

Ridge Historical Society

NEWSLETTER



August-September 2004

Visit the web site at www.ridgehistoricalsociety.org

The current exhibit "The Prairie School in Beverly" featuring over 100 photographs by Mati Maldre has been extended through September 12th.

Tuesdays have been added to the schedule of days (Thursdays and Sundays) we are open to the public. Hours for all three days are two to five p.m..



Jenkinson (1912) & Clarke (1913) Houses, Walter Burley Griffin

Photograph by Mati Maldre

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL IN BEVERLY

By Mati Maldre and Sue Delves

"Until democracy produced a good architecture and good art, it could not produce a good life for its citizens."

Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*

I acquired an interest in architectural photographic documentation, paralleled with a new exposure to the Prairie School of architecture, in 1971, while studying with Aaron Siskind at the Institute of Design at IIT. In 1980, 10 years after Paul Sprague and Tom Yanul first identified and documented the cache of Griffin Houses on 104th Place, Kathy and I purchased the Jenkinson House, designed by Griffin in 1912. Aided by a Graham Foundation Grant in 1988, I launched my independent research on Griffin and his Prairie School contemporaries, pursuing a

project to document and photograph, with my 4x5 Deardorff view camera, all 64 of the existing structures designed by Griffin in America (1902 to 1914). My photographs were published as **Walter Burley Griffin in America** in 1996, in collaboration with Paul Kruty and his extensive research. Paul Kruty argues that Griffin should be recognized as the third great member, after Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, of the Prairie School of architecture. The book provided the first complete visual record ever published of Griffin's surviving architectural work.

Meanwhile I also had gained tremendous respect for Beverly/Morgan Park's treasury of Prairie School homes representing many other architects of the Prairie School, gradually assembling the representative collection you see

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The Dangers of Police Work

Officer MacPhee had a hard tussle with a large and powerful dog last evening. Henry Feil, who got it from Mr. Heller, and noticing its disposition, requested the police to shoot it. Entering the barn for the purpose, Mr. MacPhee was immediately set upon by the savage animal, and it was only by the aid of his club that he was enabled to beat the animal back. The heavy police club was broken in the struggle. He at last managed to get in a shot that ended the fight.

The Post
November 3,
1906

RHS President Praises Mati and Kathy Maldre for Walter Burley Griffin Event and Exhibit

Twenty-five years ago, it was Mary Olsson, then a BAPA staff member, who seized the opportunity to seek National Register of Historic Places designation for several blocks around Longwood Drive, making it the then-largest historic district in the nation. Soon after that, architectural historians Paul Sprague and Tom Yanul called attention to a group of interesting houses on 104th Place, affirming that they were the work of architect Walter Burley Griffin, and published several articles. Soon Mary Olsson was again pushing for Landmark District status and eventually the renaming of 104th Pl. to Walter Burley Griffin Place.

Skip forward to June, 2004. Mati Maldre, a noted photographer and professor who, with his wife Kathy had bought one of those Griffin houses in the seventies, is host for the national meeting of the W. B. Griffin Society at Ridge Historical Society. It marked the opening of "The Prairie School in Beverly" his exhibit of 53 black-and-white photographs of local houses...And none other than Mary Olsson currently is president of Ridge Historical Society.

Her remarks written the next day to Mati and Kathy summarize the weekend's events.

"Dear Mati and Kathy:

You are a Joy!! Your outstanding Exhibit and meeting brought together a wonderful group of serious-minded folks who melded so well with our "Village People". The pride in the day between the homeowners, the visitors, the house docents and yourselves was truly electrifying. For me to hear Paul Sprague and Tom Yanul say how well the community had taken care of itself was just the best ever. The Griffin Society members came from far and wide — Iowa, Massachusetts, Evanston, Wilmette, Florida, Elmhurst, Berwyn, Urbana and

other spots. (For some it seemed to be a true reunion of veterans of preservation battles.)

You are the Great Catalyst of Photography, Architecture and History, Mati. Some twenty-five years later, you brought knowledgeable and interested persons together once again to see what Walter Burley Griffin Place looks like. It was truly an exciting day and we thank you so very much!!!

It was pure fun to see Nick Beiderman (a man who has traveled the world over, still living contentedly in his WBG, after several decades) and, then, to meet the young couple who just purchased a WBG (they were thrilled with the event and were enthused by Paul giving them suggestions for restoring their new home). These stories are "so Beverly." They'll be talking of your day for years to come. And, they'll be your new neighbors, as well.

We Salute you. Your Exhibit is brilliant and we thank you.

With best regards,
Mary Olsson"

Ridge Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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Open to the public Tuesdays, Thursdays
and Sundays, 2 to 5 pm, or by
appointment.

REMEMBERING THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"

By William Sabel

THE ICE MAN

Before the advent of the electric refrigerator, the only means of keeping food from spoiling in the summer time was with ice and an icebox. This was a wooden cabinet where a 25 or 50 pound block of ice would be placed in the top compartment. Another compartment below would have a series of screen shelves where the food was placed. As warm air rises and cold air falls, this natural convection would preserve the perishable food.

Whenever the housewife was in need of a piece of ice, she would place a cardboard sign in the front window indicating whether a 25 or a 50-pound block was required. If the block of ice was too large for the available space, an ice pick was utilized to whittle the block to fit. Underneath the icebox was a hinged door that concealed a pan that would catch the water from the slowly melting block of ice. Sometimes one would forget to empty the overflowing pan and then it was a mess to clean up. We had an enclosed back porch that served as a refrigerator in the wintertime. As a lot of food was required to feed our large family, all available space was utilized for the storage of perishable items. Some of the homes would have a metal cold storage box fastened on the outside of a half opened window just off of the kitchen or pantry. This provided extra storage capacity for perishable items in the wintertime and it was cheap to operate.

THE TELEPHONE

Our first telephone was located in the den and the mechanism for its operation was fastened to the wall. This consisted of a coin box where it was necessary for the caller to deposit a nickel in a slot provided for that purpose whenever he desired to make a call. The telephone instrument itself was about a foot tall with a mouthpiece at one end and a hook fastened along side the upright support and this held the receiver the caller would place to his ear. It had a large flat base to keep it from toppling over.

In order to call one of my friends, it would be necessary for me to drop a nickel in the slot and the operator would quickly ask, "Number please". I would then reply into the mouthpiece, "Beverly 8312". In a few moments, connections would be made to my friend's house and when he responded, "Hello", we would begin our conversation.

Once a month the coin collector from the telephone company would visit our home and with a special key, open the coin box on the telephone and extract the coins. Mother would always be on hand to purchase extra nickels so we would have a ready supply for future telephone use.

Chicago was divided into neighborhoods that included Beverly Hills, Englewood, Hyde Park, Morgan Park, Blue Island, etc. so it was necessary to give the exchange prefix and then the 4-digit number when you wanted to make a call.

BREAD BAKING

During the depression of the early 30's, many families baked their own bread and our family was no exception. Every Saturday was bread-baking day in the Sabel household and it was an all day job. Friday evening Mother would get all of the necessary ingredients together for the weekly chore and they were carefully measured and dumped into the mixing container. This container was a five-gallon tapered galvanized pail with a "Z" shaped rod that was inserted into the ingredients and it had a handle to turn and mix the contents. My older brother and I were often recruited to do the turning while she added the various ingredients according to her well-worn recipe card. In addition to mixing, this bread-making device also kneaded the bread. When it became too hard for us to turn, Mother would take over and she would keep kneading until it was just the right consistency according to her experienced eye.

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The Death of a Mystery Woman

A poor woman was found dead by a policeman on Tuesday afternoon in the railroad ditch at 101st Street. Her neck had been broken, presumably by a passing train. No clew (sic) to her identity was found at the inquest. A letter in her pocket led the jury to believe that her name was Miss Mary Cotton or Mrs. Mary Daun. The young lady telephone operator at Longwood said she had asked her for a drink of water a short time before. She also told her that she was walking from Chicago to Bloomington to get work. She was about 45 years of age.

*The Post
November 3,
1906*

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL IN BEVERLY

That Darned Cupid

Miss Marion Biegler has resigned her position as teacher to be married the last of this month at Detroit to Mr. Davis. Miss Caroline Hagen has resigned to accept a position as critic teacher in the De Kalb State Normal School. This is a compliment to the painstaking care of the teachers' committee here in providing the very best teachers. Mrs. Atwood and Mrs. Weatherwax are substituting for them until permanent successors are appointed. Rumor has it that Cupid is to waylay another teacher soon. This makes eight new teachers since last July. Superintendent Heil hopes Cupid will go to Santa Claus and keep him company.

The Post
January 6, 1906

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here. I view this entire Griffin Society weekend as a vehicle to focus attention on the wide variety of Prairie examples, from the vernacular up to the "big stars" like Griffin, Wright and Maher, and including those whose work was done during the height of the Prairie School between 1910 and 1916.

Early in the development of their careers, Walter Burley Griffin and other young architects worked from studios in the new Steinway Hall on Van Buren Street. Each one had come under the spell of Louis Sullivan's daring ideas, and they were working with Frank Lloyd Wright who later referred to their coterie as "the eighteen." Later many also worked from Wright's studio in Oak Park. They shared creative ideas for a new, completely American architecture, reflecting the simplicity of the flat Midwestern prairie, at the same time setting aside traditional standards.

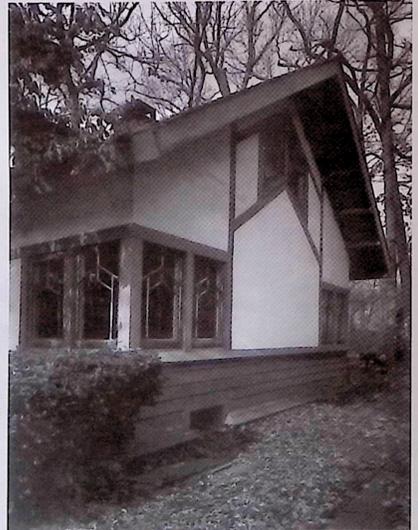
The Arts and Crafts Movement and its concentration on simplicity, along with the introduction of homemaker magazines aimed at middle or upper middle-class families helped to spread curiosity about new concepts in tasteful requirements for a home. Most important was *House Beautiful*, published in Chicago and therefore reflecting and fostering Midwestern taste and a new style of living that was happening here.

Prairie designs aimed for an organic sensation of a building related to site, and the needs of the people who would occupy it. The basic concept was to make the building and landscape harmonious; to consider light, breeze and view as part of the design. They began with simple shapes and forms, creating horizontal, ground-hugging lines with sheltering, overhanging eaves. Casement windows were grouped, sometimes in simple ribbon-like lines but more often using distinctive wood mullioned geometric patterns. (Griffin frequently used the diamond and triangle.) Living spaces were opened into a single L-shape space, usually around a central fire-

place. Rooms became only suggested areas of use rather than absolute confines. The result was compact, economical and friendly.

Texture and/or roughness combined with the use of warm earth color was expressed by the use of rough textured stucco, rough sawn cedar trim, sand plaster walls and the proliferation of rectilinear interior woodwork, all of which was stained and/or varnished but never painted to hide the texture. Beverly-Morgan Park provided a suburban setting where natural elements could blend with the designs. (The area now known as Beverly Hills was annexed to Chicago in 1890, and Morgan Park didn't vote for annexation until 1914.) Most of what are listed as Prairie Style homes in this area are not of the low, ground-hugging type so often associated with these architects, such as found in Wright's prototypical Evans house on Longwood Drive. Rather, these prairie homes were built for moderate income families utilizing small lots. They were "city"

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Von Norstrand House, Walter Burley Griffin
Photograph by Mati Maldre

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL IN BEVERLY

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houses, built on a modest scale and less opulent than other Prairie houses, but retaining the basic concepts of open space, light, and airiness.

Griffin generated rational design solutions that sought to improve living conditions for all. In his most masterful designs, such as those in Mason City, Iowa or Anna, Illinois, his achievements can be compared to any of his Prairie School contemporaries. Yet, he was also able to transform traditional boxes and small cottages into spaces of harmony and warmth which elevated the status of moderate housing to new plateaus of

enjoyment and function.

In my architectural photographic documentation, I strive to maintain the intricate and delicate blend of fundamental documentation and interpretive expression that reveals new appreciation and understanding of our man-made environment. I attempt to couple a firm respect for the subject's integrity and the architect's intent with a desire to produce a fine photographic image and print. Thus, my photographs, like the buildings they represent, are both art and science, both personal and practical. My mission in this presentation is to expand the public's appreciation of Griffin and the Prairie School as found in Beverly-Morgan Park.



Evans House Dining Room, Frank Lloyd Wright

Photograph by Mati Maldre

Historic "Kensington Tea Bread" Reappears at WGB Society Party

Frequently, the Newsletter quotes comments (in our sidebars) from "The Reminder" a small weekly newspaper published by Bethany Union Church during the years when grand Prairie Style houses were being built on Longwood Drive and Seeley Ave. The paper frequently refers to "Kensington Teas" held in members' homes or front porches in the summertime. It seemed fitting, especially since the Saturday lectures for the WB Griffin Society were held at Bethany Union Church, and the first owners of some of the featured houses were church members, to serve "Kensington Tea Bread". Linda Lamberty discovered the recipe in "The Reminder", and someone was found who was willing to make the pretty, sweet light brown bread for the opening party.

The Better Mouse Trap

If you are troubled with rats, mice, mink or any other four-legged thieves, my 15 years' experience breeding and training ferrets ought to do you some good. Trained ferrets always on hand. Wholesale and retail. Fred Graham, 10773 Washington Av., Morgan Park, Ill.

*Ad in The Post
January 6, 1906*

The Gypsy Encampment

The Young People's Society gave a very enjoyable and financially successful "Gypsy Encampment" yesterday on the Academy grounds. Handbills announced "ten big attractions" and ice cream, lemonade, cakes and red hots 5 cents; donkey rides in charge of Dudley Baker and grab bag, etc., etc., made it a "really truly" show. Major Claxton, as usual, was there to aid the cause of the young people.

The Post
August 4, 1906



NEWS BRIEFS

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

SALY GRANT PROGRAMS SCHEDULED FOR LATE 2004

The Dorothy Ann Saly Teacher Enrichment professional development workshop series for 2004-05 will kick into gear at the Ridge Historical Society this November with a repeat of the full day workshop which was so successful last year, and two late afternoon workshops offering an exciting new theme by each of the same two very creative presenters. Meg Kelly Carrol of St. Xavier University and Lisa Oppenheim of the Chicago Metro History Education Center are working enthusiastically with Linda Lamberty of RHS to blend primary local materials with their lively and exciting programs. The workshops are geared to teachers of grades 5 through 8, but are designed with the intention that teachers of other grades should be able to "adjust" them up or down.

Some of the perks being offered are: CPDUs, a tasty meal (lunch on the full day and supper on each of the half days) and a fun and interactive program to delight and enlighten. If you are a teacher who missed out on this last year, this is your opportunity to make up for it. And if you attended in 2003, we are doing our best to out-do ourselves this year. Information will be going out to each school and we will have plenty of promotional material on hand, so don't be shy! There is NO CHARGE TO TEACHERS OR SCHOOLS, and dollar awards are planned for those who attend.

UPCOMING RHS PROGRAMS FOCUS ON ARCHITECTURAL AND PRESERVATION TOPICS

Mati Maldre's exhibit of silver print, view-camera photos documenting "The Prairie School in Beverly" has been extended through Sunday, Sept. 12th. Several Friday evening pro-

grams on related subjects will constitute this year's "In the Cool of the Evening" lecture series:

The first will be Mati's own "The Prairie Style in Beverly: A Visual Tour and View Camera Demonstration" on Friday, August 20th. Doors will open at 7:30 PM and slide program begins at 8 PM. Champagne and light refreshments served.

Next will be "Wright's Guy Smith House: An American System Built Home in Beverly" the following Friday, August 27th, by Debra Nemeth, local resident and owner of a Frank Lloyd Wright American System Built Home. Doors will again open at 7:30 PM and program begins at 8 PM. Champagne and light refreshments served.

Lastly (after a hiatus over the Labor Day weekend) on Friday, September 10th will be RHS president and long-time preservation advocate, Mary Quinn Olsson addressing "The History of Our Historic Districts", with others active in the effort from the early 1970s on. Doors will still open at 7:30 PM and program begins at 8 PM. Champagne and light refreshments served.

VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR THE WBG SOCIETY TOUR AND PHOTO EXHIBIT

Many people must be acknowledged: Joan Wynne Murphy, Jennifer Kenny, Carol Flynn, the Maldre family, and Pat Caldwell were docents for the Prairie Homes which were opened; Terry O'Hara catered the opening party; Linda Lamberty performed many tasks; research and captions produced by Harold Wolff and Jennifer Kenny contributed materially to the body of the exhibit; and Bill

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NEWS BRIEFS

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Sandstrom and Linda helped with setup and cleanup. The atmosphere inside was made bearable on a muggy weekend by a group donation and purchase of a portable air conditioner. Availability of the terrace meant the house was never over-crowded and the "gal-

Bill Sabel Remembers the "Good Old Days"

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When this stage had been reached, the mixing handle and "Z" bar were removed and the pail of dough was allowed to rest over night where it would go through a series of risings and proofing. During warm weather, there was no problem in getting the dough to rise to the proper stage but in the wintertime, the pail had to be placed on a stool in front of the hot air register in the den. Here the constant heat of the coal fired furnace in the basement kept the dough at the proper rising temperature.

The first thing Saturday morning, Mother would poke the overflowing dough back into the pail and get it ready to form the fresh dough into loaves of bread, braided coffee cakes and sugar frosted pan rolls. The proofed pail of dough was unceremoniously dumped on the floured tabletop where a minute or two of further hand kneading was performed until the mass was of the proper consistency for dividing. From experience, Mother knew just the right amount of dough to slice off the mound of fresh dough and fill the tin bread pans to produce a loaf of bread.

Next came the formation of coffee cakes from the raw dough. This operation was performed by slicing 3 gobs of dough and rolling them individually into yard long ropes an inch in diameter. These were pressed together at one end and the braiding process begun. When finished, the ends were pressed together and the limp coil of dough was carefully placed in a round, greased cake pan. After brushing the top of the coffee cake with beaten egg yolk, it was sprinkled with sugar and sometimes cin-

lery" remained a relatively hushed and tranquil space. As artist/host, Mati himself was enthusiastic, kind and appreciative in acknowledging the work of others. There was great enthusiasm over the Prairie School subject and our local history. What a worthy cause to celebrate and put forth at the Ridge Historical Society.

namon also. What dough was left was formed into meatball sized lumps and rolled around in the palm of both hands until it was just right and then placed in another greased cake pan touching one and other.

These were for sampling by all of us kids who were standing around waiting for the fresh baked goods to be removed from the aroma filled oven. The 7 or 8 pans of bread and coffee cakes were then set aside and covered with a clean dishtowel while the active yeast did its job. After a half hour of further rising, the pans were placed in the preheated oven for the baking and the smell of fresh baked bread would soon fill the house. When the baking process had been completed in a half hour, the hot pans of fresh baked goods were inverted onto wire racks where the contents were allowed to cool. It was a tradition in our household to have fresh baked coffee cake with butter and cheese for breakfast on Sunday morning along with a soft-boiled egg.

In my teen years, I played a trumpet with a group of fellow musicians and after a late dance job; my buddy and I would arrive home at 2 o'clock Sunday morning and feast on a whole fresh coffee cake washed down with a cold glass of milk. Those were the days! I still bake bread but now I use a bread-baking machine in place of the old hand method. It takes 5 minutes to put the ingredients into the machine and then when the proper buttons are pressed, a hot loaf of bread is baked in 3 1/2 hours.

The Social News of the Day

A new telephone has been installed in the grocery store of Otto Groll at 97th and Charles Street.

Daniel Barnard and the Misses Elizabeth and Alice L., left on Wednesday for Florida to spend the winter.

A week ago last night was celebrated by the young people of Longwood with a dance at the Hamilton Park club house.

Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Moberly of 9830 Prospect Avenue, are the happy possessors of a little daughter, born Dec. 28.

The Post
January 6, 1906

NOT TO BE MISSED

A Calendar of Events and Attractions

In the Cool of the Evening Lecture Series

Friday, August 20

"The Prairie Style in Beverly: A Visual Tour and View Camera Demonstration", by Mati Maldre

Friday, August 27

"Wright's Guy Smith House: An American System Built Home in Beverly", by Debra Nemeth, local resident and owner of a Frank Lloyd Wright American System Built Home

Friday, September 10

"The History of Our Historic Districts", with others active in the effort from the early 1970s on, by RHS president and long-time preservation advocate, Mary Quinn Olsson.

Doors open at 7:30 p.m. Programs begin at 8 p.m. Champagne and light refreshments served following the programs.

Individuals wishing to become docents are invited to contact the Society at 773-881-1675 to register for the training class scheduled for August.

Ridge Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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

DATED
MATERIAL

FIRST CLASS
MAIL

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