



Ridge Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

February/March 2003

Visit the web site at www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org

FROM BEVERLY TO BROADWAY

Could anyone from our remote corner of Chicago ever achieve success on the level of Broadway stardom? Well, once someone did.

Raymond Earl Middleton was born on February 8, 1907, to Almor C. and Lela Owens Middleton. The Middletons lived in Englewood until 1923, when they moved to 10144 South Irving (now Bell) Avenue, which was convenient for Almor Middleton, an executive with the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. Ray Middleton was then 16, and in the middle of high school. He graduated from Calumet High School in 1926 and decided to pursue a career in music, probably encouraged by his uncle Arthur Middleton, a well-known basso. Ray Middleton earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Illinois in 1930. He then won a scholarship to the Julliard School of Music, but spent his summers in Beverly, where Ridge Historical Society member Richard Wiley remembers he worked for Mr. Wiley's father, a local house builder.

Ray Middleton, described by the New York Times as being a strapping 6 foot 3 inches tall with a strong resonant baritone, was admired for a versatility that extended to all kinds of roles in musical shows, grand opera, and movies. He debuted with the Chicago Civic Opera Company in "Gianni Schicchi." He made his Broadway debut in 1933 playing John Kent in the Jerome Kern musical "Roberta." Other important roles in the 1930's included the role of Washington Irving in the Maxwell Anderson-Kurt Weill show "Knickerbocker Holiday" (1938) and featured appearances

in George White's "Scandals" (1939) and as Abraham Lincoln in the World's Fair extravaganza "American Jubilee" (1940). His performance as Lincoln led to a CBS radio series, "Honest Abe." He also appeared in more than twenty Hollywood films, including "Gangs of Chicago," "Lady for a Night," "Sweethearts on Parade," "Jubilee Trail," "I Dream of Jeanie" and "Road to Denver."

In 1942 Middleton enlisted in the Army Air Corps, where he served four years. Returning from the service in 1946, he originated the role of Frank Butler, the man Ethel Merman couldn't get with a gun in "Annie Oakley." After two and a half years, he left that role to co-star with Nanette Fabray in the Kurt Weill-Alan J. Lerner vaudeville musical "Love Life." In 1950, he succeeded Ezio Pinza in "South Pacific,"

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In 1937 the Morgan Park Improvement Association held a special meeting at Kiskaddon Hall and unanimously protested the proposed theatre at 111th and Longwood Drive.

The theatre was eventually built at 95th and Ashland.

Membership Renewal Reminder

Check your address label on this month's newsletter:

Do you see a dot of **blue**?

If it's there, you need to **renew**.

No dot? Then you've **renewed**, and **WE THANK YOU!**

Please remember that RHS will be publishing a Membership Directory.

Only memberships in good standing as of March 1 will be included.



Letters to the Editor

FIRST WEDDING IN THE RIDGE AREA PREDATES PRIOR ACCOUNTS BY 10 YEARS

The Thirteen Club was begun in 1906 by Professor J.H. Herl of Morgan Park High School. The all-male organization has no minutes, no dues and is limited in membership to 13.

Meeting 9 times each year, the host of each evening was the chairman. His wife prepared the meal which provided an auspicious beginning for the program that followed.

At each meeting, one of the members presented a paper which he had written on a topic of interest to the group.

The group continues to this day, albeit not with the original 13 members.

Editor's note:

This Letter to the Editor corrects a bit of misinformation we provided in our last issue. It also shows the amount of work required to do proper historical research, and how RHS serves as a resource for these efforts.

Dear Dave,

I had to write you to correct a side note on page 4 of the December/January Newsletter, but as I do this I am aware of the irony of the situation. A year ago, your sidebar on the First Wedding in the area occurring in 1845 would have been assumed to be correct. However over the past year with of course, who else but Linda Lamberty's help, I have discovered that the First Wedding actually occurred almost 10 years previous, at about 103rd & Seeley with who else, but DeWitt Lane's sister-in-law.

The research of the correction is interesting because it shows the juxtaposition and need for a historical library at RHS. (Who knows what other Ridge History will come to light as family historians begin their research.) We have known for many years that DeWitt, who's wife was Amy (Mary) Baxter Lane, purchased 160 acres on the SW corner of 103rd & Western Avenue (extending to California Avenue & to 107th) on June 26, 1835 and his brother-in-law, Levi C. Baxter bought the NW corner (extending to California Avenue & 99th Street).

The next day, his brother, Dorastus Lane bought the SE corner (extending from Seeley Avenue to 107th Street) plus the NE corner (extending to Seeley Avenue and 99th Street) of 160 acres was purchased by a woman named Marcia Delia Farnsworth. (Her land is interesting

because it is the site of the old water tower and the old spring, which has been described several times in RHS publications.) Marcia's name was interesting because one of DeWitt's daughters was named Marcia Delia Lane Henry. With a bit of research, a bit a Linda Lamberty, and the wonders of historical research libraries and collections, we can now say the Marcia's maiden name was Baxter and she was indeed DeWitt's sister-in-law.

Southern Cook County Before the Civil War, Early Settlers and Their Families, Vol. II published by Ferdinand Schapper in 1917 (which happens to be one of Paul Petraitis's favorites) on page 518 notes a wedding announcement and that "she was a widow and married Willard Jones of Chicago ... at her home on the northern part of the ridge, the whole ridge in early days was known as Blue Island". Page 538 of *The History of Lake County*, by John J. Halsey, published in 1912 describes a

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Ridge Historical Society

Newsletter

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Open to the public Thursdays and

Sundays 2 to 5 PM, or by appointment.



ANNUAL FUND CONTRIBUTORS HELP KEEP RHS FINANCIALLY STRONG

The Annual Fund is one of the ways we raise money to underwrite the work of the Ridge Historical Society. This money is placed in our general account and helps to pay for operating expenses. We would like to acknowledge the generosity of the following individuals who have contributed to this fund. This list was compiled as of the newsletter deadline, and does not include contributions received after this date.

- Margaret Ahern
- Dick Arnold
- David and Jane Barclay
- Mel and Joyce Black and Alissa
- Elsie Bruce
- Leroy Bryant, Sr.
- Russell F. Carlson
- John and Pat Coffey
- Tom and Lori Daker
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- Thomas Hynes
- Elmer and Elizabeth Johnson
- Gretchen Johnson
- Walt Kelly
- Donald and Billie Marie Keyser
- Greg Lochow
- Mati Maldre
- Jim and Bernice Matthews

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FROM BEVERLY TO BROADWAY

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playing the role of the French planter Emile de Becque for 37 weeks opposite Mary Martin on Broadway. He repeated the role in the 1955 City Center revival with Betsy Palmer.

In the mid-1950's, Middleton toured the country with his one-man show "America in Song and Story," a potpourri of songs, history and folklore. In 1965 he won critical praise for his portrayal of the innkeeper in "The Man of LaMancha," and played the role for three years on Broadway. Over the years he made frequent television appearances in roles ranging from the CBS revival of "Panama Hattie" with Ethel Merman to parts in situation comedies and dramatic series, including "M*A*S*H," "Too Close for Comfort," and "Knott's Landing."

Ray Middleton died of a heart attack in Panorama City, California, on April 10, 1984, at the age of 77, having served as a leading man of the Broadway musical theater for more than three decades.

Harold T. Wolff



WHAT'S COOKING?

What's going on in your neck of the woods? Drop us a line and tell us about your favorite memory or let us know what you're up to. We'd love to hear from you!

George C. Walker donated land at the top of the Ridge on 111th Street, and at a cost of \$12,000 built a Romanesque library designed by Architect Charles Frost.

He donated the library to the Village of Morgan Park, and it opened in April of 1890.

The library trustees included Dr. Justin A. Smith, Austin Wiswall, C.O. TenBroeke, I.S. Blackwelder, Dr. William German, F.P. Silva and G.S. Wright.

The library is now the Walker Branch of the Chicago Public Library.

FIRST WEDDING RESEARCH REVEALS NEW DATE

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notice published in the Chicago American: "Married October 1, 1835, at Blue Island, by Rev. Mr. Hinton, Mr. Willard Jones of Chicago and Miss Mercia Delia Farnsworth of Blue Island." Page 728 in *The Portrait Biographical Album of Lake County, Illinois*, notes the marriage of Marcia Baxter to Willard Jones on October 1, 1835.

It also states that the land Willard wanted to buy in Cook County was unavailable (could that have been in the Ridge Area?) and thus he homesteaded in Lake County, until the land was surveyed and available for purchase from the government in 1842. Levi Baxter bought land adjacent to the Jones's in 1844.

Unlike the unlucky Wilcox-Jackson marriage, Marcia lived to the age of 78 (1809-1887) and she had 9 children of whom unfortunately, 4 died within a few days of one another of scarlet fever. Willard, her husband, was born in 1799 and died in 1872.

Willard is an interesting historical personality. He is listed on the rolls as a carpenter and as a founding member of the first Baptist Church in Chicago in October of 1833 by A.T. Andreas in *History of Chicago*, Vol. 1, and in *Chicago and the Baptists*, published in 1933 by Perry J. Stackhouse. Willard owned several plots of land at Clarke & Monroe in what is now downtown Chicago. An interesting find by Linda Lamberty is a story which describes a small cow path, owned by deed by Willard Jones, so long as at least one cow was walked down the path once a year. The author is standing at Daniel Burnham's office window, describing his view of a man and cow walking in downtown Chicago. (I have misplaced my photocopy of book reference, but Linda has it.) I have not yet substantiated this story through land abstracts or wills, but until the late 1940's a plaque was on the 100 West Monroe Building, (reference: *Chicago History Magazine*, published in 1947 by the Chicago Historical Society), summarizing the

story. Current day photos of the building do indeed show an odd architectural feature which is about 10 feet wide by 18 feet high at the 100 West Monroe building.

Marcia and Willard's son, DeWitt L. Jones (does the L stand for Lane or for Levi?), served in the Civil War, was States Attorney for Lake County in the 1880's, was a Lake County Judge for 16 years (1894-1910), was the City Attorney for Waukegan for 8 years (1882-1894) and did law work for our Lanes of the Ridge.

It is also interesting to note that just as we here on the Ridge honor our Pioneers, so does the town of Grayslake in Lake County. A recent subdivision includes the names Jones Point Road (Willard's farm's name) and Levi Baxter Street.

In conclusion, I look forward to the consolidation of the RHS Library and the opening of more resources for family historians. Who knows what other researchers will find out in the future!

Best Wishes,
And Dave, your new newsletter format is very nice,

Peg Mackle Kapustiak
Granddaughter of DeWitt N. & Margaret Lane

Around 1893 to 1900 there was a flourishing Whist Club that met every other week at the homes of the members. Prominent among these were the Hortons, the Edwin Olivers, the Wiswalls, the Baldwins, and the Wilders. The young people were asked to occasionally fill in.

Louise Barwick, 1940

THE ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE CENTER

The Architectural Resource Center of RHS is an important source of information when researching your home's history. For an appointment to meet with a research assistant, call 773-881-1675.



NEWSLETTER ARTICLE REKINDLES FOND MEMORY FOR FORMER RESIDENT

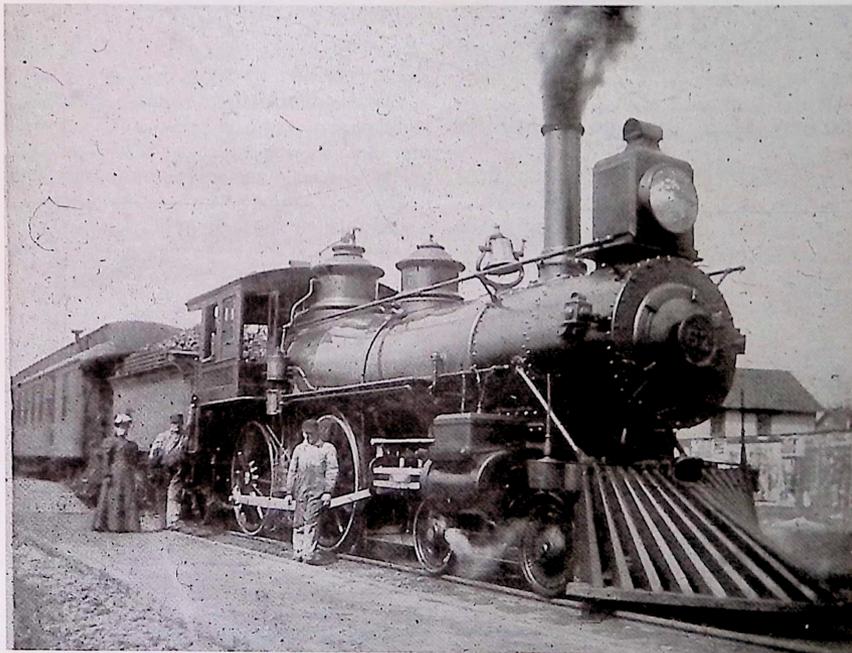
Our report of the rededication of the Morgan Park 111th Street Station in the December/January issue of the Newsletter, recalled a treasured memory to member Robyn L. Dare of Shalimar, Florida. This information was provided by Harold Wolff, who spoke with Mr. Dare.

In 1933, Mr. Dare, who had closely followed the exploits of Commander (ultimately Rear Admiral) Richard E. Byrd, the first explorer to fly over the South Pole, obtained time off from the Morgan Park Military Academy to attend the commander's lecture at Morgan Park High

School. As he was walking over to the high school, he had to pause for a commuter train stopped at the 111th Street Station. While waiting, he observed a naval officer descend from the train and begin to look about. Recognizing the commander, Mr. Dare, who was in full cadet uniform and overcoat, went over to Byrd, saluted, and asked if he could be of any help. The commander replied that he would like to know how to get to the high school. Mr. Dare then had the pleasure of escorting his hero to his destination, as well as attending his talk.

"A matter that has caused me a great deal of annoyance during the last two years, by the many complaints that have been made, is in regards to the pasturing of cows and horses on vacant lots and in parkways and allowing the animals to stray loose, destroying gardens and damaging lawns. It seems strange that so many of our good citizens who keep cows and horses do not realize that Morgan Park is no longer 'all pasture'...."

James R. Grey
President,
Morgan Park
Village Board
1909



There are occasions when you come across something at RHS that is marked one way only to find that it's a horse of a different color, or as in this case an iron horse. This image is from a slide marked "Rock Island Train". Thanks to information provided by Charles Stats of the Chicago Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society we have discovered that it is probably a Panhandle (Pittsburgh, Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad) locomotive built in their shops in 1883. The location of the photo is unknown.



NEWS BRIEFS

OUR MOTTO: IF IT FITS, IT'S NEWS TO US!

RHS RECEIVES EDUCATIONAL GRANT

Beverly Hills/Morgan Park is a community with a long history of educational excellence. This tradition will be continued through a program funded by the late Dorothy Ann Saly, a teacher for 47 years and a longtime resident of the community.

The Dorothy Ann Saly Teacher Enrichment Program for Beverly Hills/Morgan Park was designed to bring enrichment to local schools by tapping into educational resources in fine and performing arts, history and geography, and other areas.

This program integrates the efforts of the Beverly Area Planning Association, the Beverly Arts Center of Chicago, Ridge Historical Society and Morgan Park Academy as resources for professional development seminars for teachers.

RHS will design and implement programs on history and geography. This component will be designed to foster the idea that global learning begins in one's own community. RHS will provide information that will help encourage students to appreciate the rich local history and develop a sense of curiosity and understanding about how past and present inspire the future.

The RHS Educational Committee is beginning work, and is seeking individuals to serve on the committee and assist in implementing these programs. If you are interested in finding out more information, or to volunteer, call Linda Lamberty at 773-779-7727.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

If you have been to Driscoll House recently you may have noticed an odd odor in the air.

Work is in progress to turn the former tenant's quarters into our new Costume Display Room. This expanded space will allow for more exhibition area for our extensive costume collection as well as much need work space. Part of this remodeling included refinishing the floors, hence the odor. Upon completion of the project the former Costume Room will be converted into a Research Library. Coming soon: the smell of paint.

PROGRAM AND EXHIBITION IDEAS WANTED

The Program and Exhibit Committees have begun their work for 2003, and are interested in your ideas. If you have an interest in seeing a particular program, or would like to see some part of our community history highlighted in an exhibit, now is your chance to make your voice heard. Call us at 773-881-1675 and leave a message along with your name and telephone number. We're interested in hearing what you have to say.

LOCAL BUSINESSMAN PROVIDES GRANT TO RHS

Ed McGunn, RHS member and President of Corporate Safe Specialists, recently presented RHS a check for \$3,000 to go towards promoting the organization. Ed was instrumental in providing funding and labor for last year's extensive restoration of the RHS grounds. His wife Lori serves on the RHS board, and she presented the check at the January Board of Directors meeting. Ed has also put forward a challenge grant in the same amount that would be put towards showcasing Driscoll House during the Christmas holidays to attract community members to visit RHS during that time. We sincerely appreciate his ongoing generosity.

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More news
from 1937

19 of the 21
prizes in the
city-wide
harmonica
contest were
taken by Ridge
boys under the
leadership of
Harry K.
Meech.

Crossing gates
that were not
closed, a 15-
year old driver
behind the
wheel of a new
car and an
oncoming
limited train
were a recipe
for tragedy at
95th and
Vincennes
Ave.

ANNUAL FUND CONTRIBUTORS

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- Gene and Pat McGrail
- Ed and Lori McGunn
- Jay and Kay McLaughlin
- Charles Menard
- Marcella Meyer
- Norman Miller
- Joel and Shirley Morbito
- Edward and Margie O'Farrell
- Patrick Racey
- Mrs. Harry G. Robertson
- Bill and Marie Sandstrom
- Betty and Ray Siegel
- L. Patrick and Lorraine Stanton
- Ellis Stukenberg
- Carl and Elaine Spencer
- Jack and Audrey Sullivan
- Martha Swift and Dean Miller
- Beth Turley
- Ted and Nora Wayne
- Michael Wolski

NEWS BRIEFS

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DOCENTS (ALWAYS) NEEDED

RHS is always looking for volunteers in various areas, but our most critical need is for docents. Docents work during our public hours (Thursday and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m.) and are responsible for opening Driscoll House to the public and explaining exhibits to visitors. Training is provided, and we encourage you to include a friend. Having two people on duty makes it easier on busy days. Docents are not required to assist visitors with research questions or access to the RHS archive. It's easy, and you meet all sorts of interesting people. Call us at 773-881-1675 to leave a message along with your name and telephone number. Someone will contact you.

"Even a casual observer can pick out without difficulty the plain folks or the hill folk. The people who live on the hill have a way of raising the feet high when they walk and leaning forward and breathing deeply. Those who reside on the low side glide along in an easy and natural manner."

Richard H. Little
"A Sentimental Journey to Morgan Park"
1909



- To renew your membership
- To come to the February program.
- To come to the Book Sale.
- To become an Annual Fund contributor.
- To volunteer at RHS.
- To stay in touch with us!



THE FIRST STEP TO INDEPENDENCE

is carefulness in spending. The man with a salary will find that his money goes further when he deposits it in the bank and pays his bill by check. And he knows where every penny goes, too. The Calumet Trust & Savings Bank invites accounts from salaried men and housekeepers. As little as one dollar will start one. Many a one begun with that sum has become a goodly balance, because of the check it puts on thoughtless spending.

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FRITZ FORNELL

Horse Collar For and Blacksmith Navigation Guaranteed

Universal Blacksmithing 11212 Vincennes Rd. near Morgan Av. Wagon and Carriage Making and Repairing

NOT TO BE MISSED

A Calender of Events and Attractions

The deadline for the April/ May Newsletter is Wednesday March 12th. We also accept submissions via email at ridgehistory@hotmail.com

True Believers

vs

The Accommodationists

Politics of the Mid-19th Century

Sunday February 9, 2003 - 2 p.m.

Walt Kelly, Professor of History and former Chairman of the History Department at Chicago State University, will present a lecture on the political climate of this era and the events leading to the Civil War.

Light refreshments and lively conversation follow the program.

Ridge Historical Society

Better Book Sale

Friday, Saturday and Sunday

February 14-16

Browse through a great collection of books and pick up some tremendous bargains. Donations and volunteers welcome.

Contact Sue Delves, 773-445-5806

Board of Directors Meeting

February 12 – 7:30 p.m.

March 12 – 7:30 p.m.

All events and meetings are held at Driscoll House unless otherwise noted.

Ridge Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

Ridge Historical Society
10621 S. Seeley Ave.
Chicago, IL 60643

DATED MATERIAL

FIRST CLASS
MAIL

If you see the blue dot, your membership renewed it is NOT!
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Beverly to Broadway

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New Discovery on First Ridge Marriage

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RHS Awarded Educational Grant

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