

Ridge Historical Society

Newsletter

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER, 2002

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

GENE DELVES, PRESIDENT

CALENDAR of EVENTS

AUGUST 2: Chicago Bungalow Exhibit opens. (More fully described on enclosed brochure)

AUGUST 6, 7:30 p.m. RHS Board Meeting

AUGUST 9, 7:00 p.m. Chicago Bungalow Exhibit program by Mati Maldre

AUGUST 16, 7:00 p.m.: Chicago Bungalow Exhibit program by Dominic Pacyga

August 21, 7:30 p.m.: Historic Maps and the Pioneer Landscape by Paul Petraitis

August 23, 7:00 p.m. RHS Benefit at Beverly Art Center features the story of "Fame", a 92-year old double-gaff schooner (details in this issue).

SEPTEMBER 2, 7:30 p.m. RHS Board Meeting

SEPTEMBER 6, 7 p.m. Chicago Bungalow Exhibit program by Chuck Shanabruch

SEPTEMBER 13, 7 p.m. Chicago Bungalow Exhibit program by Ellen Skerrett

SEPTEMBER 14: RHS Garage Sale

August 23 Benefit Brings RHS *Fame*

Until a dozen years ago Beverly/Morgan Park resident Mike Mulcahy was a regular guy who liked sailing. Then he became part owner of the wooden schooner called *Fame*, and his life changed. "I discovered that I had a share of the most significant part of Chicago maritime history," Mulcahy said. "The passion was easy to develop."

Mulcahy didn't buy just a boat — he became caretaker of a legend: *Fame* is the oldest sailing vessel on Lake Michigan and the only real double gaff rigged schooner left in Chicago.

Fame was launched July 13, 1910 in East Boothbay, Maine and arrived in Chicago in 1920. The 40-foot craft has two masts and the hull is built from white cedar. The original design and rig have never been altered.

In 1926 the schooner was purchased by Chicago yachtsman Ted Dunlap who owned it for more than 40 years. Dunlap's passion for *Fame* is evident in the reels of 16mm film he shot each summer through 1958, documenting not just *Fame's* sailing history, but the

maritime history of Chicago and Lake Michigan. These films, transferred to video, are part of the presentation Mulcahy will make at Beverly Art Center, 2153 W. 111th Street, Friday, August 23 at 7 p.m. The program is sponsored by and a fund raiser for Ridge Historical Society. Ticket price is \$25.

Fame is unique in that it has been sailing out of the same city for 82 years. Only museum boats have been in the city that long.

She has had the same name since 1910 (usually when boats change owners, names change too). *Fame* has raced in every decade of the 20th century and finished seventh in the Mackinac race in 1927. Two racing trophies are named for *Fame*.

Fame is the oldest working vehicle in Chicago. No other boat has its history documented as does *Fame*, because its owner took film of it regularly. It is unlike any other boat in the world and when out sailing, other boats sail toward it to have a closer look.

Mulcahy has presented the *Fame* story at yacht clubs and an east coast maritime museum and is eager to share the story in the community he has called home for almost his entire life. To reserve tickets for the August 23 program call Ridge Historical Society (773-881-1675). The evening includes a wine and cheese reception and a raffle for which an outing on *Fame* is the grand prize.

RHS Web Site Reaches Out

The RHS web site has, once again, experienced growth thanks to alert attention by RHS web site coordinator Dave Daruszka.

In addition to its existing capabilities RHS is now linked to like-minded groups. RHS now has the ability to track the popularity of our web site. We also have added some exceedingly interesting photographs.

Now www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org can act as a gateway to the Chicago and Northern Illinois History Web Ring. Click on the icon at the bottom of the site title page and see what other organizations are doing and saying.

A new site meter lets RHS know how many people visit our web site. Each week reports are delivered to RHS by e-mail and they record the duration of

each visit as well as a grand total of "hits."

And two new types of photos have been added. Check out pictures of the completed restoration of the 111th Street Metra station and old photographs of 111th Street streetcars. The latter were donated to RHS by the late Foster Palmer.

"X" Marks the Spot *Washington Heights and the Panhandle Railroad*

by Paul Petraitis

The dramatic terrain of our ridge, rising as it does out of the flat Chicago plain, is curiously difficult to detect in aerial photographs.

The easiest landmark identifiable from the air remains the "X" at 103rd Street where the Panhandle Railroad crossed the Rock Island line. Completed in 1865, the Panhandle, aka the Pennys or, earlier, the Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad, connected the newly completed Chicago Union Stockyards with the Ohio valley.

Around this crossing grew the community of Washington Heights, with borders stretching from 95th and Robey (Damen) to 107th and Halsted. Platted in 1874, in many ways "the Heights" was the prototype Rock Island commuter town, spawning many aspects of what we now recognize as The Ridge life style. The western border of "The Heights" runs right through RHS headquarters — the Driscoll House.

Before the village was platted the railroad workers living there called it "the Crossing" and named the 103rd Street settlement "Tracy" in honor of John Tracy, an officer of the Rock Island. The plaque recognizing the 70th anniversary of the line, installed trackside near 103rd and Hale was relocated to Driscoll House, but the 80-year-old elm, planted along side of it, is still standing opposite 10307 Hale in the little community garden.

For the first 13 years of its existence, the Rock Island barely affected life on the Ridge because it stopped only at Vermont Avenue in Blue Island. Local farmers, like the Wilcox, Morgan and Barnard families still used the horse-drawn wagon to get to Chicago.

The Panhandle changed all of that, offering "the Rock" its first bit of competition. No sooner did they put up the Washington Heights station than they began a branch line to serve the area's planned growth. A branch called the "Dummy Line" left the mainline near 97th Street to 99th Street, crossing the Panhandle just north of the Wilcox House.

For 20 years Washington Heights enjoyed the convenience of a commuter station at 99th and Prospect. And oh, how they hollered when the Rock Island moved the line to 89th Street — the "Dummy Line's" current route. Local farmers around 99th Street entered an injunction to delay the removal of the route until 1890.

Who were the people who lived here just before and after incorporation of Washington Heights?

Thanks to detailed notes, interviews and maps compiled by Mrs. Cora Heineman, a local scholar completing her thesis toward a degree at the University of Chicago

in 1926, details are available. It was in December of that year that the Beverly Weekly Review published her map of Washington Heights about 1874.

RHS Researcher Linda Lamberty has recently uncovered the handwritten research notes used by Mrs. Heineman. These notes introduce readers to some of the earliest neighbors.

RHS Founding Father Gary Sauermann painstakingly redrew the Heineman map while he was compiling his pamphlet on 103rd Street.

The Sauermann residence of that day, just southeast of 103rd and Morgan, like many old farm houses, was set back from the street and in fact fronted on 103rd Place. According to Heineman, this was part of the old Blocher Farm. A portion of Sauermann's 103rd Place remains as a partial alley just south of Marcus Garvey High School.

For interesting reading concerning this community buy a copy of Gary Sauermann's unique publication.

NEWS NOTES

Volunteers Beautify Driscoll House Grounds

About 50 people donated more than 700 hours so far in 2002 to beautifying grounds surrounding Driscoll House.

The work was headed by board member Joyce Black who credits members of Morgan Park Junior Women's Club and many others who installed new plantings



on either side of the driveway from Seeley Avenue, along the south and west fences, in the oval, and on either side of the entrance door. Because so many people volunteered their services the group was able to do major weeding on the Longwood side of the property.

This is the first of a three-year commitment by the MP Junior Women's Club to help maintain the Driscoll House grounds. Their work is supported by a \$3000 grant from the city, whose representatives will inspect results next Spring.

Joyce Black said her group also planted more than 100 bulbs that she dug out of a mound of mud at Garfield Park Conservatory. They were recycled from State Street and Michigan Avenue plantings.

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DATED MATERIAL — FIRST CLASS MAIL

**SEEKING TREASURES
for the GARAGE SALE**

It is time to uncover hidden and unused treasures and take them to Ridge Historical Society to be offered to eager buyers at the 2002 Garage Sale of September 14. Such donations will be accepted after August 1. What is wanted -- what is needed are antiques, collectibles, housewares, furniture, jewelry, vintage items, but no clothing!



FAME (see Page One)