

RECORD

BEVERLY HILLS, MORGAN PARK, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS & MT. GREENWOOD

Morgan Park annexation battles lasted 20 years

to 1914

By Carol Flynn, with expert research by Linda Lambert, RHS Historian

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the annexation of the Village of Morgan Park to the city of Chicago. Next to the actual founding of the Village, this is the most pivotal

milestone in the history of the community. It was not an easy decision for the residents to make; the battle over annexation lasted for twenty years, and there were seven elections before the final, unequivocal decision to annex

was finally made. Those twenty years were marked by periods of strife. Neighbors were pitted against each other and there was at least one documented death threat.

St., 22nd St., and Lake Michigan. Chicago was beginning to emerge as an important transportation hub between the eastern and western United States. There was the strategically important portage system which connected the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes, and Chicago was also about to become the nation's railroad center. The flourishing economy attracted people to move here.

During this time, many settlements, towns and villages were established throughout the area, with miles of open spaces often separating the settlements.

Growth of Chicago

Chicago mainly grew by annexing other communities that had formed around the central core at the mouth of the Chicago River. From its origins as a French trading post and site of Fort Dearborn, by the time the City of Chicago was incorporated on March 4, 1837, it consisted of over 4,000 people, and about 10 square miles. The boundaries were North Ave., Wood

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RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10621 S. Seeley Ave. Chicago, IL 60643

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Call for current hours.

Look for the Ridge Historical Society on Facebook.

"Government is a device for the better diffusion of welfare."—Theodore Roosevelt.

The better the device the greater and more diffused the welfare.

Annexation means

Relief from **Factional Bickerings!**

Annexation means

Chicago Schools—"Famous the World Over."

Annexation means

Adequate support of our Public Library as a branch of the great 325,000 volume Public Library of Chicago!

Both the Annexationists and the Home Rulers engaged in spirited campaigning for their causes. From the RHS collection.

See Annexation, page 2

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Early roads like the Vincennes Trail connected the developing settlements to one another and to Chicago. Later, railroad lines allowed "suburban" communities to further develop and be connected to the business hub of

Chicago. The rural areas separating the communities began to be swallowed up. As populations grew, many of the suburbs were hard-pressed to provide all the services that their residents needed and demanded, especially sanitation services, clean drinking water, fire and police services, and later,

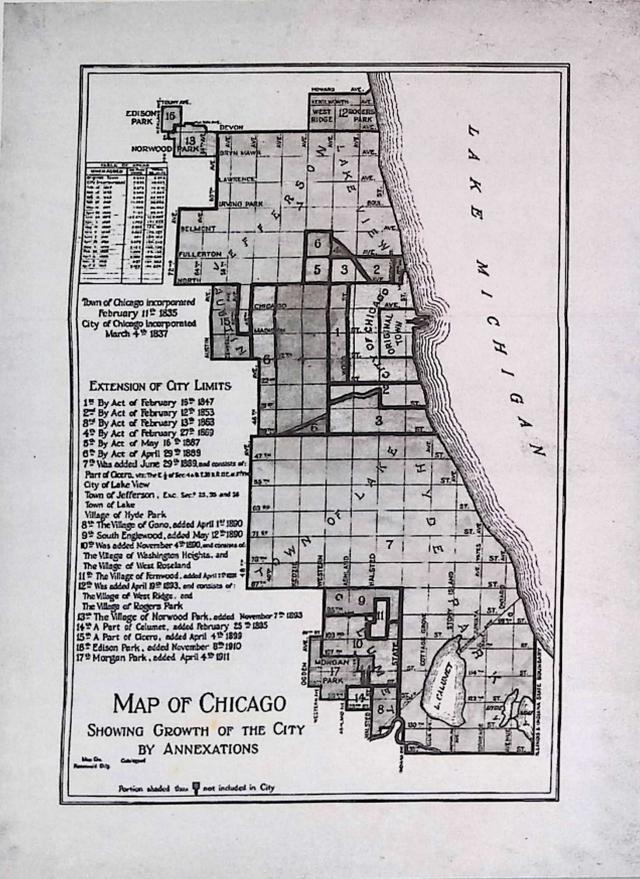
schools. Joining a larger jurisdiction was an option to share tax revenues to reduce the cost of providing services.

After 1850, Cook County was divided into townships, which administered basic governmental functions. Several pieces of Illinois and county legislation

helped allow for and clarify questions of annexation. For Chicago, extensive annexations occurred from 1850 to 1920. Most of these annexations happened because Chicago offered superior services. The decisions were not easy to make, were often controversial, and sometimes were challenged in court.

The largest annexation occurred in 1889. Hyde Park Township, comprised of most of what is now the South Side of the city (Hyde Park, Kenwood, Woodlawn, South Shore, Pullman, Roseland, etc.), had been formed as a separate municipality in 1861 but voted to annex to Chicago at this time. Lake Township to the west of Hyde Park also voted for annexation. Jefferson Township on the north side, incorporated as its own town since 1872, opted for annexation. To its east, Lake View, which had just incorporated as a city in 1887 also annexed to Chicago after a controversial vote.

Residents of Chicago proper had to vote to accept the areas into the city, and to be sure, not everyone who lived in Chicago was in favor



Map of the City of Chicago showing growth by annexation. This map was made ca. 1911, right after Morgan Park voted to annex, and shows Morgan Park as part of the city. But the election was declared invalid, and it was not until another vote in 1914 that the actual final legal decision was made to annex. From the University of Chicago Library website.

of annexing additional areas, stating that city resources would be spread too thin.

Morgan Park and annexation

By 1890, the northern sections of the Ridge, Washington Heights and Beverly Hills, had annexed to Chicago. Morgan Park was now bordered

Given the community's history, it should come as no surprise that the idea of annexation to Chicago was so controversial. Morgan Park can be considered an early "planned" community. The streets and parks were carefully designed and laid out to resemble an English

enclave. Prestigious schools and churches were founded. The Baptist Theological Union relocated there and its faculty included William Rainey Harper, who became the first president of the University of Chicago. Morgan Park prohibited the sale of liquor when it was incorporated as a village in 1882. Esmond public school and Walker Library were built. Local services included a post office, telephone, telegraph, good sewerage disposal, pure water from an artesian well, and plenty of shops. Most of the men commuted to Chicago for work.

In a booklet called "Morgan Park Views" put out in 1899, Charles P. and Frank Silva said, "The Village of Morgan Park is by all odds the choicest of Chicago's suburbs. It is a thoroughly established, progressive village. It is blessed with having the right kind of citizens. Our children grow up surrounded by only good influences. There are many reasons why Morgan Park is much superior to other localities for the purpose of a home. Today Morgan Park is known all over the land on account of its natural beauty

and its educational institutions. It leads and will continue to lead all other localities as an education center, which means churches, schools, good society and the place for a home."

Although the intent was to promote the purchase of real estate, the wording does reflect the pride with



Annexation was a hot topic for conversations on a street corner in Morgan Park. This real photo postcard ca. 1909 shows Major Horace L. Claxton, John D. Barnes, and Carl A. Geisler. Claxton, a salesman for Sunday Creek Coal Co., was a vice president of the Morgan Park Annexation Society; Barnes was a druggist and owner of J. D. Barnes & Co., a drug store; and Geisler was a druggist working with Barnes. The picture was taken in front of Barnes's store at Commercial and Morgan Aves. From the RHS collection.

which many Morgan Park residents tended to think of their village. Silva Hall was built as the social center for the village where events included dances, concerts and lectures. Morgan Park took pride in its rich cultural life.

Morgan Park next considered annexation in 1907. Sniffed Henry J. Bohn, a publisher and Calumet Park District Commissioner for whom Bohn

See Annexation, page 4

Annexation means

Progress and Economy!

Annexation means

A GREATER MORGAN PARK

and a Better, Cleaner and Safer Morgan Park!

The Morgan Park Annexation Society:

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on the north and east by the city. In 1894, Morgan Park first considered the possibility of annexation. The measure was defeated by a vote of 267 against to 66 for. Thus began the 20-year battle over annexation.

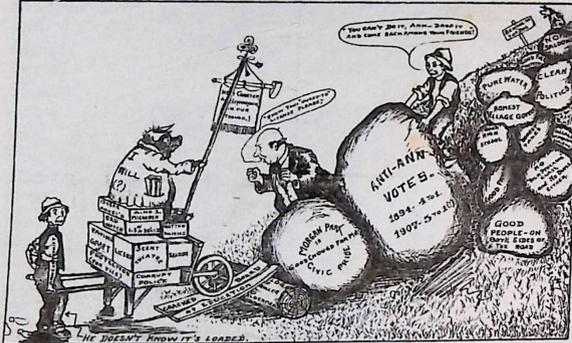
village. The plots were large, intended for "handsome residences." It was marketed to the well-to-do as a country retreat. The developers established the community as a religious, educational and temperance

Park near the 111th Street train station is named, as quoted in *The Post*, the most prominent of Morgan Park newspapers, "If a city run by red-nosed rum soaked pot-house

Annexationists and the Home Rulers. They were referred to locally as the "Annies" and the "Anti-Annies" or the "Aunty Annies." The issues identified as being important in the annexation question were taxes; honesty

was run by full-time professionals while the village was managed by part-time, inefficient managers who had jobs elsewhere. Annexationists wanted the cheaper, softer water of Lake Michigan. Home

the Chicago system, and wanted a new high school built before annexation was considered so that it would be less likely to be closed if annexation occurred. Annexationists countered that the



Political cartoons appeared on each side of the annexation issue. This unattributed anti-annexation ad probably appeared before the 1908 election. From the RHS collection.

politicians, whose religion is self, whose principle is pelf, can manage our village affairs more honestly and satisfactorily than business men having the good of their homes at stake, then by all means annex." The final vote in 1907 was 264 for annexation and 424 against.

Annexation issues

With the 1907 election, the battle lines began to be drawn and the issues enumerated for the years of struggle to come. The two camps were the

in Chicago city government; water; the school system; city services such as police, fire fighting, street lighting, gas and electric rates; and liquor.

Morgan Park tax rates were higher than those of Chicago, but the Home Rulers argued that the city would have to raise taxes sooner or later to keep up with services. Home Rulers considered the Chicago government inefficient, disinterested and dishonest. Annexationists countered that the city

A Vote for Annexation will almost surely mean saloons for Morgan Park

not open saloons probably, but blind pigs and the so-called "clubs" organized to evade the "dry" law. Such places exist in other "dry" sections which have been annexed to Chicago, in spite of the thousands of dollars which have been spent in the continual fight against them.

ARTHUR BURRAGE FARWELL

says "that the cost of the fight in Hyde Park since 1890 has been \$260,000, and that if the city and country did its duty nearly every dollar of this expense would have been unnecessary."

MORGAN PARK DOES ITS DUTY

With Home Rule the "enforcing power" is anxious to keep it out. With annexation the "enforcing power" would be in sympathy with the wets.

The Englewood "Dry" District

Here in the city, I am living in a "DRY DISTRICT." Ever since this territory was taken into the city, twenty years ago, IT HAS TAKEN A SPECIAL ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL CITIZENS TO KEEP THE SALOON OUT, and at a private expense and cost that has been felt keenly. Last week the local temperance committee had the honor to issue ELEVVEN SALOONS WERE BEING BUSINESS ON PROHIBITION TERRITORY, asking a generous contribution of funds to get them ousted. If Morgan Park becomes a part of the city of Chicago, she WILL HAVE TO ORGANIZE to combat an evil that by voting herself in, she would draw down upon herself. What does a body of one hundred men or their subordinates care for this district or Morgan Park on the saloon question? My observation is that it cares nothing and even smiles.—Englewood Morgan Park.

Mr. Nay's Experience in Getting the Dry Law Enforced

I have had much experience in fighting illegal liquor sellers, and have found that the police, deputy sheriffs, etc., are in sympathy with the liquor dealers, and make it very hard to enforce the law.—Frank Nay.

THIS QUESTION HAS ARISEN

If Chicago votes "wet" in the future, will it make all of Chicago "wet"? If it will, then we certainly do not want to annex, and no longer wet. The only SAFE course is to vote against annexation and be SURE of remaining "dry."

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE MORGAN PARK HOME RULE ASSOCIATION.
April 4, 1910.

The topic of saloons in Morgan Park was a particularly volatile topic in the annexation debates. The Home Rulers ran this announcement in 1910. From the RHS collection.

Rulers lauded the advantages of their artesian well water as being cleaner.

Home Rulers maintained that the Morgan Park school system would lose its high quality by becoming part of

same teachers would continue to teach in the Morgan Park schools and that no high school had been closed because of annexation.

Annexationists believed services such as fire fighting

and police would improve under the city. Home Rulers felt that the services in place in Morgan Park were adequate, or wanted new police and fire houses built before annexation so they could be paid for and controlled by the village. Home Rulers maintained that annexing to the city would bring in saloons; Annexationists said just the opposite would be true: there would be a better chance of keeping the area dry.

There were emotional and philosophical arguments also. Morgan Park would lose its unique identity, its charm, if annexed. That was countered with the argument that Morgan Park would not be able to persevere without much needed resources from the city. Annexationists were traitors; Home Rulers were obstructionists.

There were official votes on the issue again in 1908, and two in 1910, and again in 1911. Some prominent citizens who originally were Home Rulers switched to being in favor of Annexation. The Post, headed by David Herriott, started with active support for the Home Rulers but changed its

stance to neutrality, then came to support annexation. Herriott maintained that as a home owner and father, his heart was with the Home Rulers, but as the publisher of the Village's most prominent newspaper, he had to be objective and realistic about the situation.

1911 Annexation victory

In the 1911 vote, the Annexationists won; Morgan Park residents voted to annex by a vote of 441 to 409. Morgan Park became part of Chicago. The Chicago Tribune ran an article describing the celebrations

— and fighting - that went on. Bonfires were lit on all four corners of the village square, and a parade was held. But when the village leaders met, insults were traded, and before long, fistfights broke out. Soon the entire crowd was involved. The volunteer police department broke up the melee.

The jubilation only lasted for a few months. Four legal suits to invalidate the election were filed by Home Rulers. Enoch J. Price, former Morgan Park village attorney and now president of the high

school board, was a staunch Home Ruler. Price was at least one person who received a death threat for his role in the annexation battles. He tried to have the 1907 petition for an election thrown out because there was a

would take no action because the land was vested in an estate. The vote for annexation was declared invalid. Tempers in Morgan Park ran high and the Chicago police were called in for protection at a meeting by the

To E. J. Price.
 You are given 30 days to
 move out of Morgan Park, refusal will
 mean your valuable land will
 be sold - perhaps as one of interest
 in your beautiful town.
 Yours truly,
 The Committee of
 Five.

Morgan Park 2-15-11
 Mr. Enoch J. Price
 Morgan Park, Ill.
 Dear Sir:
 First of all
 of a fine morning we have
 with you if you are
 leaving, some of the
 necessary to the
 for some of the
 that is a matter of
 to you in your
 to be ready to
 and to be ready to
 p. 52

Enoch Price was the former village attorney and a prominent Home Ruler. He received this death threat, and a letter warning him to protect himself. Neither of the authors have been identified. In an oral interview conducted in 1975, Enoch's son Owen Price, said of his father and the annexation issue, "He was right in the middle of it. Oh boy, my mother used to hate to see him walk out of the door in the evening for fear he'd get killed. Believe me, there was some passion raised in the annexation fight." From the RHS collection.

gap in the northeastern boundary line between Chicago and Morgan Park where there was unorganized territory of 200 acres, and the law called for a complete and unbroken boundary line. This now became a major legal issue. This land was referred to as the "no man's land" and the "cabbage patch" by the local press. Morgan Park tried to legally assume the land but apparently the owners

old village board that feared threatened "mob violence."

Through legal maneuvering by then village attorney Henry P. Heizer, the Annexationists actually got the law concerning unbroken boundary lines overturned, and convinced Governor Edward. F. Dunne to sign the bill. But now there was also a law on the books that said there had to be a

See Annexation, page 7

The News Desk

Carl Spencer Memorial Bicycle Race Party

The “great” Carl Spencer Memorial Bicycle Race Party was held on July 24. This annual event and fundraiser is a highlight of our summer on the

Unique this year at the RHS Garage and Book Sale will be a special collection of Sherlock Holmes merchandise and ephemera from the estate of Gene McGrail.

Ridge. It takes place as the riders in the Beverly Cycling Classic speed past our Graver-Driscoll House on both the east, Longwood Drive, and the west,

Seely Avenue. It was a thrilling spectacle. Inside was a delicious hot buffet and later, as the evening wound down, tasty homemade desserts.

If you missed this event, please know we missed you too. Plan on joining us next year.

Sherlock Holmes, garage sale and better books

The annual RHS garage sale must be bigger, better and more exciting than ever. Scheduled for September 26, 27, and 28th, goods are already

being collected. We want this to become a destination event; and with your help, by donating slightly used and unique “stuff,” we can raise needed funds and help our neighbors find treasures they never dreamed of.

Unique this year is a special collection of merchandise featuring the life-time collection of Sherlock Holmes novels and related ephemera from the estate of Gene McGrail. Pat, Gene’s wife, will be offering this material for the benefit of RHS and it will be featured during the 3 days of our sale weekend.

House and grounds

This summer work has been done on the roof and masonry repairs have been completed. In addition I anticipate that by the time this newsletter is out, we will have a new apron for the driveway at the west entrance. Much credit goes to House & Grounds volunteer, Joe O’Connor, for pursuing these projects. In addition Joe and Herman Schell have been doggedly adding to our funds by recycling metal scrap.

If you have metal to discard, especially the more remunerative copper, aluminum, or brass, let us know. Joe and Herman will arrange to help you dispose of it for the benefit of RHS.

The flowering of the grounds has been enhanced with day lilies and old fashioned roses through the generosity of Nick Pasqual, who brought freshly dug plants which were planted by Fran Oehmen and Allison Moulton. Thanks to County Fair Foods, 10800 S. Western Ave., for the hanging baskets on the terrace and to Steuber Florist and Greenhouses, 2654 W. 111th St., for the plants in the boxes at our front door. Ken Majeske obtained these donations and they do look beautiful.

RHS website

Look for our new website at ridgehistoricalsociety.org in the beginning of September. For some years RHS had a website which became inaccurate and out of date. It was decided to take it down completely and start again. Planning

and consultation have been in progress. It will start with the basic information about us, our mission, our calendar of events, our contact information and our offerings. Plans are to add pictures, and substantive material over time. Importantly, programs, events and other happenings will be found there and will be kept up to date. In fact, the *News Desk* as you know it will be found on the website, so that we can be timely in making announcements. Our outstanding newsletter, the *Record*, will be a continuing source of in-depth essays and researched articles on local history and is a benefit of membership.

So...

Watch for our website.

Visit us on Facebook.

Check the newspapers for calendar postings and feature articles.

Look for evites in your email and read about the history of the Ridge in the *Record*.

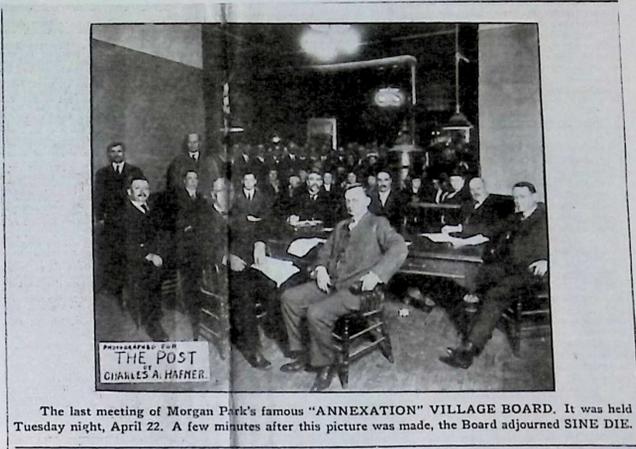
Thanks for listening. Edris Hoover, President.

two-year wait between annexation elections. So the next vote was scheduled for 1914.

The final vote

During the intervening years, several things happened that had an impact on the annexation issue. **Women won suffrage rights.** The women of Morgan Park were supporters of annexation. And for the first time, the young voters of the area took a formal stand by forming an annexation club. An entire generation of Morgan Parkers had grown up during the years of annexation debate. And Morgan Park continued to grow during this time. Newly arrived home owners did not have the same sentiments about the old village structure. Morgan Park was going on 40 years old, and some of the original old guard was gone. Home Rulers lamented the loss of community spirit, but the tide had clearly turned in favor of annexation.

The last election on annexation occurred on April 21, 1914. The final vote was 1273 (620 men and 653 women) for and



The last meeting of the Morgan Park Village Board of Trustees took place on April 22, 1914. This picture appeared in *The Post* on April 25, 1914, and a reprint of the picture was run in the *Beverly Review* on June 1, 1939, identifying the people. The members of the Board were: seated in front, Fred L. Kimmer, president, and Rees B. Stephenson, village clerk; seated around the table from left to right, W. H. Jenner, H.R. Conklin, unidentified young man, Samuel N. Pond, Frank O. Walker, Charles B. Martin, and William Clemens; standing to the left in the back are George L. Stebbins, treasurer, left, and Henry P. Heizer, village attorney. Heizer saved the day for annexation by getting the law concerning unbroken boundary lines changed. From the RHS collection.

790 (403 men and 387 women) against.

The response of the city to provide services for its newly acquired community was immediate. Actually, in 1911, Morgan Park had received new fire and police services, and the city had paid teachers' salaries, during the period annexation was in effect. Now, reported in *The Post* by Alderman Albert J. Fisher of the 32nd Ward, which included Morgan Park, the city had appropriated sums for water, a police station, a fire station, ash and garbage removal, improved maintenance of streets

and the neighborhood swimming pool, and a new parkway.

Morgan Park's neighbors to the south and west also dealt with annexation. **Evergreen Park** had incorporated as a village in 1893 and

never annexed to the city. The City of **Blue Island** voted down annexation in 1915. In 1927, **Mt. Greenwood** annexed to the city, making itself and Morgan Park the southwest boundaries of the City of Chicago.



One of the first services that Morgan Park received when it annexed to the City of Chicago was a new fire station. Engine Co. 120 was formed in 1914 and the fire house at 110th and Homewood was built in 1915-16. From the RHS collection.

Ridge Historical Society
RECORD
 BEVERLY HILLS, MORGAN PARK, WASHINGTON HEIGHTS & MT. GREENWOOD

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FALL 2014 ISSUE



Mark your calendar for these exciting events

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, SEPT. 26 AND 27,
 9:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.; AND SUNDAY, SEPT.

RHS Annual Garage Sale

at RHS, 10621 S. Seeley Ave., Chicago.

Donations of items for sale being accepted
 now; contact RHS at 773/881-1675; or

"The News Desk" in this issue for more
 information.

SUNDAY, OCT. 12, AT 2:00 P.M. Revealing the Chicago Fire

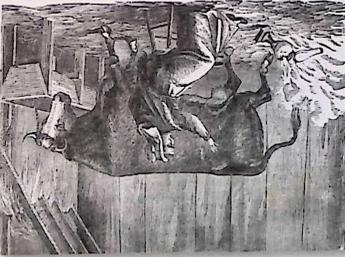
With Presenter Herman Schell, at RHS,
 10621 S. Seeley Ave. \$5.00 admission.
 The Great Chicago Fire of October 1871
 was a major milestone in Chicago's history.
 RHS Board member emeritus Herman
 Schell has studied the topic thoroughly and
 will share his expertise with RHS at this
 program. Light Refreshments will be served.

SUNDAY, NOV. 9, AT 2:00 P.M. Antiques Appraisal with Rex Newell

at RHS, 10621 S. Seeley Ave. Admission:
 \$5/RHS member; \$10/non-member. Bring
 your vintage items to be appraised! First
 40 items to arrive will be examined and
 appraised by experienced appraiser Rex
 Newell. Limit of one item per person. Light
 refreshments will be served.

For information on these programs, contact
 RHS at 773/881-1675, or [ridgehistory@
 htmall.com](mailto:ridgehistory@hotmail.com).

REPRODUCED COURTESY OF THE CHICAGO FIRE MUSEUM AND THE COW



Did Mrs. O'Leary's cow kick over a lantern and start the
 Great Chicago Fire? Presenter Herman Schell explores
 the facts and fallacies of this horrific part of Chicago's
 history in an October program at RHS. 1871 illustration
 of Mrs. O'Leary and her cow from Harper's Magazine.