



# Ridge Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

June/July 2003

Visit the web site at [www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org)

### Crackpot Cultists Invade Beverly

In the years following the Civil War numerous religious groups sprang up with the idea of improving or expanding Christianity. These groups shared the common thread in their belief that a Utopian civilization would right the wrongs of society and government. While we would consider these beliefs strange by today's standards, these spin-offs were not uncommon at that time. One such group was the Koreshans, led by the charismatic Cyrus Teed. For a short time, beginning in 1892, the group resided in a communal home in Beverly (then part of Washington Heights) near 99<sup>th</sup> Street and Winston Avenue.

Cyrus Teed was born in 1839, the second son in a family of eight children. He quit school at age 11 and found work on the Erie Canal towpath. He subsequently chose to study medicine under an uncle in Utica, New York, eventually relocating to New York City in 1862. He enlisted in the New York Infantry as a corporal and while on a march in Virginia suffered sunstroke, leaving him paralyzed in his left arm and leg. He was discharged from the army and returned to New York to study medicine at the Eclectic Medical College. After graduating in 1868 he returned to Utica and rejoined his uncle's practice.

While working in his home laboratory in 1869 Teed had what he referred to as an "illumination". He claimed to have turned lead to gold and called this knowledge the "Philosopher's Stone". Later that evening he had a vision of God in the form of a beautiful woman, and learned the secrets of the universe and his place in it. He was told that he would interpret the symbols of

the Bible for the scientific age, and that the earth was enclosed and we lived on the inside. The following years were difficult ones; his medical practice suffered, his wife's health failed and he moved around attempting to establish himself in various towns. It was at this time he had his first encounters with the Harmony Society and the Shakers, communal groups that would prove inspirational to the Koreshan philosophy.



Cyrus Teed, leader of the Koreshan cult.

Teed also began to attract followers, especially a large number of women. Women would be a major factor in the development of the Koreshan Unity. The good times returned in 1883 when Teed, his brother and sister, established a successful medical practice in Syracuse, New York. Accusations of financial fraud arose when he was accused of

#### POLITICAL ODDITY

"You may notice a sad-faced man on the streets of Morgan Park. He is the village Democrat. There was at one time a village Republican but he either died or moved away and the village Democrat is left alone to represent both parties."

Dick Little  
"Sentimental Journey to Morgan Park"

Continued on Page 3

## *New Exhibit for Summer 2003*

# The Vanderpoel Art Collection

**C**OME NOW, said John Campbell, to every artist worth the salt...

considered, "the most remarkable art enterprise in the world."

### HAUNTING WHISTLE

When a fire was discovered in Morgan Park, the alarm was sent out by a steam whistle located at the waterworks on 115th Street. The whistle was from an old Chicago River tug-boat, and elicited a nerve-wracking shriek that frightened horses as well as the public. Following annexation the whistle was sold to Blue Island where its noise continued to be heard in Morgan Park for many years to follow.

This Summer of 2003, on the heels of local artist Barbara Wynn Bansley's wildly popular installation (see information elsewhere in this newsletter), the Ridge Historical Society celebrates the origins and history of our least-recognized gem, The Vanderpoel collection of art. The association has been facing one of its greatest challenges, and we feel it timely to share their amazing story of a grass roots expression of love that grew into an International crusade by many of the World's most celebrated artists.

In 1913, the collection was born of a single painting\* purchased by the community at large to memorialize the neighbor, the artist and the teacher, John H. Vanderpoel (Beverly resident and highly respected instructor at the Art Institute of Chicago) who had died in 1911.

Before long, at the suggestion of the well-known Dudley Crafts Watson and thanks to two other Beverly residents, John A. Campbell and Wm. M.R. French, director of the Art Institute, and others of great note, earnest letters began going out to solicit works from and by his former students and colleagues in honor of Vanderpoel. The heartwarming response was overwhelming! Henceforth, all pieces have been donated rather than purchased, more often than not by the artists themselves and representative of their personal best, in justice to the memory of the beloved "Van." With support from the community, the Art Institute and the art world, Campbell nurtured the effort until it was

Please join us over the next few months to learn things you never knew about the people, the place and the times. Our exhibit will tell of the remarkable legacy, then point you back to the works themselves for fulfillment. Here is your chance to follow the stories behind the organization AND the pieces - It is a "must hear" tale and a "must see" jewel in our very midst!

(Look for more about the story and exhibit in our next newsletter. Anyone interested in lending a helping hand, please leave a message for Linda Lamberty at 773-881-1675.)

\* "The Buttermakers" by John H. Vanderpoel, first hung at the J. H. Vanderpoel School and later removed to specially designed quarters at the new Ridge Park Fieldhouse in 1929.



Your comments and letters are always welcome. Please send us any news and items of interest.

## Ridge Historical Society Newsletter

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# Crackpot Cultist Invasion (continued)

*Continued from Page 1*

obtaining money by claiming he was the second Christ. By 1884 he was back in New York living in a communal home with four ladies, which lasted until 1886. That same year, Mrs. Thankful H. Hale extended an invitation to Teed to speak at the convention of the National Association of Mental Science in Chicago. He spoke at the convention on the topic "The Brain" and performed a faith healing.

Two days before the convention, on September 6, 1886, a communal home was established in Chicago, consisting mostly of members of the Mental Science group. In short order the Guiding Light Publishing House; the Assembly of the Covenant and the World College of Life were established. A second home was begun in Groveland Park (33<sup>rd</sup> and Cottage Grove), and in 1892 the Koreshans rented the former residence of real estate developer Laurin Hilliard in Washington Heights. Named "Beth Ophra", there was a mansion and seven cottages on eight and a half acres of land. There were beautiful flowerbeds, tree lined walks and two ponds that were used for ice-skating in the winter. At this time there were one hundred and ten members, eighty-three of which were women. Like many other communal societies, they ascribed to the practice of celibacy.

Throughout the 1890's Teed was faced with legal problems, some of them instigated by opponents of his strong support of women's rights. Husbands, whose wives' affections had been alienated from them by the enigmatic Teed, sought legal redress against him. These women had chosen to cast off their worldly possessions (and domineering husbands) to become part of his flock. A reporter for the Chicago Herald noted that Teed's hold on women was not of a sexual nature, but due directly to his claims of divinity and flowery manner of speech.

In early 1894 Teed acquired land in Florida about sixteen miles southwest of Fort Meyers. This property was destined to become, what Teed would envision as, a New Jerusalem with a population of eight million faithful Koreshans. Members of the Chicago community began to move to their new home that year. Those that remained were subject to increasing harassment by the press, who viewed the faithful as crackpots. Their time in Washington Heights would end in 1902, and the last of the Koreshans relocated to Florida in 1903. New Jerusalem would prosper briefly, and included a printing plant and other industries that provided revenue. The group also entered politics, and in 1906 Teed became involved in a street fight in Fort Meyers during an election. His injuries would contribute to his death in 1908. He did not rise from the dead as his followers believed, but in the 1920's his body was washed out to sea from its grave by a hurricane.

With Teed gone the community lost momentum and faltered. There were never more than a few hundred residents of what would become the town of Estero. Their newspaper, the American Eagle, resumed publication in 1965 as a horticultural conservation periodical. That same year the Koreshan Unity decided eighty acres to the Nature Conservancy for a nature park. Koreshan State Park opened and the State of Florida began a restoration of the historic buildings in the community. The College of Life Foundation still maintains a vast collection of Koreshan books, writings, artwork and furniture at their museum.

*David Daruszka*

## TOUGH GUYS

The Monroe twins, Lefty and Chick, were members of the 1914 Morgan Park High School football team. Their father was a Baptist evangelist. They carried themselves with an arrogant swagger and feared no one. They let everyone know that they could do anything they pleased... because they were already "saved" thanks to their father.



### WAR HERO

Distinguished citizen Austin Wiswall was a Major in the Civil War. At the Battle of Deep Bottom he took command of a regiment of "colored troops". Ordered to charge the breastworks they were passed by a white regiment in full retreat. They pressed on, and only 15 escaped death.

Wiswall was shot five times and left for dead in the field. He was captured and sent to the notorious Libby Prison.

He survived his imprisonment and came to Morgan Park in 1875. He served on the Village Board for 9 years and was instrumental in putting in a sewer system and water works. He died in 1905.



The Washington Heights School was located on the site of the present-day Barnard School. Built in 1875, the school was destroyed by fire in 1890. The same fate befell the first Barnard School and the present building is the third school to occupy this location.



Esmond School was built in 1891 to replace a one-room schoolhouse that had served the Village of Morgan Park since 1873. The Morgan Park water tank can be seen in the distance on the left (just to the right of the tree). On the right, at the crest of the ridge, is the impressive home of Col. George Clarke, prominent citizen and founder the Pacific Garden Mission.



## Volunteers Carry The Load, Help Make A Difference At RHS

Once again, **Linda Lamberty** knocked herself out planning and creating something special to decorate **Sue Delves'** little red BMW for the Memorial Day Parade. Artist **Ethel Wirtshafter** rode in the front, putting a human face on the promotion of the approaching RHS emphasis on the history of the Vanderpoel Art Gallery at Ridge Park. Propped into the car's trunk were huge paint palettes with color images of Vanderpoel paintings where the paint splotches belong. Giant tubes of paint bearing a Ridge Historical Society label poked out of the trunk, spewing colored plastic "paint". World War II veteran **Bob Wirtshafter**, dressed in full uniform always worn to the parade, was seated in the back seat.

From the earliest days of Ridge Historical Society, the **Morgan Park Junior Woman's Club** has been mentioned in this newsletter time and again, for they have continuously provided significant support for this organization. For many years they held flea markets in Bohn Park during the summer, and RHS always received significant support from their profits. The Juniors provided hours and days of labor when RHS had its two designer showcase events which greatly improved the appearance of the house as we inherited it. Many Juniors are part of the group called "the clippers" who meet frequently to clip and mount current newspaper stories for our archives. It was the Juniors who provided the enthusiasm and the workers for the October opening of the Morgan Park 111th St. station. They also selected our grounds for their three-year garden project, guided by Greencorps Chicago. And recently, having helped clean up after the sessions scraping, plastering and painting the former tenant space, they

decided RHS needed a new vacuum cleaner. So we have a nice new OREK! Thank you, friends!  
On Sunday, May 18, 2003, the Ridge

Historical Society participated in the new Style and Substance Sessions at the Beverly Art Center that were held in conjunction with the 33rd Annual Beverly Hills/Morgan Park Home Tour. Our table was easily identified by the attractive, large posters designed by **Dave Daruszka** highlighting the services and resources of our Architectural Resource Center. A number of neighborhood residents were able to find out information about their historic homes by using our computerized historic building database. **Jennifer Kenny** and **Mati Maldre** were on hand to answer questions about historic house research and the programs and services we offer at RHS. Some lucky new members took advantage of our "one day only" membership special. In exchange for a \$30 family membership, RHS researchers will be conducting a detailed house history search.

**Elmer Johnson**, Editor Emeritus of the Ridge Historical Society Newsletter, was recently inducted into the Senior Citizen Hall of Fame of the Chicago Department on Aging. Elmer was among the honorees recognized for their outstanding contributions to their communities. Elmer was also honored by the Central Baptist Children's Home and Family Services for his 42 years of service, including two terms as President. Congratulations to Elmer from all his friends at RHS!

Look for a story in our next newsletter detailing exciting new developments of the "Dorothy Ann Saly Teacher Enrichment Program for Beverly Hills / Morgan Park" to begin here in the Fall!

This is a thoroughly joint effort combining assets of the Ridge Historical Society and the Beverly Art Center with such regional stars as the Hubbard Street Dance Company and the Chicago Metro History Center for Education. The unique series is designed for teachers and will offer training and creative insights, plus handouts suggesting many additional resources available locally. Every effort is being made to make this both professionally and financially appealing to educators. The grant committee (of which RHS is a member, along with BAPA, BAC & MPA) is thrilled with the progress of its innovative plan, made possible by the late Dorothy Ann Saly, who was both a teacher and a Beverly resident.



# NEWS BRIEFS

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

## VOLUNTEER GARDENERS CLEAN UP RHS GROUNDS

Thank you, Liz.

### A BUSY MAN

Dr. William Henry German was born in Greenbush, Canada in 1855. He set up his private practice in Morgan Park in 1884 when it was a Village of 500. He was an ardent Methodist and was instrumental in establishing 3 churches in the community. He also served on the Calumet Park board as well as the local school board and the Chicago Public Library board. German was a surgeon at two area hospitals and for the Rock Island Railroad. His office and home was located on Prospect Avenue where he died on July 31, 1944.

**Joyce Black** and her crew of gardeners from Morgan Park Juniors put in two days of cleanup and weeding just in time to spruce up the grounds and garden before the Home Tour. As usual, BAPA held its thank you party for Home Tour volunteers at RHS and it was pleasant enough to use the veranda.

## REFERENCE LIBRARY PLANS MOVE FORWARD

As soon as the Bansley exhibit closes, work will begin on preparing the former costume room for a thorough cleanup/fix-up and its new life as a reference library.

**Kevin Murphy**, a Boy Scout in the troop at St. Christina Church, has offered to make that his Eagle Scout project, subject to the customary approval process. Our own volunteers will also be welcomed.

## NEW RUG GRACES ENTRY HALL

There is a handsome new floral Karastan rug in the entrance hall. The old one had outlived its useful life. **Ara Pridjian**, owner of K.A. Pridjian & Co. (at 11600 S. Halsted since 1924) selected the perfect rug and offered an attractive price as well. Without doubt his is one of the oldest businesses in our area. He and **President Gene Delves** were at Fenger High School at the same time.

Also in the house furnishing area: Our dining room chairs were phased out several years ago. At a recent garage sale, **Sue Delves** spotted a set of four pretty chairs, at an affordable price. As she was completing the purchase, our member **Liz Cibulskis** stepped forward and offered to pay for two chairs as her gift to RHS.

## RECENT RESEARCH REQUESTS

A local student at UIC made an appointment to research the history of the Beverly Art Center. His assignment was to learn as much as he could about a local institution that is not necessarily widely known in the Chicago area. He was pleased with the amount of information he found in our files.

Another caller, referred by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, wanted an assurance that Howard Van Doren Shaw was, indeed, the architect for 9346 S. Damen. **Harold Wolff**, who has researched Shaw's work in the community, confirmed that fact.

A local educator researching the early Chicago Stockyards and its connection to local residents, called to check the location of the Swift home. The call was referred to our member **Martha Swift** who still lives in that home on Hoyne.

A Clissold upper grade student was to visit RHS to see what we have on the Underground Railroad, and both she and a family member were to describe how they were received and what they saw on their visit. The standard reward for UGRR student researchers is to make a rubbing of the bronze plaque that once stood in front of the Gardner House on Beverly Ave. That is where the Wilcox family lived during the Civil War, and the family passed on its stories of having sheltered fleeing slaves in their barn.

**Carole Lewis** contacted us via email regarding a business her great-grandparents owned on Vincennes Avenue in Washington Heights. **Dave Daruszka** photographed the building and sent her copies. In return, Carole and her mother are providing RHS

*Continued on Page 7*

# NEWS BRIEFS

*Continued from Page 6*

with an audiotape of their recollections of life in Washington Heights.

Writer **Jeff Huebner** emailed a request for information on John A. Campbell for an article he was preparing on the Vanderpoel art collection. The article appears in the May 30 issue of the Chicago Reader.

## VOLUNTEERS CONSERVE NEWSPAPER COLLECTION

**Eileen Klees, Maureen Gilligan, Kate Eaton and Paula Everett** are continuing a project to organize and properly preserve our collection of newspapers. We have most issues of the Beverly Review and The Villager, and complete collections of the Morgan Park Post. However, anyone with Beverly Review issues prior to 1950 is urged to share them. With high hopes, Eileen has submitted a grant application for the proper preservation materials to conserve these collections.

## BANSLEY EXHIBIT CONTINUES TO JUNE 20

As announced in the previous Newsletter, the opening reception for **Barbara Bansley's** art installation, "The Wit of America's First Ladies" was held Friday evening, May 23. Over 60 visitors watched and/or participated in the reading of the scripted conversations between First Ladies across generations, seated at tables in the museum-living room and two front rooms upstairs. Several organizations and classrooms made group visits during the first week, and others have made reservations.

The exhibit is open daily from 2 to 5 p.m., with Ms. Bansley present on most days. She commented that the multimedia work is, "my 13th child. I love hearing other people read the words I've put together, and I hear a different inflection or interpretation each time. Visitors enjoy becoming an interactive participant as they read one woman's words

from the handmade table napkins on each table."

There is a \$3.00 admission fee; however entrance to the exhibit is free to RHS members on Sunday, June 8 at 2:30 pm, our regularly scheduled program time.

## LANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REUNION PLANNED

Lane Elementary School in Alsip is celebrating their 50th Anniversary with an Open House and Family Activities on Saturday, September 6th from 1 to 4 pm.

All graduates and former students are invited to attend. They are also looking for photos and other memorabilia to display. The Alsip School District can be reached at 708-389-1900 if you have questions or comments. The school is located at 4600 W. 123rd Street.

## BEVERLY/MORGAN PARK PHOTO HISTORY BOOK IN PRODUCTION

Work is progressing on a photographic history book of the community to be published by Arcadia Publishing. The softbound book, which will retail for about \$20., will be available in time for the Christmas holidays. The book will feature over 200 images gathered from the Ridge Historical Society archives that tell the story of our community. RHS member Joe Oswald is authoring the book, assisted by Dave Daruszka who has been scanning photos from the collection. Dave, Linda Lamberty and Jennifer Kenny have also been providing their research and editing skills. The book will be available through bookstores and RHS. Profits from copies purchased from the Society will benefit our programs and activities.

## LOCAL THESPIANS

The Beverly Theatre Guild was established in the 1920's as an activity of the Chicago Park District. The Guild offered theatrical productions in the Ridge Park field house until 1962. The group ended its affiliation with the Park District and became a not-for-profit community association sustained solely by its own revenues. The group is open to anyone, regardless of theatrical experience or neighborhood residency. The Guild continues its theatrical efforts to this day.

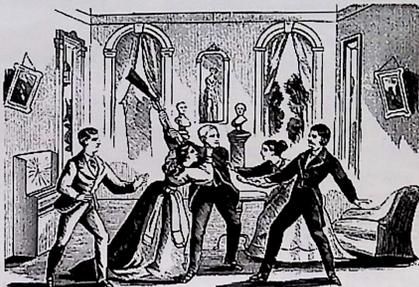
# NOT TO BE MISSED

## A Calendar of Events and Attractions

The deadline for the August/September Newsletter is Wednesday July 16th. We also accept submissions via email at [ridgehistory@hotmail.com](mailto:ridgehistory@hotmail.com)

### The Wit and Wisdom of America's First Ladies until June 20th

Driscoll House will be open daily for this special multimedia exhibit by local artist Barbara Wynn Bansley. The artist will be on hand most days to interpret this unique blend of art and history that tells the story of the women who inhabited the White House. Admission is \$3. per person with proceeds benefiting the Ridge Historical Society. Group visits are welcome. For more information, or to make a group reservation, call 773-881-1675.



### Ridge Historical Society Board of Directors Meetings

Wednesday, June 14th & July 9th  
7:30 pm - Driscoll House

# Ridge Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

Ridge Historical Society  
10621 S. Seeley Ave.  
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DATED MATERIAL

FIRST CLASS  
MAIL

inside...

Crackpot Cultists Invade Beverly  
Vanderpoel Art Collection Exhibit  
Volunteers Make the Difference

Page 1  
Page 2  
Page 5