

# The Historian

Preserving & Promoting Neighborhood History

Volume 30, No. 3  
Summer 2014

## Board of Directors Monthly Meetings

August 25, 2014

October 27, 2014

December 29, 2014

All meetings are held  
bi-monthly on the last  
Monday of each even-num-  
bered month at 7 p.m. at  
the Society, 1447 W. Morse  
Avenue and are open to all

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One highlight of the tour will be a visit to a fabulous 'castle' at 3007 W. Hollywood Ave.

## Society Visits Peterson Woods for Annual House Walk

*By Colleen Sen*

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society's 28th Annual House Tour will feature, for the very first time, the Peterson Woods neighborhood in the far southwest corner of West Ridge. This tiny wedge of a Chicago neighborhood is called "one of Chicago's best kept secrets". The western boundary is a lovely park, Legion Park, which borders the North Shore Channel between Bryn Mawr and Peterson Avenues and provides a recreational 'green belt.' The custom built homes, many accented with turrets and Tudor-style wood beams, tile roofs, leaded windows, and wrought iron fencing, were built between 1925 and 1935 for members of Chicago elite, and some have had only three owners.

The house tour will take place from noon to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 14. Highlights of the tour will be a visit to a fabulous 'castle' on Hollywood and Virginia and a beautifully upgraded mansion on Sacramento. Historian Arlene Swartzman will talk about the history of Legion Park in the park.

Check-in at day-of registration will be at 5736 N. Sacramento. Light refreshments will be served. The pre-registration fee is \$20 for members, \$25 for nonmembers; same day fees are \$25 for members, \$30 for nonmembers. To register, go to [rpwrhs.org/program/house-walk](http://rpwrhs.org/program/house-walk). Or, mail your check to RPWRHS, 1447 W. Morse Avenue, Chicago, IL 60645. ☐

## SAVE THE DATE!

The Historical Society has an exciting lineup of programs for the rest of the year:

Saturday, October 11, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. "Clark Street, Then and Now: A Walking Tour," led by Glenna Eaves.

Sunday, November 2, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. 'Members

Only Party' at the Greenleaf Arts Center. Bring your treasures for appraisal by two antiques experts.

Saturday, November 8, 2014, 7:00 p.m., "The White City" a new musical, at Indian Boundary Park Field House.

Sunday, December 7, 12:30 - 4:30 p.m. 'Holiday House Walk', Green Briar Park neighborhood.

Rogers Park /  
West Ridge  
Historical Society

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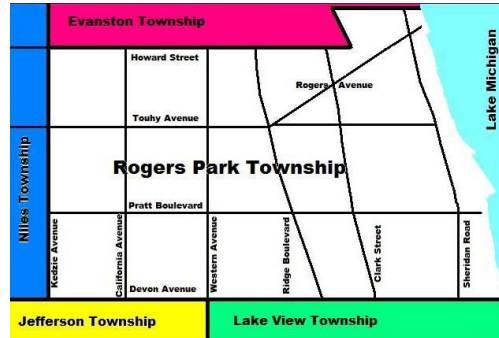
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# How Chicago Rid Itself of Townships Extending Beyond its City Limits

By Hank Morris



Map of Rogers Park Township

In 1850, a township called **Ridgeville** was organized, extending from **Graceland Cemetery** in Chicago to the southern edge of the Ouilmette Reservation (now **Wilmette**), along what is now Central Street in **Evanston**, and from **Lake Michigan** to **Western Avenue** in Chicago. This obviously included all of **Rogers Park** and almost half of the area that would become the **Village of West Ridge**.

In 1857, the Township of Evanston was split off from Ridgeville Township; and, at approximately the same time, that portion of Ridgeville south of Devon Avenue was reorganized as **Lake View Township**. Lake View was an incorporated Illinois **civil township** with a charter granted by the **Illinois General Assembly**, independent of neighboring Chicago. Lake View Township included all land east of Western Avenue, between Devon Avenue and North Avenue. West of Lake View Township and south of West Ridge was **Jefferson Township**. And west of West Ridge was, and still is, **Niles Township**.

Example: Until Rogers Park and West Ridge were annexed to Chicago on Tuesday, April 4, 1893, the two communities were, respectively, a part of Niles and Ridgeville Townships. So, all of the tax monies collected by those townships from the two communities didn't go into Chicago's coffers.

As far back as 1895, **Chicago's City Council** had grown tired of having some of its taxes going to townships that extended beyond the City Limits into bordering communities. Every time a new area/community was annexed, it was part of another township and part or all of Chicago's income was siphoned away by the township that the new acquisition had been a part of prior to annexation.

This was happening all over the city and Chicago aldermen decided that, to require that townships existed wholly inside or wholly outside of the Chicago City Limits.

The **Chicago Civic Federation** formed a Committee of Fifteen, that provided financial support by the Tax Conference Committee, which was charged with investigating the impact such a move would have on Chicago and on civic tax collection if it were to consolidate all of the townships within the Chicago city limits.

John S. Miller of the Civic Federation said: "If the townships are to be abolished, I do not believe that it can be accomplished without a [Illinois] constitutional amendment."<sup>1</sup>

These words didn't go unheeded. Some thought that the seven townships within Chicago at that time (now eight) should be merged into one. However, unless there was a constitutional amendment, the fate of townships would have to be determined by the voters at the upcoming General Election in 1896.<sup>2</sup>

Many don't realize that the only practical mechanism available to communities for expansion is that of **annexation**. It was critical that a clear and workable definition of the taxation authorities and their areas of authority be established.

# From the President's Desk



Ken Walchak

Hi There,

Summer's over? How can that possibly be? While everyone is getting ready to head back to school, here at the Historical Society, we are squeezing the last bits out of Summer with our exhibit on Fritz Pollard an NFL Hall of Famer. If you haven't had a chance to see it yet please stop by the museum on Morse Ave. and pay us a visit. Bring your kids and grandchildren in to see a bit of history they are unlikely to learn listening to Mike Ditka. Along the same line, join us on August 26 at the Northtown Public Library , 6435 N. California for a talk on the National Girls Baseball League. Think back to Thillens Stadium at Devon and Kedzie, and the giant baseball sign. I'm sure some of you have fond memories of playing or watching games there on summer evenings. I'm equally sure you will enjoy this nostalgic talk.

The highlight of our programming season happens in just a few weeks. Sunday September 14th is our Annual House Walk. This year's event promises to be very cool. It is taking place in a seldom visited corner of West Ridge called Peterson Woods. You can sign up, and as I always encourage, become a member on line at [rpwrhs.org](http://rpwrhs.org). What better way to spend twenty five bucks!!

Last, but certainly not least, while you are signing up for the house walk, and joining the society, take the time to browse our new and improved website. It, along with our Facebook, Twitter, and all the other hip social media sites, are full of information sure to make for a richer life in our Rogers Park/ West Ridge community. Our new partners from the Public History Lab at Loyola University have helped bring an organization rooted in the 19th and 20th centuries, into the 21st.

Come join us,

Ken Walchak

## Do you receive our *Cabbagehead*?

Your society sends out an electronic newsletter frequently. It contains news of events that were announced AFTER the previous *Historian* newsletter was mailed and will occur BEFORE the next issue of the *Historian* is published. It's our way of getting the word out to our membership about things they otherwise might not learn about.

Send us your e-mail address to insure that you're on the distribution list. Just send us an e-mail at [info@rpwrhs.org](mailto:info@rpwrhs.org) with the subject "Cabbagehead".

## Membership as of July 1, 2014

### Welcome New Members

#### Individual

Joel Birman  
Janet Lastovica  
Joseph Ore  
James Schwegel

#### Student

Paul Hughes  
Laura Pearce  
Hope Shannon

#### Student Household

Katherine Macica

#### Patron

Amy Kraushaar

### Thanks for Renewing

#### Individual

Ann Marie Caughron  
James Corman  
Wynne Delacoma  
Mike Eischen  
George Glastris  
John Keller  
Nancy Jane Lauren  
Donald Nyderek  
Virginia Palmer  
Fred Schein  
Glen Timmerman  
John Zender

#### Household

Richard & Kathy Anderson  
Cheryl Bye & Christopher Rutt  
Daniel Dexter & Gregory Beckett  
Bob Fuller & Audra Lewicki  
Brett Keller & Andrea Monter  
James & Sandi Price  
Hilary & Corky Schnadt  
Warren & Eileen Skora

#### Senior

Bindy Bitterman  
Jack Bourke  
Harvey Choldin  
James Corman  
Robert Dostal  
Patricia Duff  
June Finfer  
Ellie Kalish

## Membership as of July 1, 2014

*continued from page 3*

### Senior

Gary Knutson  
Ken Kopper  
John Lee  
Geraldine Moran  
Pat Shaw

### Senior Household

Milton & Joan Blum  
Richard & Dorothy Gregory  
Robert & Mildred Heinemann  
Doris Hoyne  
Edward & Peggy Niimi  
Michael & Sara O'Conner  
Robert & Katie Remer  
David & Ingrid Stalle

# Townships

*continued from page 2*

Nothing further happened in 1896. The cross-border townships still existed. But, the idea of consolidation had not been defeated. By April 1899, there was an idea afoot to petition the state for a constitutional amendment allowing Chicago and other cities of its size to consolidate not only townships but several other governmental units, such as the many individual park districts and school boards into a single entity. It was known as the Greater Chicago Bill. (**60 ILCS 20**) or the Township Consolidation Act. (repealed by **P.A. 88-62**)

The distinct and individual park districts were not actually consolidated until 1934, when the legislature passed the “**Park Consolidation Act**” which gave us the **Chicago Park District**. This idea for a super city was defeated because it also proposed that **Cook County** and Chicago be merged into a single entity. One idea that did survive was replacing the offices of the **Justice of Peace** with a network of **Circuit Courts**.<sup>3</sup>

Most Chicago aldermen indicated their approval of the Greater Chicago movement and were in favor of a constitutional amendment.<sup>4</sup>

On Saturday, April 15, 1899, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on page 1 that the Illinois State legislature had passed a bill allowing the consolidation of the townships within the city limits into one. “The passage of a bill to consolidate all the townships in Chicago into one township with forms of municipal administration carefully specified in that bill. This is separate from the city government.”

What did not pass was the proposed constitutional amendment to form Greater Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

Three months later, on Saturday, July 1, 1899, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the law passed April 15 had taken effect on that day. Ergo, all townships existing across the city limits of Chicago would have to be **truncated**.

The part of a township that was in Chicago stayed in Chicago and the part outside Chicago was effectively now under the jurisdiction of some other taxing body. And all taxes collected from the parts within Chicago would finally belong to Chicago.<sup>6</sup>

This didn't mean that the problem was resolved. Sure, the eight townships within Chicago now existed only within the city limits, but there still were township officers for each township and they were still on the payroll, costing taxpayers monies that otherwise could be used to improve the city.<sup>7</sup>

The part of Ridgeville Township that existed within the city limits of Chicago was renamed Rogers Park Township. The remainder became **Evanston Township**. But, as is often the case, this didn't last. There was still some confusion as to the name of the township and its jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup>

The movement to abolish township governments was detailed in the *Chicago Tribune*, on Thursday, February 21, 1901, page 9.<sup>9</sup>

To the Illinois State legislature fell the task of abolishing township government officials only within the city limits of Chicago. In April 1901, the functions of said township officials would thereafter be conducted by specified city officials. For instance, the **City Clerk** would be the ex-officio Town Clerk and **Assessor** for each former township, etc.<sup>10</sup>

The status of each of Chicago's township's expenditures was enumerated in the *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, April 20, 1901, page 5. The newspaper reported on each office as if that office were already illegal.<sup>11</sup>

Two months later, the citizens of Evanston petitioned to create a new township, to be known as “Ridgeville” that would coexist with the city limits of the City of Evanston. The city



of Evanston at that time existed within three townships and the Evanstonians wanted to merge the townships into one just like Chicago had. To do this, the state would have to amend the act, because it allowed any city the size of Chicago within Illinois to consolidate those townships within its city limits into a single entity. Evanston wanted the state to allow any city with a population of 3,000 or larger to consolidate those townships that extended beyond its limits to be exclusively within its city limits.<sup>12</sup>

Township governments continued to exist, at least until February 1902, when the two central committees of the major parties were making plans for conventions to determine their separate slates of candidates for the upcoming elections. Up until that time, the **Central Republican Committee** and that of the **Democrats** had also organized Town Conventions. They both were intent on passing resolutions abolishing the township governments lying within the city.<sup>13</sup> They didn't want to field a slate of people to fill positions which they fully expected to be abolished in that year's elections.

Evanstonians got their wish and the city of Evanston was placed wholly within the Township of Ridgeville in 1904. However, there was still a small strip lying south of Evanston's city limits that was still known as Evanston Township.<sup>14</sup>

In May 1907, with all the changes that had been happening within Chicago, the City Council determined that the city should have a new charter. One of many proposed changes was to finalize the consolidation of the various townships

into the municipal government.<sup>15</sup>

The townships that presently lie within the city limits are: **Hyde Park, Jefferson, Lake, Lake View**, North, Rogers Park, South, and West. Their names and boundaries are still used on property plats and by Cook County for tax assessment purposes. Otherwise, for all practical purposes, they no longer exist.

Now, when you look at your property tax bill, and see that you live in Rogers Park Township, even though you live in West Ridge, you'll know why. □

#### References:

1. *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, 12-28-1895, p. 5
2. *Chicago Tribune*, Thursday, 6-4-1896, p. 7
3. *Chicago Tribune*, Friday, 4-7-1899, p. 2
4. *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, 4-8-1899, p. 2
5. *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, 4-15-1899, p. 1
6. *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, 7-1-1899, p. 8
7. *Chicago Tribune*, Wednesday, 4-11-1900, p. 2
8. *Chicago Tribune*, Wednesday, 7-25-1900, p. 3
9. *Chicago Tribune*, Thursday, 2-21-1901, p. 9
10. *Chicago Tribune*, Friday, 4-19-1901, p. 5
11. *Chicago Tribune*, Saturday, 4-20-1901, p. 5
12. *Chicago Tribune*, Tuesday, 6-25-1901, p. 13
13. *Chicago Tribune*, Thursday, 2-20-1902, p. 2
14. *Chicago Tribune*, Sunday, 7-10-1904, p. 8
15. *Chicago Tribune*, Sunday, 5-12-1907, p. 5

## Collectors Corner

By Hank Morris

In previous issues, your Society acknowledged receipt of donations of materials for our archives in a feature called the Collectors Corner. While we haven't received much in a while, we really do want to acknowledge donations when they occur. So, we hope to revive the Collectors Corner feature in future issues.

We thank incoming Board member Dona Vitale for her donation of materials related to political campaigns for alderman, state representative, and other offices in Rogers

Park in the period 1979-1992, including candidate flyers, buttons and campaign worker materials.

We thank Lois Corush Stifel for her donation of personal objects and photos, related to the Congregation B'nai Zion school and camp, Bernard Horwich JCC Day Camp, Joyce Kilmer Elementary School, and Roger C. Sullivan High School from 1948 to 1967. □

# The North Shore Channel, the West Side of West Ridge

*By Hank Morris*

The waterway now known as the [North Shore Channel](#), which starts at the locks at Wilmette Harbor, and extends south to just below Lawrence Avenue is not a natural river. It's a man-made canal. This is the most visible part of the reversal of the Chicago River. Instead of draining into Lake Michigan, the Chicago River now flows uphill and empties into the [Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal](#) and thence the [Illinois River](#).

## Why?

Early Chicago sewage systems discharged their putrid contents directly into Lake Michigan or into the Chicago River, which itself flowed into the lake. The city's drinking water supply also came from the lake via [water intake cribs](#) located about two miles offshore.

There were fears that all the sewage being dumped into the lake could infiltrate the city's water supply, leading to typhoid fever, cholera, and dysentery. During a tremendous storm in 1885, the rainfall washed refuse from the river far out into the lake (although reports of an 1885 cholera epidemic are untrue), spurring a panic that a future similar storm would cause a huge epidemic in Chicago. In response to this close call, the Illinois legislature created the Sanitary District of Chicago (now The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District) in 1889.

The only reason for the storm not causing such a catastrophic event was that the weather was cooler than normal. The North Shore Channel is a drainage canal dug between 1907 and 1910 to flush the sewage-filled North Branch of the Chicago River down the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to the Illinois River, thence to the Mississippi River, and finally to the Gulf of Mexico.

## A Warning

Chicago's sewage treatment system discharges only lightly treated fecal matter into the canal. Because of concerns about the effects of chlorine, on marine life, the three main treatment plants in Chicago do not disinfect the sewage, although plants in nearly all other major cities do. As a result, Chicago canal water has a high enough concentration of fecal coliform bacteria that signs along the canals warn residents against having "any human body contact." with the water. ☐

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If you haven't visited our [website](#) recently, you might be surprised!

# Research Info: Demystifying the Soundex code

By *Hank Morris*

When doing genealogical research, you're bound to encounter the **Soundex code**.

The Soundex code was developed by Robert C. Russell and Margaret King Odell and patented in 1918 and 1922. A variation called American Soundex was used in the 1930s for a retrospective analysis of the US censuses from 1890 through 1920 by the **National Archives** to index the U.S. censuses (beginning with 1880). It is this version that we are discussing.

Soundex codes correlate surnames that sound alike or closely similar sounds but have different spellings. For instance, names like "Morse" and "Morris" sound similar but are spelled differently, and the same goes for "Smith," "Smythe," "Smithe," et.al.

My grandmother said her maiden name was "Hirschfield" yet her brother Julius said it was "Hirschfeld." Brother and sister disagreeing on their mutual surname? So, without Soundex coding, finding an ancestor might put you in a quandary where you're sure of only the sound of the family name, not the spelling.

**The Census Bureau** sorts Soundex Encoded files first by state, then by the Soundex code of the individual's surname, and finally by the person's given name. Soundex codes are used by more agencies for indexing than just organizing census information. For instance, the first four digits of your Illinois driver license give the Soundex code for your surname.

## How does it work?

The first character in a Soundex code is the first letter of your surname, not a digit. Next is a three-digit code that represents the next three consonants in your name. Only the digits 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are used in the Soundex Code. So, let's take my name, "Morris." The first character in the Soundex code is "M." The remaining consonants (Soundex codes always ignore vowels), are "r," "r," and "s." Another rule of Soundex is to ignore a duplicated consonant. So we ignore one of the two r's in "Morris." This leaves "M," "R," and "S."

Now, the Society's museum is on Morse Avenue. We know that "Morse" sounds almost the same as "Morris." So, applying the rules, we'd also end up with "M" and "R," and "S" for "Morse". See where this is going?

The Soundex code for "Morris" is "M620" and, it has exactly the same code for "Morse!"

Where do all those numbers come from? Remember three numbers follow the initial letter of the last name. Russell and Odell figured out that they could fine-tune the coding of the names by assigning numbers to only the consonants. So far, we know that we ignore duplicate consonants and all vowels. According to the following table, the following table lists the correspondences between digits in the code and letters in a name:

- 1 = B, P, F, V
- 2 = C, S, G, J, K, Q, X, Z
- 3 = D, T
- 4 = L
- 5 = M, N
- 6 = R

Note that: The letters A, E, I, O, U, Y, H, and W are NOT coded or used—except as the first letter of a surname.

So, using the above table, the letters "M," "r," and "s" translate to "M62." That's still not three digits after the initial. In developing the Soundex Coding, Russell and Odell saw that many names might result in fewer than three digits. So they instructed that we insert "0" for the missing third digit. Hence, the Soundex code for "Morris" becomes "M620" and so also does the code for "Morse." They sound the same and code the same. Soundex is designed to group similar sounding names under a single Soundex code.

What about names with far more letters and an abundance of consonants? Nothing! Once you have the third digit, your Soundex code is finished.

## Example:

"Bielawski" gives us the consonants: "B," "L," "W," "S," and "K".

“B” is the first letter in the name. The table says that “L” corresponds to “4.” Remember we must not use the “W.” The table also tells us that “S” and “K” are both coded as “2.” Therefore, the resulting Soundex code for Bielawski becomes B422.

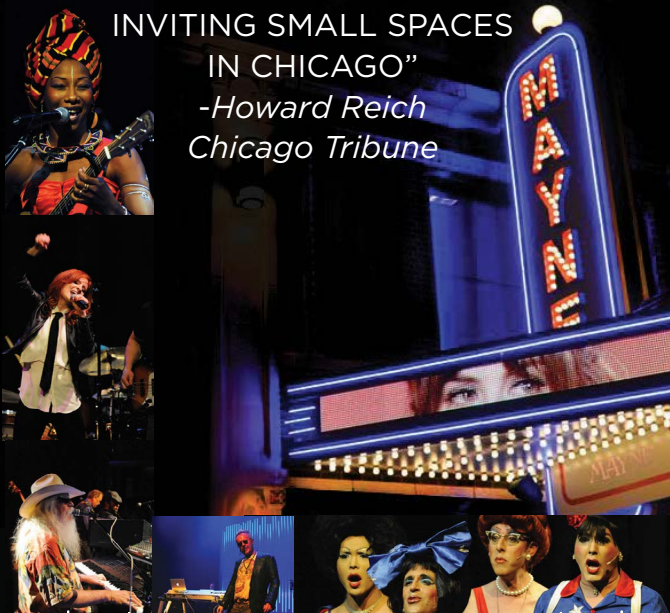
By the way, if you have an Illinois I.D., the state moves the letter that designated your Soundex number from the first position in the 12-digit code to the end. The other numbers simply shift left one place: (note, the last five digits of your drivers’ license are used to show your sex and the exact day, month, and year of your birth). The state I.D. number, as shown in the next column, do not change beyond moving your initial from first to last place. So the 5 digits representing your sex and birth date remain where they were and mean the same thing as in the drivers’ license.

Example: Driver’s License “M620-xxxx-xxxx” becomes I.D. “620x-xxxx-xxxM”.

Lucky for us, Rootsweb, among others, offer a **free Soundex code** translator on line. To use it, just click on the link and enter the name you want to convert. They’ll do it for you. Sadly, there is no reverse Soundex-to-surname calculator function because the correspondence is not one to one. Eliminating all vowels, certain letters, and duplicate consonants makes reinserting them in the correct place extremely difficult. It would be an interesting challenge for a programmer, though, mathematically, it’s not possible. So, you can’t use Soundex code to find the name.

Now when you encounter something coded in Soundex, you’ll know what it is, and even have a hint of the spelling. □

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IN CHICAGO”  
-Howard Reich  
Chicago Tribune



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# The Other Golf Club

By LeRoy Blommaert



The front of the postcard.

Most people of a certain age remember West Ridge's only golf club at Western Avenue and Pratt Boulevard (now in Warren Park and named the Robert A. Black Golf Course). For the first few years of its life, it was located in Edgewater and was called the **Edgewater Golf Club**. But, the Rogers Park community had another golf club, although almost no one living today remembers it; fewer still know it ever existed. It was the **Birchwood Golf Club** and always was wholly within Rogers Park. Unlike the Edgewater Golf Club, it had a short life, from Wednesday, July 4, 1906 until perhaps 1912.

A recently acquired photo postcard brought the Birchwood Golf Club to the author's attention and inspired him to seek more information. The clubhouse shown in the photo looks more like a railroad depot than a typical clubhouse of the period, and sure enough it was—originally. A Friday, May 29, 1959, *Chicago Tribune* article recounts the recollections of Graham Jackson and confirms that the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway (known then as the "St. Paul") donated the clubhouse to the club after it discontinued passenger service into Rogers Park in 1908 when the Northwestern Elevated Railroad's line took over operation on the St. Paul's trackage.

According to Mr. Jackson's recollections the club was a

nine-hole course and was located north of Rogers Avenue and south of **Calvary Cemetery** near Sheridan Road. Mr. Jackson, along with his father, Walter L. Jackson, jointly won the Pater-Filius alternative shot event in 1910 at the club. Graham Jackson recounted that Sheridan Road ran between the first and second holes and wasn't much of a road back then. According to the young Mr. Jackson, "The first hole started at about where is now Rogers Avenue and Sheridan Road and went north. The third tee must have been about where the gas station is now [since replaced by townhouses], and the fairway ran west, following the curve of the cemetery to form a dogleg. It was known, then, as the Devil's Elbow."

According to Jackson, the members of the golf club had an opportunity to buy the land from the owner from whom it was leased but declined because they thought the price was too high--\$600 an acre.

In the *Tribune* article, **Chick Evans**, a nationally known golfer affiliated with the Edgewater Golf Club, confirmed Mr. Jackson's recollections and added that the Edgewater Club considered purchasing the Birchwood Club in 1910, but purchased the land at Pratt Boulevard and Western Avenue instead. He remembered plentiful strands of white birch trees—which, not surprisingly, gave its name and the name of the subdivision to the south, Birchwood Beach. □

# The Pioneering Walchak Family

*By Kay McSpadden*

Clark-Devon Hardware is one of the oldest businesses in Rogers Park continuously owned and operated by the same family. Probably most residents of Rogers Park and West Ridge have patronized this landmark store at the corner for which it is named, and those who wait for buses there are certainly familiar with its iconic big clock sign. It might not be as famous as the Marshall Field's clock, but it is nevertheless a distinctive Rogers Park landmark.

Three generations of the Walchak family have owned and operated this store since about 1924, some 89 years. Recently members of two generations of the family gathered at the historical society to reminisce and share their story. Those who participated were Bernie Walchak, the now-retired son of the first owner; his wife Phyllis; their sons Ken and Ed, present owners; Ken's wife Joan; and his sister Aviva Plummer. A small audience reminisced along with them, offering questions and comments. Ken Walchak is the current president of the Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society.

The Walchaks began by reviewing the development of their business from its beginnings till today. The first store was a small, one-man operation. The family is not quite sure of the exact year of its founding by William Walchak, grandfather of the current owners, but it was probably 1924. Nor is the family certain of the first location, though they believe it was on the corner that the store currently occupies, Clark and Devon. Later in the 1920s, it was moved to Clark and Wallen for a couple of years, then to 6339 N. Clark in the early thirties. William Walchak's family lived upstairs in those years.

William not only sold merchandise but often installed items he sold. Ken Walchak says, "In those days he did everything himself. If someone needed a toilet and didn't want to install it, after the store closed he would go and install it for them." Bernie, Ken's father, remembers as a child helping his father. After school, he sometimes went to a paint factory on Grand Avenue to pick up special orders and bring them back on the streetcar.

In the 1950s Bernie joined his father as co-owner; they ran the store together, still without additional employees. However, they soon realized they needed to expand in order to support their two families. At that point they

bought a building on the northeast corner of Clark and Highland, south of Devon. This building included two storefronts, about 3000 square feet total, with three apartments above. Ken and his brother Ed worked in this store as kids.

Bernie's wife recalls that she felt sorry for her sons having to spend every Sunday helping out at the store—and for herself too, having to spend nights and weekends at home alone. Later she learned that the time spent in the company of their grandfather and father was one of her sons' happiest childhood memories. "We would come to the store on Saturdays, and my grandfather would teach us how to use the lathe and other equipment. I would walk home with him to Granville and Ravenswood for lunch," Ken remembers.

In the mid-seventies Ken and Ed joined their father in that 'old' store. By then there were about six employees. Again, they needed more room. In 1979, they bought the former Ridge Theatre building on Devon just east of Clark, which they occupy now, and remodeled it into what they call the 'new' store. Since then they have put on two additions and also gradually 'evicted' tenants in order to expand their space eastward. They now employ about 70 people in 15,000 square feet of sales space.

The clientele has changed little over the years. Janitors have always been the main customers and the business predominately commercial, selling merchandise to repair apartment buildings. As some neighborhood buildings have been passed down through generations, the Walchaks find themselves serving children and grandchildren of former customers. They remember a Mrs. Touhy coming in; her family were descendants of Patrick Touhy, one of the 19th century developers of Rogers Park. They also remember Mr. Schreiber of the family for whom the park just north of the store is named. A member of the audience, Wynne Delacoma, attested to such generational loyalty: her father was a Clark-Devon Hardware customer many years ago.

One difference the owners have noted is that there used to be more trades people such as bricklayers and carpenters than there are now. "They've moved on," according to Ken.

While the customer base has remained firm, their ethnicity and that of the staff has changed as the neighborhood has changed. For many years the staff consisted mainly of middle-aged Jewish men who had previously owned their own hardware stores. Now its members vary in age and include many immigrants, among them Assyrians, Bosnians, Russians, Israelis, Romanians, and others. The Walchak brothers agreed: “We have a great group of employees.”

Besides the history of Clark-Devon Hardware, the Walchaks also reminisced about other businesses that formerly populated the neighborhood. Talking of his youth, Bernie remembers attending Buck Rogers movies at the Ridge Theatre which is now part of the store. When he was underage, a prominent neighborhood man would carry him into the theatre; “They wouldn’t dare stop him.” When he was older, he and his friends would pull down the fire escape to sneak in. By World War II, the theatre was no longer functioning. As a teenager, Bernie took dates to movies at the Granada on Sheridan just north of Devon.

Phyllis, Bernie’s wife, remembers a wide range of thriving businesses east on Devon, including a five-and-dime, shoe store, butcher shop, a jewelry store and a furrier. The latter processed furs himself there in the store. North on Clark near Wallen was the Collins grocery store run by two sisters for years after their father died. The Bowman Dairy barn was on Clark and Greenleaf; the horses were kept on the second floor which they accessed by a ramp. Phyllis remembers the German family of a friend of hers who had a small grocery store on Morse; the owner would get produce from the Randolph St. market and carry it home on the streetcar.

On Clark south of Devon was Mr. Flood’s cleaning supply store, next to Johnny Held’s Brown Bear, a popular and long-lived restaurant on the corner of Clark and Highland. There was also the Atlantic Restaurant which later became the Oxford Restaurant. Ken spoke of the disastrous Oxford

fire on New Year’s Eve in the early sixties. The day of the fire was bitterly cold, and the firemen came into the store to warm up. As it happened, there was a supply of liquor available, leftover from gifts given to the janitors in those days. The liquor enhanced the warmup process for the hardworking firemen. The Walchaks noted that children of waitresses at the Oxford still come into the hardware store.

Such customer loyalty has been supported by public recognition. Clark-Devon Hardware Store has received a top rating from Consumer’s Checkbook, a nonprofit consumer information service, and has been named the city’s best hardware store by Chicago magazine.

The family offers a simple explanation for the store’s success and its longevity: “We have done the same basic thing for all these years. We sell the things that people need to maintain their properties. Whether houses, apartment buildings, universities, or hospitals. They are all buildings, and use basically the same parts to keep them together. We have also listened pretty carefully to our customers and brought in the things they asked for. We still service some of the same property management firms that my grandfather did. Many of the janitors and building owners have continued to grow their businesses over the years, and that has helped us grow our business along with them. We’ve been very fortunate.” □

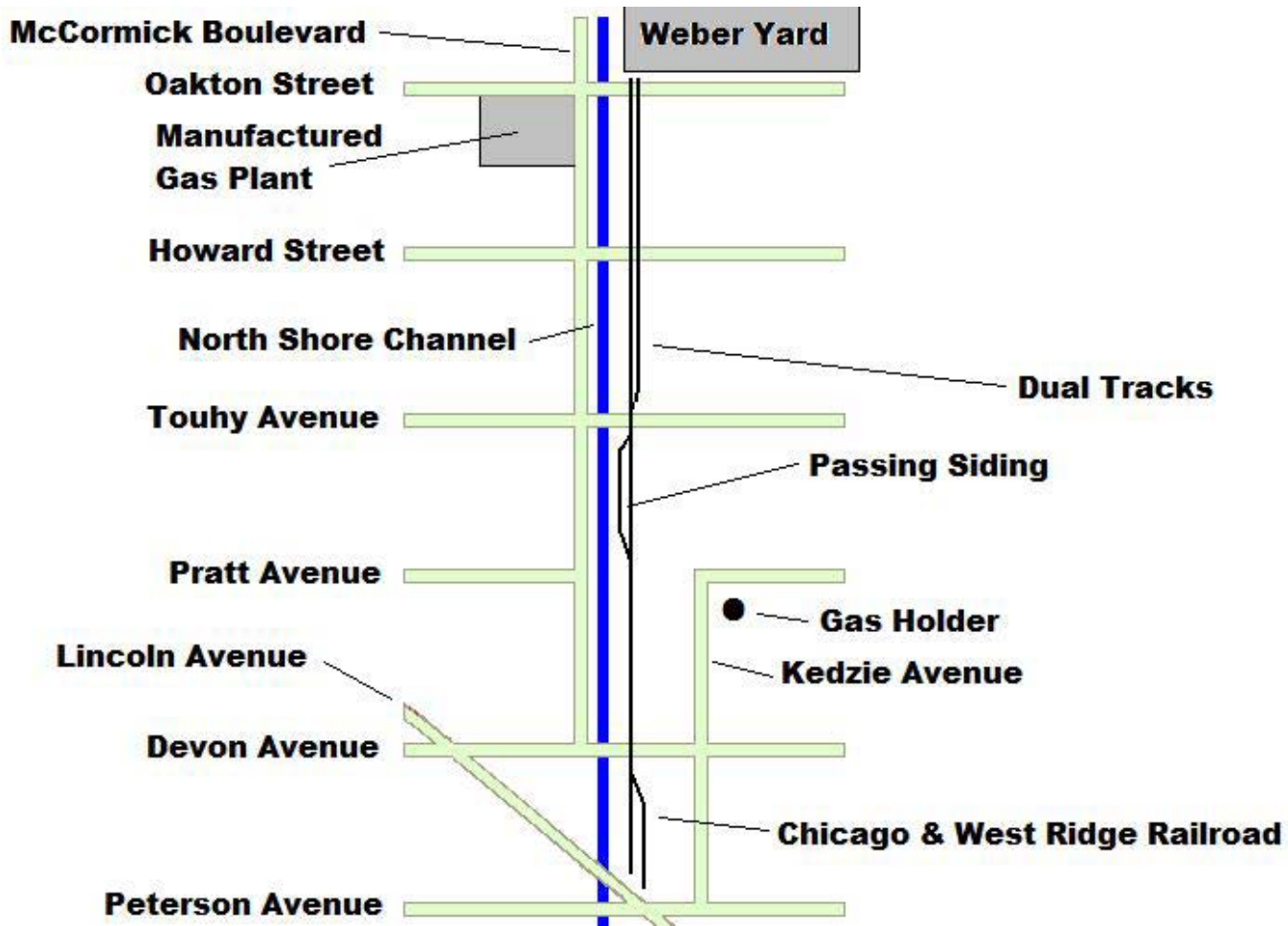
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# The Chicago & West Ridge Railroad

By Hank Morris



Where the railroad ran.

The **Chicago & West Ridge Railroad (C&WR)** was the brainchild of **Barney F. Weber**. He wanted a rail line to service a brickyard he owned. The railroad owned no equipment or rolling stock, just the tracks and the right of way. Since it owned no equipment or rolling stock, the C&WR was not a common carrier and, as such, was not regulated by the **Illinois Commerce Commission**. The C&WR's tracks served several industries, including three brickyards, two of the Illinois Brick Company and one of the National Brick Company. One of these brickyards may have been founded by Barney F. Weber and later sold to one of the two larger concerns.

Under agreement with the C&WR, the **Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW)** operated as a branch line over the C&WR tracks that served the area between Lincoln Avenue at the southern end, and the **Weber Yard** at the

northern end. The C&WR ran on the east bank-parallel to the **North Shore Channel** (built 1907-1910).

At the southern end were two **dead-ended sidings**. Toward the north end, there was nothing significant south of Devon Avenue. From Devon, Kedzie Avenue extended north only as far as Pratt Boulevard. (Kedzie wouldn't be extended north to Howard Street until the late 1950s). Land east of Kedzie was in Chicago and west of Kedzie was in **Tessville** (1922-1936), now known as Lincolnwood (1936-present). A block or more south of the **People's Gas Light & Coke Company's gas holder** at North Shore Avenue was a greenhouse complex large enough to require its own **siding** for loading and unloading rail cars. North of the gas holder were two sidings. One was a **passing siding** and the other was used by Plant 5 of the **Illinois Brick Company**. A passing siding allows trains going in opposing directions to pass each other on



a **single-track line**. They were a common feature of early railroads and today's railroads still use tens of thousands of miles of passing sidings.

On Saturday, July 20, 1895, the Illinois Brick Company's Plant 5 at Pratt Boulevard was the southernmost point of the C&WR. The line wasn't extended farther south until later. The siding leading to Illinois Brick's Plant 5 passed to the west of the Bichl Teaming Company's garage on Pratt. However, it's unlikely that Bichl was a customer.

At Touhy Avenue, things got more interesting. Just east, in Chicago, was a building that housed both the Bartlett Motor Truck Company and the offices of the **National Brick Company**. Remember, Kedzie didn't come through yet. The land east of where it would later be was in Chicago, and the land west was in **Niles Center** (1888-1940), now known as Skokie (1940-present). Here the C&WR branched off into **dual trackage** and two sidings, all dedicated to serving the **brickyard**. Interestingly, the map incorrectly calls the **North Shore Channel** the "Evanston Branch of the Drainage Canal." Only two tracks crossed Howard Street. Just north of Howard Street, in Evanston, were the offices of the Chicago Rose Garden Company.

At the area where the **CTA Skokie Swift** (a.k.a. Yellow Line) now travels were the Chicago Rose Garden Company's green houses and a frame boiler room. Greenhouses used steam from boiler rooms to heat the greenhouses warm during winter, thus allowing them to grow crops around the year. The greenhouses were also served by a siding.

Further north was Plant 3 of the Illinois Brick Company on the land south of Oakton Street and north of the greenhouses. The tracks south of the centerline of Oakton Street belonged to the C&WR and those north, to the C&NW. A single track serving Plant 3 extended south of the **Weber Yard** across Oakton Street to Plant 3's brickyard.

Want proof? On the east side of the shed that once housed the National Brick Company is a parking lot. Near Jarvis and Kedzie Avenues, you can see one rail of the C&WR sticking through the road's surface. They didn't rip out the tracks, just paved over them.

Note: Joe Piersen of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society wrote/compiled "C&NW Lines North of Mayfair: Maps". This huge (18" w x 11" h) book contains highly detailed (100 ft. to one inch) photocopies of most of the C&NW's maps of the area. So far, it's the only detailed historical source I've found that indicates that there EVER WAS a C&WR. It details the entire 2-3 mile route on pages 23 to 29. □

# Park 557's Naming Still Unresolved

By Hank Morris

Chicago Park District Park 557 runs along the east side of Kedzie Avenue between the first alley north of Touhy Avenue and Jarvis Avenue. It consists of nothing more than a few paths, benches, and trees. While it has no fieldhouse, the official address is 7211 N. Kedzie Avenue.

Park No. 557 garnered some attention last year after Australian Consul-General Roger Price tried to have the park named after American-Australian architect **Marion Mahony Griffin** (Tuesday, February 14, 1871–Thursday, August 10, 1961). She and her husband **Walter Burley Griffin** (Friday, November 24, 1876–Thursday, February 11, 1937) designed the Australian capital city of **Canberra**. Marion was one of the first licensed female architects in the world, and is considered an original member of the **Prairie School**.

In the early 1900s, the Griffins won an international competition to design the first capitol city of **Australia** after the continent's British colony declared its independence in 1901.

The Griffins moved from Chicago to Australia after winning the competition, and work began in 1913 to construct the city on farmland in southeast Australia, Price said. He said that “the artificial lake at the city’s center was named after Walter Burley Griffin, and a view from the summit of Mount Ainslie will be named after Marion Mahony Griffin to commemorate her contribution to the design of Canberra later this year.”

The Griffin’s design encompassed everything about the city, from its circular street layout to the parliament buildings and public green space, although, in the end, not all of the design was implemented.

The Griffins lived in Australia until 1936, when they moved to **Lucknow, India**, having received a commission to design the Lucknow University Library. Sadly, this is where Walter Burley Griffin died in 1937 of **peritonitis** following a **cholecystectomy**. When Marion moved back to the United States in 1938, she moved back into her



Map of where Park 557 is located.”

family house at 1946 W. Estes Avenue in Rogers Park, until her death at Cook County Hospital on August 10, 1961. Her ashes are interred and marked by a memorial plaque at Graceland Cemetery.

Marion was a master artist who had a strong connection to the neighborhood. She painted murals at what is now George Buchanan Armstrong School of International Studies, 2110 W. Greenleaf Ave.

DNAinfo.com reported on Wednesday, June 11, 2014, that a spokesman for the Chicago Park District said that efforts to rename the park for Griffin had been abandoned. In the same announcement, the Park District spokesman said “Another location is under consideration.”

While the park has yet to earn a name, the 1.6 acre park on Kedzie Avenue would get lights under plans introduced by **Mayor Rahm Emanuel** to the City Council. The lights would be installed for the “illumination of night time activities and for safety purposes,” according to a statement from the mayor’s office. The lights would be funded with \$24,000 from a city fund created by **Open Space Impact Fees**, which are collected from developers to create more park space in the city. The appropriation for the funds still needs approval from the City Council. □

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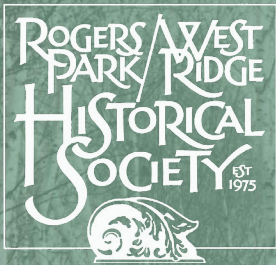
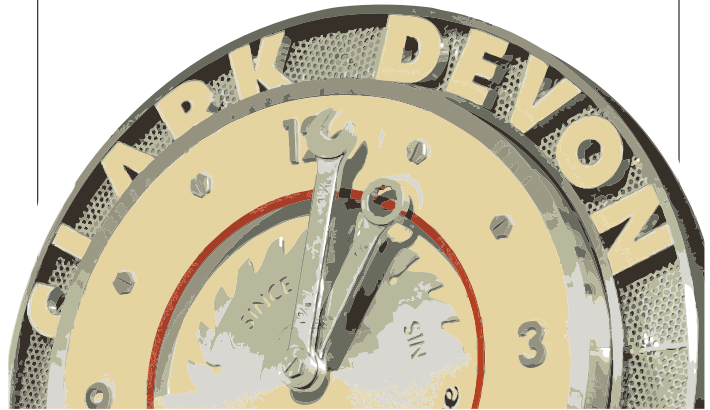
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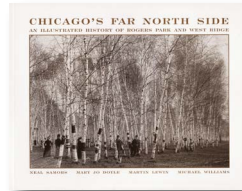
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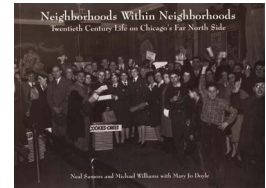
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Oral histories are a wonderful way to learn more about our neighborhoods before all the complexities of “modern life” settled in.

Memories are precious, whether they’re yours, a friend’s or a relative’s. Help preserve our community’s past through oral history today.

You can reach the **Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society** to arrange an interview at **773-764-4078** or e-mail us at **info@rpwrhs.org**.

## Do you have photos of Rogers Park or West Ridge?

Our Photo Archives and Cataloging Project is charged with the preservation of our photo collection. In it, we have literally thousands of photographs that have been donated to the Society to be preserved for future generations and today’s researchers.

It’s one of our most valuable resources. Why not add your old photos to our collection? We will scan them and put them in the Photo Archives. Future generations and today’s researchers will thank you for your efforts.

We can scan slides, negatives, prints, whatever. While we would prefer to preserve the originals, we’re not greedy. If you want them back, we will honor your request.

It would be most helpful if you could provide notes as to what is being shown in the photographs. We’ve never met Aunt Martha. Please tell us who is who. Neighborhoods change. Please tell us where the photo was taken and when. **Your photos can be from any time period, that means even the 2000s.**

For more information, contact the Society’s offices.

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### Do You Know?

Congratulations to Ann and Frank Glapa who correctly identified this photo as being the now gone Mary Bartelme Elementary School at 1914 W. Loyola Avenue.

