



# Ridge Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

October/November 2003

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

### ENTERTAINMENT IN THE '20s

**T**he movies of the early 1920's were a good source of clean family entertainment. There was nothing like the violence, sex and embarrassing scenes that are commonly shown today.

The first motion pictures in the early 1920's were silent and in black and white. When a scene called for an actor to speak, the words were displayed on the screen immediately after they were spoken so the audience could follow the story line. You could see the actor's lips move but you couldn't hear his voice.

In order to add realism to the film, sound effects were played in the theater by means of a pipe organ in the larger theaters or a piano in the smaller ones. The musician would carefully follow the scenes being portrayed on the screen and play the appropriate music to match the action taking place in the movie. For a romantic scene, the organist or piano player would play a slow soothing waltz and if the hero was escaping from the villain on horseback, a faster, louder song could be heard echoing throughout the theater.

In 1927, sound came to the theaters when Al Jolson was the featured vocalist in "The Jazz Singer". This film was still in black and white, as color motion pictures didn't arrive until the middle 30's.

Radio was the main source of home entertainment in the 20's and 30's—no TV in those days. It was sometime in the middle 1920's, when Dad bought the first family radio and it had both head phones and a loud speaker. It was set up in the

den where we could all gather around the new fangled gadget and listen to the news of the world. The loud speaker was for local stations while the headphones were required for more distant cities. It was battery operated and required a rechargeable 6 volt battery similar to the one used in the automobiles of those early days for it's electrical power.

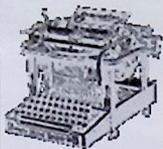
After listening to several programs for a few hours in the evening, the battery had to be uncoupled from the radio and recharged. A battery charger was needed for this procedure and it was plugged into a nearby 110-volt outlet and allowed to recharge overnight in order to be ready for the next evening's entertainment.

The battery was periodically checked for it's amperage by means of a hydrometer which was a glass syringe which would read the difference in the specific gravity of the water and sulfuric acid in the 3 cells of the battery. This in turn would tell whether the battery was fully charged or about to run down. As sulfuric acid is very corrosive, it had to be handled very carefully and Dad was the only one allowed to do the battery checking.

One of the earliest broadcasts I remember hearing on this radio, was when Lindberg flew his solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927 and landed in France. That was very important news and we all anxiously huddled around the radio to learn about this momentous event. Another exciting broadcast was the world heavy weight boxing championship between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney that occurred

*Continued on Page 3*

We continue our series of historical remembrances by author Bill Sabel in this issue. Next month Bill will look at another facet of community life, The Milkman.



## Letters to the Editor

**A**s a former resident of Morgan Park, I was delighted to read a copy of the *Newsletter* when I attended a meeting of the Society in September.

I was particularly interested in the article from Pauline Palmer's book about "Shorty" Saunders. In about 1946 thru '48, I delivered the evening papers for "Shorty" from the newsstand on the corner of Monterey and Homewood. I have many fond memories of sitting in the stand visiting with him, and the customers who stopped. We rolled the papers and then I put them in my wagon or bag or sled and set off to walk around to the 25 or so homes on my route. I learned many lessons about work ethic and determination and perseverance, and particularly about the dignity of the human spirit, from those days. "Shorty" was a grown man then, and his mother was gone. He lived alone in an apartment across the street from the stand. He hired one of the strong boys from Esmond or Morgan Park High to give him a ride on their shoulders to the stand and back in the evening. In his apartment he raised canaries. Cages and cages of beautiful yellow songbirds greeted him each evening when he returned home.

Sincerely,  
**Alice Klingensmith Hofmann**

### Welcome new members!

- Anne Morgan Moore
- Stephen and Deborah Beal
  - Mildred Williamson
- the Brian Murphy Family



## From the Editor's Desk

Aside from my responsibilities as editor of the *Newsletter*, I also assisted in production of the recently released Arcadia book "Chicago's Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood". One of my duties was scanning the photographs used in the book. That task has now qualified me for the job of "Mr. Photo". Whenever a request comes in such as, "Do you have a photo of my Uncle Charley?" I try to find one.

More often than not, there is no photo. While our collection contains hundreds of images, it is by no means as extensive as we wish it could be. There are gaps in our history that need to be filled. That's where our members, and the community at large, play an important role. Every photo in our collection was given to us, and we continue to actively seek photographic images of our community's history.

If you have images of events, people and places that you wish to donate, please contact us by phone, letter or email. We appreciate your generosity.

*David Daruszka*

### Ridge Historical Society Newsletter

Editor - David Daruszka  
Editor Emeritus - Elmer Johnson  
President - Gene Delves

The Ridge Historical Society  
10621 S. Seeley Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60643 (773) 881-1675  
Web site:  
[www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org)  
Email: [ridgehistory@hotmail.com](mailto:ridgehistory@hotmail.com)  
Open to the public Thursdays and  
Sundays 2 to 5 PM, or by  
appointment.

### Card Sharks

"Many of the commuters of Morgan Park while away the time in journeying between the city and their aristocratic village by playing cinch and hearts. The traveler had best take his own deck, as the ones used by the commuters usually contain at most 44 or 45 cards.

*Richard H. Little*  
"Sentimental Journey to Morgan Park"

# ENTERTAINMENT IN THE 20's

*Continued from page 1*

sometime in the late 1920's.

Then in the early 30's, we got a large modern console type radio for the living room and it required 110 volts so we didn't have to depend on batteries anymore. It had a large speaker in front, close to the floor and covered with a fancy gauze material. The tuning dial and radio controls were in the cabinet on top of the speaker.

In the evenings, on a cold winter night, all the kids would lie flat on their stomachs in front of the radio with their chins in their hands and listen to the "Lone Ranger" as he would gallop along side his best friend, Tonto. All of the programs used sound effects to create the proper atmosphere and to stimulate the imagination as to the action taking place. I can still hear the Lone Ranger, as he would clippity-clop across the desert shouting, "Hi, ho Silver — Away".

Another program we enjoyed was "The Shadow Knows" where the sound of a creaking door would emerge from the loud speaker and you would imagine all sorts of ghostly things that was taking place. Another spooky program was "Lights Out" and it came on at midnight with many kinds of eerie sounds that would make the hair on your neck stand on end, when listening at midnight in a darkened room.

If you happened to be outside on a warm summer evening taking a stroll at 10 PM in the depression days of the 30's, you could hear the voices of Amos and Andy emanating from every opened window along Drew Street. Everyone listened to Amos and Andy and the Fresh Air Taxi Cab Company and no one voluntarily missed hearing all about their nightly episodes.

The movie theaters of the 30's were very elegant affairs inside and out with their elaborate foyers and auditoriums. The

Capitol Theater at 79<sup>th</sup> and Halsted St. in Chicago even had simulated clouds drifting by overhead and had stars twinkling in the blue sky that could be seen when the theater darkened and the featured film began.

Dad was a building inspector employed by the City of Chicago and his job included inspecting the movie theaters in his district for any building violations. As a fringe benefit, the Warner Brothers theater chain issued him complimentary family passes to any of their theaters in the city. Needless to say, our family was quite popular among the younger generation. As we were such a large family, the ushers would never know when we invited a couple of our neighborhood chums along to view the featured film with us.

With so many boys in the family, Dad decided to add a pool table to our home and the only room available was in the basement of the old, turn-of-the-century house. A bit of preliminary remodeling had to be done before the standard sized, slate topped pool table could be installed. In order to carry the first floor load, there was a thick wooden beam down the center of the basement ceiling and heavy brick columns that were ten feet apart supported this beam.

The wood beam was reinforced with steel channels on both sides and lag screwed to the beam, thereby eliminating one of the brick columns. The other column was replaced with a 4 inch steel column in order to have maneuvering room when making a shot with the long pool cue. We older boys helped Dad with this remodeling job and when we finished, the pool table was set up and we all had a lot of fun playing the different games of pool for many years. Our basement poolroom was a popular place for all of our neighborhood chums and their parents

## Moving Day

In 1908 Joseph Lane decided to move his house from 108th Street to Longwood Drive. Placed on rollers and pulled by horses, it made its way down the muddy streets at the rate of about 300 feet per day. The house was stalled when it reached the railroad tracks waiting for a workman to cut the telegraph wires to clear the chimney. After a two day wait Joseph lured the railroad watchman, who had been posted to prevent circumvention of the plan, to a tavern. He left \$5 with the bartender, and by the next morning the house was across the tracks.

*Continued on Page 4*

## ENTERTAINMENT IN THE 20's

### *Continued from Page 3*

knew where their kids were and they were not getting into trouble. Those were the days!

On the farm in the late 1930's, there wasn't much outside entertainment besides the radio. While we enjoyed the Lone Ranger as he galloped his horse Silver out of the loud speaker, we wished we could see him too. That wish was granted on Saturday nights in the summer time when the small village of Tyner, Indiana would host the free weekly outdoor movies.

Here is where friends and neighbors from miles around would gather on a warm summer evening to view a 16-millimeter movie film that would begin as soon as darkness settled down on the small village. The gathering place was a vacant lot next to the general store that sponsored the movie. The owner of the store was an enterprising man and his wife who would be on hand to take care of the young patrons of the movie during the 15-minute intermission between

films by satisfying their desires for sweets and soft drinks. He also improvised a seating arrangement by laying planks across short up-ended logs for those who didn't care to sit on the ground or bring their own chairs.

As the youngsters gathered in front of the movie screen, the parents and older folks would try to get comfortable in their improvised seats and then would catch up on the latest gossip. The smaller children, impatient for the movie to start, would chase each other in an informal game of tag. Everyone found it an enjoyable way of getting out of an uncomfortable farmhouse on a hot summer evening before air conditioning was in common use.

While the feature film wasn't the latest of Hollywood's blockbusters, it was usually an action picture of some kind. Shirley Temple was a popular child actress at that time so her movies were much in demand.

**Bill Sabel**

The Ridge Historical Society has an extensive collection of class photographs from Barnard School dating from the 1930's through the 70's. The photo on the right was taken in 1951. Do you recognize anyone in this picture? If so, let us know.





## Book Review

# "MEASURING AMERICA"

Ella McGill taught history with gusto at Sutherland Elementary School, where she had long been a terrifying institution by 1965. Days before my graduation that year, she took me aside and said, "Linda, I know that one day you will achieve something wonderful having to do with history."

Mrs. McGill's outrageous reputation had well preceded her. I will never forget a steamy June day in second grade when sweet Miss Lindahl had to close the windows because Mrs. McGill was expounding so loudly in the room above - which didn't help much, as the air vent still did a fine job of carrying her voice right to the back of our room.

With her remark to me, I believed Mrs. McGill had finally turned the corner to madness. As a student in school I was always the absolute WORST. As the years go by, though, I have at least come to excel as a student of what interests me. Oddly, this has come to usually involve history.

To the "history challenged" the subject is too often parchingly dry. Names and dates ad infinitum pale in comparison to all else today's world has to offer. So when a book (or perhaps even a TV show on PBS) breathing life into the past comes along, it makes me want to jump up and tell everyone I know all about it. Such a book is Andro Linklater's, "Measuring America."

In researching local history, I have learned that this land was rife with surveyors. Butchers, bakers, farmers, teachers, newspaper men, you name the occupation... no matter what they ended up doing, many of our early settlers had at one time done surveying. "Measuring America" is the story of how surveying evolved and how surveyors made America. It sets the stage for everything that happened here - in the US, the Midwest and Chicago, right on down to our very own Ridge. So, perhaps you need to already like history to enjoy this book, but would you be reading this

newsletter otherwise? And perhaps Andro is a little obsessed with numbers, but would he likely have written it otherwise?

In any case, "Measuring America" explains so many things! In 292 pages of text, appendices, notes and etc., the author lays centuries of groundwork for the sweeping tale of what is unique in all the world about America.

So, have I (or will I) ever achieve "something wonderful" to do with history? Only time will tell, but I find daily that Ridge history grows richer. Each new discovery adds color to the palette, and lately the past even "talks" to me on occasion. It tells me to share the blush of life I find there, and to yell it out if I have to.

Thank you, Mrs. McGill, more than I can ever say.

*Linda Lamberty*



We had Beverly Hillbillies long before L.A. did! This cute little tyke was Elwood Olson, who donated many of his family's photos to the Ridge Historical Society.

## Crime Report

July 29 - Charles Halford died after being fatally stabbed at 111th and Western by a youth.

Sept. 23rd - The "Afternoon Robbers", four youths, were captured by Morgan Park Police and confessed to numerous crimes in the Ridge area.

Nov. 18 - Alice Schultz, local dress shop proprietor, was the victim of a daring holdup at the corner of 111th and Hoyne.

*Suburban Star*  
1937



# NEWS BRIEFS

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

## Beverly/Morgan Park History Book Arrives

The Images of America book "Chicago's Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood" published by Arcadia Publishing has arrived and is now on sale (see the order form on Page 7). Produced in association with local writer Joseph Oswald, the book contains over 200 images gathered from the Society's photographic archives. The book follows the development and history of the Ridge communities from its glacial prehistory to its modern-day guise as the "Village in the City". Along the way you'll learn more about the people and events that shaped our history. It's a great book for old-time residents to remember the "good old days" and for newcomers to appreciate the history that makes us who we are today. All books purchased through the Society will go to benefit the organization, with the funds raised earmarked to properly store our photo collections.

## RHS Newsletter Presented With An Award of Excellence

The Illinois Association of Museums presented the Ridge Historical Society Newsletter with an Award of Excellence as part of its annual competition for historical societies from around the state. The judges citation notes that they were especially impressed by the fact that the publication was an all-volunteer production. They also noted that they especially enjoyed the history notes in the sidebars. President Gene Delves attended the annual awards dinner in Skokie, Illinois to receive the award (and hopefully had a nice meal).

## Local Artist Ethel Wirtshafter Honored

A reception honoring Ethel Wirtshafter, batik expert; art, drama and yoga instructor; woodcarver and photographer, will take place on Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 4 PM. RHS members are invited to join this celebration to a lifetime commitment to the love of art. The reception will take place at the Walker Branch of the Chicago Public Library, 11071 South Hoyne Ave. For more information call 312-747-1920.

## Keep Your House and Furniture Insured!

Ask JUDGE GOE for a list of his Companies

## KEEP COOL!

Fine Home-Made ICE CREAM

at \$1.00 per gallon, 25c a quart, 15c a pint, delivered at your home. Try it and be happy.

Our Own Make of Confectionery

Always Fresh

OUR ICE CREAM SODA

Makes you feel Cool and Contented

ALSO TOBACCO AND FINE CIGARS

WM & THOS. NICKOLS CO.

Cor. Vincennes Road and Morgan Av. Morgan Park, Ill.

## WHY NOT HAVE YOUR CLOTHES MADE AT HOME?

First Class Work at Chicago Prices

Clothes that Fit and Stay Fitted

COOL SUMMER SUITINGS

Cleaning, Pressing and Repairing

AT USUAL LOW RATES

LADIES DRESSES CLEANED or DYED

HIGH CLASS WORK ONLY

ALEX. McSKIMMING

Telephone 723 Morgan Park, Ill.

## Get Ready for Winter

Save Money by ordering your

**COAL NOW**

H. M. NICHOLS CO.

Dealers in LEHIGH VALLEY, WELLSTON and POCAHONTAS COAL; also WOOD, HAY and GRAIN.

11108 Washington Ave. Morgan Park, Ill.

## The Wages of Sin

Pleading guilty to charges of violating the internal revenue law, Otto Bonato, 41 years old, 10761 Western Ave., owner of an illicit still which exploded last July 9 at the above address and killed his wife and daughter, was fined \$500 and sentenced to six months in the County Jail by Federal Judge Charles E. Woodworth.

Suburban Star  
1937

CHICAGO'S BEVERLY/MORGAN PARK

Known as the "Village in the City," the Beverly/Morgan Park community developed in a country retreat for Chicago's social, political, and economic elite after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The area's geography also affected its development, a ridge formed by the last glacier to visit the area over 12,000 years ago placed the community at the highest elevation in the city and made it a perfect place to build large, elaborate homes. With a section of the neighborhood designated as the Ridge Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, Beverly/Morgan Park remains stands out as a unique area of the city because of its diverse architectural styles, notable history, and strong sense of community.

Using the extensive collection of images from the Ridge Historical Society, author Joe Oswald chronicles the growth, development, and continuity of this unique urban community. Mr. Oswald, a high school history teacher and author, has lived in the "Village in the City" his entire life.

The Images of America series celebrates the history of neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the country. Using archival photographs, each title presents the distinctive stories from the past that shape the character of the community today. Arcadia is proud to play a part in the preservation of local heritage, making history available to all.

PUBLISHED BY ARCADIA  
AN IMBROSIO OF THOMAS PUBLISHING, INC.

\$19.99



**NOW AVAILABLE, A NEW PHOTO BOOK ON  
THE HISTORY OF BEVERLY HILLS/MORGAN PARK**

The Ridge Historical Society is pleased to announce the release *Chicago's Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood* from the Images of America series by Arcadia Press. Produced in association with writer Joseph Oswald, the book contains over 200 images gathered from the RHS archives along with chapter introductions and captions that tell the story of our community's history. Books purchased through the Historical Society will help us to raise funds for the organization and its programs. Fill out the order form below and return it to RHS to receive your copy of this fascinating book. The price is \$19.95 plus \$1.50 per copy for orders shipped via USPS.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF COPIES ORDERED x \$19.95 = \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF COPIES SHIPPED x \$1.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL = \_\_\_\_\_

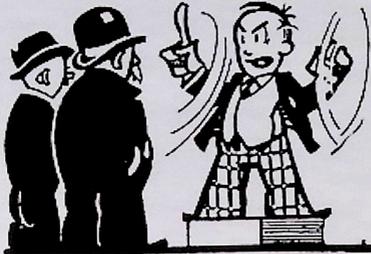
Detach this order form and mail it with your payment to:  
**Ridge Historical Society, 10621 S. Seeley Avenue, Chicago, IL 60643.**

Please allow two weeks for delivery. Thank you for your order.  
**Please do not send cash. Check or money order only.**

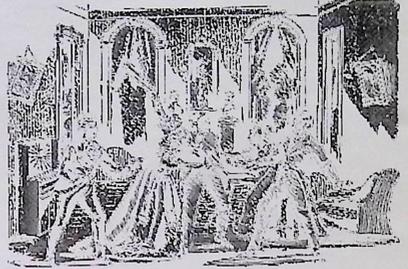
# NOT TO BE MISSED

## A Calendar of Events and Attractions

The deadline for the December/January Newsletter is Wednesday November 12th. We also accept submissions via email at [ridgehistory@hotmail.com](mailto:ridgehistory@hotmail.com)



No information on upcoming programs was available at press time. Please visit our website at [www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org) for updates on future programs.



### Board of Directors Meetings

7:30 PM - Driscoll House  
Wednesday, October 8th

### Strategic Planning Meeting

Saturday, November 15  
Time and location - to be announced

# Ridge Historical Society

---

# NEWSLETTER

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

DATED  
MATERIAL

FIRST CLASS  
MAIL

inside...

Entertainment in the 20's  
"Shorty" Saunders Remembered  
New Ridge History Book - Order Today

Page 1  
Page 2  
Page 7