Silva who, with his brother Charles Silva, promoted and developed the Village of Morgan Park; and Mamie first married Rueben Davis and later Lewis Lowery.

Several artifacts in the current exhibit belonged to William and Emma, most notably an album containing "carte de viste" images of many Morgan family members and other local individuals. A letter, dated 1860, from Sarah to her mother Mary Bingle, tells of family doings and health, plans for Mary's "return to housekeeping" and "the auctions" (presumably land auctions) as their entertainment.

The Jacksons were the great-great grandparents of Linda Lamberty. Their grandson, Art Francis, came to the Ridge during World War II and lived at 2024 W. 103rd Street.

Much has been told in former exhibits and publications about young William Barnard who was hired in 1847 to tutor the large family of Morgan children and boarded with Mrs. Wilcox and her children at 100th Street and Beverly Avenue. Another New York State family, they arrived here in 1844, but Mr. Wilcox died before they reached the property. William Barnard and his brother, Eurastus, married sisters: Miranda and Mary Wilcox.

There is more to the story of the Ridge which will come in later *Newsletters* and RHS exhibits.

Centurian Celebrates

John Baily's 100th birthday was a fine celebration of his life, shared by nearly 150 of his family and friends from near and far. Those assembled were treated to a pictorial overview of all aspects of his long life, assembled by his daughter, Edris Hoover, son John, and luncheon chair Cindy Fielding, then photographed and edited by Mati Maldre.

Reminders of John's interests decorated each table: Kiwanis peanuts, antique tools and elephants from two vast personal collections, and a photo of John himself. Contributions to Ridge Historical Society's endowment fund in tribute and respect for John, now total \$5700 and continue to come in. John started the Fund with his own gifts, matched by Illinois Bell.

Following are remarks made at the party by Jerry Taylor about John's career.

"My acquaintance with John goes back to when we both worked for Illinois Bell Telephone; "Old Ma Bell" we called her. John had close to 40 years when he retired in 1967.

We had warm summer days in a rather old office building at Washington and Franklin, but John never removed his suit coat. He didn't sit still very long either. He was out and around the building in meetings and when he got back there was always a stack of callbacks that his secretary had compiled. John sat right down and dug into them. He had the knack of talking on the phone and checking out something else at the same time.

When 1967 came along, bringing him to his mandatory retirement age, I'd hear him saying, 'Doggone, I'd keep working if they'd let me.' He liked the action.

John saw telephony go from operator-involved calling to dial service, and the disappearance of 4-party lines and the thousands of coin-operated telephones in homes. Neighbors who had no phone would go to a house where there was one, and put a nickel in the box for each call. The coin collector came to your house each month, unlocked the coin box, counted the nickels on your kitchen table and rolled the coins into a paper wrapper -- often with one hand -- and then he'd figure your bill and write it out himself. Probably he had a cup of coffee with the family before going to the next house.

Some of you recall when we changed the Beverly Central Office at 99th near Prospect, from Manual to Dial. It was the mid-1950's

John had to retire in 1967 and went on to some interesting and exciting years in the travel business and other activities and hobbies. He has kept busy contributing in many ways to other people and the community. Congratulations, John, on your good life!"

Foster McCrum Palmer 1914 - 2002

With great regret, Ridge Historical Society records the death of Foster M. Palmer of Watertown, Mass., a longtime non-resident RHS member and occasional author of reminiscences in these pages. His most recent article appeared in the October-November, 2001 issue. He graduated from Morgan Park High School in 1930, living then at 11017 Hoynes. He graduated summa cum laude from Washington and Lee University in 1934.

He taught English at Morningside College, Sioux City, Ia. from 1935 to 1937 and became engaged to the college librarian, Frances Hunter, and adopted a library career for himself. In 1938 he began a long career with Harvard University as senior reference librarian and later director of the University's Widener Library. He pioneered the application of computers to libraries.

Mr. Palmer was a trolley car enthusiast and Ridge Historical archives include a collection of his photographs of trolley cars.

He was a world traveller with much of his record of these trips recorded in his legendary Christmas letters. These letters are among the Ridge Historical Society collections, donated by Mr. Palmer this past December at the request of Harold Wolff.

"Year of the Pioneer" Examines Early Years of Chicago and the Ridge

by Sue Delves

With the opening of the "Year of the Pioneer" exhibit, co-curved by Paul Petraitis and Linda Lamberty, RHS celebrates the first generations of Americans who transformed the prairies and virgin forests into small year-around communities which laid the groundwork for modern village life. As the exhibit unfolds, it is "putting old junk into context". Scraps of paper, faded photos, crudely drawn maps, textile fragments and handwritten commentary found in attics or isolated in file drawers, become museum objects when put into a historical perspective.

A great legacy of The Ridge is that it continues to retain a stable core to its neighborhood, and there are collections of family archives within the community which allow RHS to document those settlers. Within the membership of RHS are third, fourth and fifth generations of Lane, Bingle, Wilcox-Barnard-Howe and Andrews families. These people seem quite real when you combine how they lived, where they lived, and especially how they looked: see Emma Bingle (Mrs. William Morgan) photograph. The exhibit features portraits of other pioneers. It is a continuing treasure hunt, and RHS welcomes the input of others who find historic items in their archives. The Society continues to expand the information trail carefully preserved by the late Bob White and Gary Sauerman.

Indian Boundary Lines

To prevent a repeat of the Ft. Dearborn Massacre of 1812, Indian Boundary Lines were marked off as a result of the Treaty of St. Louis in 1815. The U.S. acquired a 20-mile wide strip of land from the Sac and Fox Indians, extending from Lake Michigan to the Illinois valley. It was intended as a safe passageway where potential settlers could travel between the lake and downstate. Surveyed in 1817, it predates all other surveys in the area, including Illinois state boundaries, north and east. The treaty brought the Blue Island Ridge and the Northern half of Lake Calumet under U.S. jurisdiction. The southern Indian boundary line begins at the mouth of the Calumet River at 92nd Street, crosses State Street near 124th St., forms the southern border of the Joe Louis golf course on Halsted at 134th Street, (for years memorialized as the George Brennan Highway), paralleling I-57 well past Harlem Avenue.

An 1822 map of Indian boundary lands refers to The Ridge as "Mannito Hills". Gitche Manitow translated from the Chippewa (Ojibwa) language as "great spirit". Our Ridge name then, translates as Spirit Hills or "hills of the gods".

In increasing numbers, fur traders traipsed our area en route to Vincennes where they sold their goods. The area surrounding 91st and 92nd streets, between Longwood and Pleasant, has long been a pivotal location in the known history of our Ridge. Near what was once an Indian signal station, Norman Rexford built his tiny "Blue Island House", a hostelry of sorts, in 1835. The following year he moved House and name south to the town of Portland, now called Blue Island. The first location was where the old Indian trail, called the Vincennes Road, struck off from the hilltop to the small and muddy cluster of humanity soon to become the giant Chicago.

As Chicago began to develop in the early 1830s the rest of Illinois had largely been settled by migration down the Ohio River, or through the Cumberland Gap into Tennessee, Kentucky, and southern Illinois. Bounty land warrants for military service enticed many families west. By 1834, after the defeat of Blackhawk and the native Indians, the marshy Chicago region opened up for sale by the government.

RHS has data and patent images for all lands comprising the Ridge communities today. Based on Thomas Jefferson's system of land description designed for selling the Northwest Territory, the Ridge can be broken down by township, range and section numbers from the first sale, and from later historic maps showing names of land owners.

From New York to the Ridge to Lanes Island and back to the Ridge

Linda Lamberty, sharing her genuine interest in family trees, has discovered that many of the earliest people in this area came from three counties in eastern New York State. The Lane family is one of the earliest examples of pioneers who emigrated from New York State, settled on the Ridge and then moved on elsewhere, but remained linked to the Ridge through commerce and family. Often sons and daughters returned to the Ridge — a tradition which continues today. DeWitt Lane (1805-1852), along with five brothers, had been a farmer and land dealer in Washington County, N.Y. Dewitt, Dorastus (1813 - 1842) and a brother-in-law, Levi Baxter, each bought 160 acres on the Ridge in 1835 and settled briefly in the vicinity of 103rd and Seeley. They soon moved southwest from the Ridge when DeWitt created the legacy of a family community on Lanes Island, about 115th and Laramie (5200 west). DeWitt's father, Joseph (born 1773), was the area's blacksmith. Joseph and his wife, Hannah Mead Lane (born 1780), are buried in Hazel Green Cemetery on the old Lane farm. In 1849 DeWitt was a commissioner of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, the first railroad chartered in Chicago.

DeWitt's son, Charles Baxter Lane (1832-1912), a land dealer who raised livestock, continued the legacy of Lanes Island. He married Julia Sturdevant of Worth Township in 1859, and upon her death, married Isabella Moss of Bremen Township in 1865. He extended the farmhouse to accommodate this family of eight sons, most of whom moved back to the Ridge around 1900. Charles established a post office at the farm from 1853 to 1880 and built Lane School in the 1860s. He donated the family cemetery in 1886 to be the community's Hazel Green Cemetery. His son, Joseph Levi Lane, was the father of two lifetime Ridge residents, the late DeWitt (Dewey) Nichols Lane and Robert Arthur (Bud) Lane, both of whom were among the founders of Ridge Historical Society. Their daughters, Virginia L. Mackle and Linda Lane are active members today. Linda continues the Lanes Island connection as a teacher at Hazel Green School.

The Bingle Family

In 1842 Richard Bingle, his wife Mary (Tucker) and four children arrived at the Ridge and built a house on ground between 111th and 115th, just west of California. A photograph of Bingle's saltbox house is included in the exhibit at RHS. Their daughter,

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DATED MATERIAL — FIRST CLASS MAIL

Grant Provides for RHS Landscape Improvement Volunteers Needed to Make it Happen

As Alberta Killie's tiny white snowdrops, the first sign of Spring, carpet our driveway entrance, it seems appropriate to announce that the Seeley side of Ridge Historical Society grounds is being treated to a much-needed garden facelift. Thanks to vigilant efforts of new Board member Joyce Black, the Conservation Committee of the Morgan Park Junior Women's Club plan for beautification of RHS grounds was one of 12 winning garden proposals (out of 75 submitted) to be awarded a Chicago Greencorps grant. This represents a three-year commitment on the part of Morgan Park Juniors. The grant amount of 300 points is to be "spent" on such garden resources as plant materials, tools, soil, compost and mulch. The value of items provided under the grant is approximately \$3000.

Grant participation required a drawing of the landscaping proposal. Ours was donated by Landscape Architect (and Beverly resident) Wendy Schulenberg. Her drawing is the basis for a garden design that another new Board member, Carol Belshaw, is developing with input from Greencorps horticulturist

Martie Brennan. Another grant requirement was that two representatives attend a series of four recent planning workshops at Greencorps headquarters.

There are three important dates ahead:

May 30 is Preparation Day. A team from Greencorps will work with volunteers to prepare the soil.

June 7 & 8 are designated Installation Days, when a Greencorps team will join volunteers from our area to do the planting.

The need is for at least 10 volunteers for each of these three days. Please recruit your able-bodied children, grandchildren, neighbors and friends to join you in this rewarding experience. There has been a promise to provide homemade refreshments of a high order to the volunteers.

To make the most efficient use of the allotted "points", donations of plant material will be needed. Please leave a message at Ridge Historical Society (881-1675) for Carol Belshaw indicating what plants or tools you could donate or lend, or to volunteer your help on project days.