

The Historian

Preserving & Promoting Neighborhood History

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NOTE:

This issue was way too big to send, intact, through the e-mail limits. So, we created a second part. Just click the link and you'll be able to download it, too.

The second part is John Fitzgerald's tale of visiting every single county in the 50 states. There are over 3,000 of them and the task took nearly 50 years to complete. It's quite something, as you'll learn after you click the [link](#). Enjoy. . .



John and Judy Fitzgerald reach Luce County, Michigan, the last of their 50-year quest to visit every one of the 3,143 counties in the U.S.

Annual Meeting

By Kay McSpadden

The 2016 Annual Meeting proved to be, appropriately, a celebration not just of the Society's past year but also of what some long-time members have accomplished. The meeting took place Saturday March 19, 2016, at the Northtown Library.

The program opened with the presentation of a gift of \$270 to the Society from the no-longer-active West Ridge Bungalow Neighbors (WRBN). Many of the members of that organization have also been very active in the Society and have made many contributions to the community. The presentation was made by Jo Stavig, former co-chair of WRBN, Ann Glapa, former treasurer, Frank Glapa, Dan and Michele Miller.

Ann and Jo are former Board members of the Historical Society. Frank, a long-time member, received a Richard H. Driehaus award in 2015 for the authentic remodeling of the Arts and Crafts-style marquee over the entrance to the Glapa's West Ridge bungalow. Dan is treasurer of the Indian

Boundary Advisory Council. Michele is an artist who has created a line of greeting cards.

Next on the program, two volunteer tutors together with a student and her daughter told members present about the Indo-American Center located on California Avenue in West Ridge. Tutors Erin Kelso and Nayantara spoke briefly about the scope of IAC's activities. Zubeda, accompanied by her daughter Sanobar, used the English she has learned in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes there to praise the center as a source for English lessons, assistance, and sociability for the Indian-American and other refugees of the neighborhood. Those attending the Annual Meeting had the opportunity to contribute to the IAC by dropping cash or checks into a container. A total of \$100 was raised. The IAC is in part dependent on State of Illinois funds which have been held up because of the budget crisis. The organization also needs volunteers.

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There followed a PowerPoint presentation put together by Historical Society president Ken Walchak and Board member Dave Kalensky. The presentation showed what the Society has accomplished in the past year and its plans for the next year. It was organized according to the five committees which make up the organization's structure: Governance, Education, Outreach, Media, and Fundraising. The PowerPoint can be viewed on the Historical Society's website at rpwrhs.org.

Next came the "members only" part of the program. Members present voted to reelect two Board members for a second two-year term, Ken Walchak president and Dona Vitale treasurer. Board members can serve three consecutive two-year terms before having to step off the Board for at least one year. Terms are specified in the By-Laws revised in 2010.

Two Board members resigned as of this Annual Meeting, receiving grateful acknowledgement from President Walchak. Both are Ph.D. Candidates in the Public History Program at Loyola University. Katie Macica was Education Committee Chair for the Historical Society, overseeing Collections, Programs, Exhibits, and Oral Histories. In addition she coordinated the move from Morse Avenue to the current location at 7363 N. Greenview, just south of Jarvis Avenue. Katie is well experienced in the area

of Collections and will continue to be called on for advice. Hope Shannon headed the Media Committee which is responsible for Website/Social Media, Publicity, and the Historian. Hope plans to continue to coordinate the former two teams.

Finally, the feature of the meeting—and the reason many nonmembers came--was a talk by long-time member and former docent John Fitzgerald. He and his wife Judy in 2015 completed their fifty-year quest to visit all 3,143 counties in the U.S. John's talk was entertaining and humorous, illustrated with photos of highlights of his travels. (See John's article as **Part 2** of this issue of *The Historian*.)

Refreshments which included coffee and donut holes from Dunkin Donuts and cookies from Subway were partially subsidized by the Dunkin Donuts at Western and Rosemont Avenues and the Subway at 2750 W. Devon. Clark-Devon Hardware contributed a case of water.

Additional volunteers who helped at the annual meeting included Kay McSpadden, Vice-President; Dona Vitale, Treasurer and Outreach Committee Chair; Rob Case; Colleen Sen; Stephanie Barto, Office Assistant. Library staff members who assisted were Branch Manager Catherine Wilson, First Assistant Mary Frueh and Librarian I Diem Nguyen. □

MAP Grant Peer Reviewer Gives Excellent Advice

By Kay McSpadden

Board members and other key volunteers met with Ms. Allison Weiss, Executive Director of Sandy Springs Museum, Maryland, Friday March 4 and Saturday March 5 as part of a grant from the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) sponsored by the American Alliance of Museums. The two days were spent acquainting Ms. Weiss with the neighborhood and the Society's activities and concerns and getting excellent input from her based on her experience managing a small museum.

"It was great to have someone from the outside come in and take a good hard look at our organization," President Ken Walchak said of the peer review visit. "Kind of like a realtor who you hire to sell your home. They see things with a new set of eyes. Ms. Weiss has not only talked the talk, but has walked the walk. Her visit has energized our entire organization and will, I hope, pave the way for a new generation of members to build an organization that can face the future and build on the past."

Ms. Weiss's observations focused on the Society's vision for the future and on its connecting more strategically with the community it serves. The Board is planning a one-day retreat to develop a Strategic Plan which will include implementation of Weiss's suggestions.

The application for the MAP grant was submitted over a year ago, largely written by our partners in Loyola University's Public History Lab, led by Ph.D. candidates Katie Macica, former Board member, and Devin Hunter, former chair of the Institutional Giving (Grantwriting) Team. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) awards the MAP grants to small and midsize museums or historical societies as a way for each organization to review its operations and receive input from a peer reviewer with a proven track record at a similar museum.

Volunteers who agreed to constitute the MAP Committee for the Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society included Board members Ken Walchak, president; Kay McSpadden, vice-president; Dona Vitale, Outreach Committee Chair (now also Treasurer); Dave Kalensky, Katie Macica, Hope Shannon, and Frank Valadez.

The committee's role included completing a lengthy self-study of the organization, focusing on the areas of Mission and Planning; Interpretation; Collections Stewardship; Administration and Finance; and Governance. The group

also conducted two prescribed activities to further educate itself on the Society's strengths and challenges. An internal activity, familiarity with and implementation of the mission statement, led to an increased understanding of the importance of considering the Society's mission when deciding among possible projects. An external activity, a survey of "competitive" community organizations of a similar size as the Historical Society and drawing on a similar audience, open the doors to collaboration with some of these organizations.

Along with submission of the Self-Study workbook and sixteen of the suggested additional documents (including By-Laws, Organizational Chart, Institutional Plan, Collections Policy and Plan, Current Year's Budget), the committee chose a peer reviewer from a list of five possibilities. The committee-designed two-day schedule included meetings with Board members, key volunteers, our one staff member, and leaders of notable community organizations, as well as a tour of Rogers Park and West Ridge and meals at restaurants carefully chosen to show the history and diversity of these communities.

Its choice proved to be very beneficial. Ms. Weiss is congenial and knowledgeable, and her observations were astute and wise. While visiting the Historical Society, Allison stayed at the Lang House Bed and Breakfast co-owned by Board member Bruce Boyd. □

From the President's Desk



President, Ken Walchak

Greetings,

I'm addressing this to our old members, but also to our new members. In addition I hope to reach those of you who read this who are not yet members. I have never been so excited about the prospects for our Historical Society.

We spent the second weekend in March with a peer advisor from the American Association of Museums. We received a grant to

to sit down and get very expensive advice from a nationally known organization for free. Kind of like getting screenwriting advice from Steven Spielberg for free. We talked about the past, as you might expect from a historical society, but more importantly, about the future. We laid the groundwork for a

new strategic plan. In my day job in the hardware business, our strategic planning sometimes seems as if it extends to lunchtime on Tuesday. In the Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society, we have to have a plan for a future that wouldn't include any of us. It's kind of cool to plan like that. Questions like 'Will we have a traditional museum'? 'Do we merge our computer systems with other similar organizations to lower costs'? 'What sorts of programming will we be sponsoring in coming years'?

These are the kinds of issues that we will be discussing in a retreat that we are putting together in the next few months. We expect to have Board members, volunteers, Loyola University Public History Lab students, and community stakeholders all together in a room to hash out what the future might look like for the RPWRHS.

Imagining the future is fun. Participating in designing the future is even more fun.

Ken Walchak,
President

Volunteer Profile: Chelsea Denault

By Hank Morris



Chelsea Denault

Chelsea, you've been volunteering with us for quite a while, 3-4 years, I think. What kinds of things have you done? What have you enjoyed most?

Has it been that long?! Besides docenting on Sundays, I've served on both the Outreach and Media Teams. The Outreach Team has been focused on documenting and encouraging relationships between RPWRHS and other local organizations and institutions. Right now we're working to plan a networking event to forward this effort.

For the Media Team, I post events and other info on social media and - with my Loyola colleague Matt Norgard - I run the "We're Your Neighbors" project. We ask board members and volunteers some questions about their lives in Rogers Park and West Ridge and share their answers on the website and on social media. We hope that this initiative draws attention to our role as community members and encourages our neighbors to say hi the next time they see us around!

But mostly, I love being a docent on Sunday afternoons, talking to people and hearing their stories about living in the community. There are such interesting and kind people who live in this neighborhood.

You recently volunteered for a new RPWRHS initiative, working with students from Uno Charter School to complete service hours. Can you tell us what you plan to do with these students?

I'll be working with a group of 10 or so middle school students from UNO doing two things. First, they'll be serving as volunteer docents at the Historical Society twice a week in order to develop some public engagement skills.

Second, they'll be working on an individual research project based on a photograph from their own life or their family's experience in Rogers Park and West Ridge. I'll work with them to determine why they think the photo is significant, where it was taken in the community, and what it tells us about the community, and then to identify materials in our collections that might relate. It will be a great exercise for them to learn about the process of history-making and understand their significance in their community's history.

You're a graduate student in the Public History Program at Loyola. I know you just passed your Ph.D. qualifying exams. Congratulations! What are your history interests?

Thanks! My interests lie in postwar urban history, especially topics like urban renewal, community activism, and gentrification. I'm also interested in urban environmental history and issues of pollution.

Can you tell us something about the Public History Program?

First, it's a really wonderful program with terrific, inspiring, and hard-working people - students and professors. Public History at Loyola is a graduate level program, and there are both full- and part-time students. Each year, we admit anywhere from 7-12 MA and 2-4 PhD students. Students come in at different points in their lives too: some students have full-time jobs at museums and are getting their degree part-time. Some come to the program after having a full-time job or earning an MA; others are accepted immediately after finishing their undergraduate education.

All of our differences help us to bring different ideas and experiences to bear on our work together, as Public History is very team-oriented. First-year students take Public History Theory & Methods (which has produced some walking tours and fundraising ideas for RPWRHS), where we learn some of the foundational principles of the discipline. Other courses are Historic Preservation; Museum Management; Oral History; Public History New Media; Archives; and Material Culture. Each student must also complete an internship with a museum or other cultural institution.

As far as jobs, that's as different as the individuals are! Some want to stay teach at a university and train future public historians, while some want to transition into jobs in museums or historic preservation or archives. It's a diverse field!

How do you manage to have time to volunteer with us and to work on your studies? How does your volunteering intersect with—or support—your course work?

Sometimes I ask myself this question too! “How do I have time for this??” But choosing to commit to projects like working with RPWRHS is key because the things I do here allow me to tap into my public historian skills more than, say, writing my dissertation. Volunteering absolutely supports my course work because it allows me to use the knowledge I gained in class and adapt it and apply it to real projects.

Tell us about your background. Where are you from? Are you new to Chicago, to the neighborhood?

I'm from Detroit, but I moved to Chicago four years ago when I started the Public History PhD program at Loyola. Right now, I live in Edgewater close to Senn High School. I love living and working on Chicago's Far North Side a lot, but I miss Detroit every day and hope to move back home for work when I finish my degree.

What do you expect to do your Ph.D. dissertation on?

Luckily, I already know what my dissertation is on. I'll be looking at the local politics surrounding the construction of a trash incinerator in Detroit. I'm really interested in how

competition over limited power and resources drove certain interest groups apart and how those various groups envisioned diverse solutions to the different urban problems they perceived.

What sort of job do you hope to get after you graduate?

I hope to find a job in a museum with a social justice- or community engagement-focused mission back home in Detroit, working with community outreach, exhibit development, or public programs.

What activities do you enjoy doing when you're not studying or volunteering?

I have a dog that needs a lot of exercise, so I love running or walking with her around Edgewater and Rogers Park, especially near the lakefront. We also go hiking a lot in the County Forest Preserve. I love cooking and gardening and am a gardener/kitchen volunteer with the Peterson Garden Project.

Having been a volunteer for several years now, do you have any observations about volunteering or about the Society in general?

Providing volunteers with an opportunity to do something they're passionate about is key. I'm really passionate about people, so docenting and interfacing with the Society's visitors really makes me feel like I'm doing meaningful and satisfying work. For the Society generally, I think continuing to challenge ourselves to be a welcoming and engaging force within our communities will allow us to stay relevant and vital. ☐

“An Evening with the Meinecke's”: A Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society Event

By Matthew Amyx

As the guests entered the Tudor-style home on 2357 W. Chase Avenue, on the evening of Wednesday, January 20, 2016, their jaws dropped while their eyes swam in the waves of color, geometry, and contrast washing over them. Evocative paintings, sketches, and sculptures adorn nearly every inch of free space. Each turned corner revealed a different medium expertly mastered and innovated with: charcoal, pencil, oils, wood, spray paint, even crumpled canvas, and road tar. This menagerie for the senses could reasonably be thought the product of an army of different artisans, but they are astoundingly all the work of the prolific Chicago Renaissance man Tristan Meinecke (1916-2004), whose massive genius

and impact are inversely proportional to his meager present recognition. The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society, with the gracious blessing of Tristan's sons Brad and Scott, hosted a spirited evening of conversation, art appreciation, wine, and music in the gallery that was the home of Tristan and his equally remarkable wife, Chicago TV and radio star Angel Casey – a home that, sadly, will be lost to the Meinecke's and north Chicago's art scene by April of this year.

About three dozen people attended the showing, including artists, musicians, and filmmakers. Brad and Scott Meinecke enthusiastically shared stories of their parents' lives, including

how the flexible Tristan discovered a new method after throwing a hammer in disgust at a painting, and how the stunning Angel performed 1,500 live radio play readings in one year. Although largely (and oddly) obscure today, the Meineckes once held legendary parties at their home on 2022 N. Cleveland Avenue, attended by celebrities, journalists, and junkies alike. While the Meineckes had only moved into the Chase Avenue house in the 1990s, it too has a rich history as a British social club. Unfortunately, determined efforts by Tristan and Angel's sons to raise funds to keep the space as a gallery have failed. Sometime in April the new owners will sell the space and the magnificent, revolutionary art may all go into ignominious storage. One goal of the event was to increase awareness and attract interest from galleries and buyers to find homes for at least some of these incredible pieces.

Born in 1916 in Atchison, Kansas, Tristan Meinecke revealed his artistic aptitudes at an early age, as seen in the detailed figure drawings from the 1920s and 1930s placed throughout the house. He was already an accomplished jazz musician when he began studying painting and ceramics at the University of Michigan, (Ann Arbor, Michigan) in 1938. In 1942, his watercolor piece, *City Landscape*, featured at the Art Institute of Chicago, and the following year he moved to the Windy City, playing jazz clarinet on the south side, designing storefront displays on the Magnificent Mile, and dating local radio star Lorraine Johnson (Middletown, OH, 1920-2007), better known as Angel Casey. Through the decade, he bent his blindingly bright talent towards Shartle writing short stories and composing music. (Examples of his avant garde music are available on the YouTube channel "Meinecke Artspace".)

In the 1950s, Meinecke focused more directly on visual art, and pioneered the form known as 'split-level', where two or more layers of painting show. Throughout the evening, Tristan's sons Brad and Scott showed the historical society's members and guests the piece *Open Rebellion*, quoting one critic as saying, "Even its shadows have shadows." The gallery includes many examples of split-level artwork, a form now commonly seen in art museums but that Tristan arguably invented in 1955. Tristan rebelled against banality, and his wide range of accomplishments came partly from his refusal to replicate styles that no longer interested him. He was furthermore disgusted by the politics and phoniness he saw in the professional art world, and largely abandoned it in the 1960s, instead teaching himself architecture and partnering with Robert Bruce Tague (1912-1985) in the urban renewal of Lincoln Park. In 1976, Meinecke befriended art critic and Chicago Surrealist Group co-founder Franklin Rosemont

who frequently included Tristan's work in his exhibitions and writings. Tristan continued producing works for shows throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and when his aging hands could no longer control a brush he simply began innovating with spray paint. This indomitable spirit finished his final painting in 2000 at the age of eighty-four.

Revolutionary spirits decades ahead of their time, Tristan and Angel suffered setbacks due to the lack of progress around them. Tristan exhibited symptoms of bipolar disorder – which would have been called manic depressive in the mid-century, and weeks of mind-boggling productivity in which he barely rested would end in a crash and long periods of sleep. With the medical community's lack of understanding regarding his condition, Tristan was subjected to numerous experimental drugs that failed to treat him properly. Angel Casey established herself as a pioneer in Chicago TV with her children's program *Angel's Play House* that ran from 1953 to 1956, but she received death threats and was eventually cancelled because she was the first to feature minority children on a public television show in Chicago. Despite these setbacks, Angel and Tristan built a happy, fulfilling life of art and love around them. While records of Angel's career are sadly few (given America's general backwardness about preserving our film history), Tristan has thankfully left Chicago with one of the most varied and thought-provoking collections of art produced in the modern age – a collection that looks regrettably fated to obscurity for at least the near future. □

Newberry Library Map Curator Discusses Historical Chicago Maps

By Kay McSpadden

Jim Ackerman, the Newberry Library's Curator of Maps, gave a talk on "The History of Chicago through Maps" on Wednesday February 17 at the **Budlong Woods Branch of the Chicago Public Library**. A resident of the **Peterson Woods** neighborhood in West Ridge, Jim is director of the Herman Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography at the **Newberry Library**. He illustrated his talk with photos of many relevant maps, showing the development of Chicago from American Indian days through early settlement by Europeans up to the present. The maps, all of which are held at Newberry Library, gave an indication of the library's extensive collection of local maps. The following are some points made by Ackerman that can be learned by studying Chicago maps.

*In the colonial era, rivers were the highways; early maps were made by people traveling by river. The first settlements developed close to major rivers. Thus, the settlement of Illinois progressed from south to north, from the **Ohio River** north. Surveys of Northern Illinois did not take place until the 1830s.*

The site of present-day Chicago was never an important location for the French.

*Two early mapmakers of this area were **Guillaume Delisle**, who mapped the route of the Chicago River to the Illinois River and the Illinois to the Mississippi River in 1718, and **Thomas Hutchins**, a British cartographer who later became Geographer of the U.S.*

The land east of the Chicago River was sand, but west of the river was fertile glacial till.

*All diagonal streets in Chicago, including Milwaukee and Lincoln Avenues, Clark Street and Ridge Boulevard, were originally Indian trails and show a bit of elevation. Northern Illinois Indian trails are shown in a map published by **Albert F. Scharf** around 1900.*

In the early 1800s, the U.S. Government was anxious to gain control of the portage to the Illinois River from Lake Michigan. For this purpose it acquired land ten miles on either side of the DesPlaines River.

Plats from the 1820s and 1830s were made within the river corridor. Plats outside the river corridor date from after that. On the website of the Illinois Library, one can see all Illinois plats.

www.rpwrhs.org

A map of Ridgeville shows Philip Rogers' home along the Indian Boundary.

An 1861 map shows both Henry Town, a name given to the area just north of Rosehill Cemetery, and Andersonville.

Some Chicago streets jog because the surveys varied.

Property deeds in our area designate the township where the property is located. Nineteenth century maps show the townships in Chicago. The township was measured from a base line and east and west of a principal meridian. Townships were thirty-six square miles in size, divided into sections also of prescribed size.

Jim's talk was one of our series of bimonthly talks on historical topics. The series is a partnership with the three Chicago Public Library (CPL) branches in Rogers Park and West Ridge. Each talk is held at one of these branches: **Rogers Park**, **Northtown**, **Budlong Woods**. For information on the topic and location of upcoming talks, consult the **Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society** website or the CPL online calendar. Persons on the Society's email list receive online notices of the talks along with information on how to preregister. Preregistration is advised—but not necessary—in order to guarantee seats in case the room fills up. The Historical Society Program Team is open to suggestions for topics and would be grateful for help with sign-in, book sales, taking photos, or taking notes on the highlights of the talk for *The Historian* or for our website. □



Jim Ackerman welcomes the audience.



Problems with the projector bathed Jim Ackerman in strange colors.

Mary Bartelme Elementary School

By Hank Morris



The Burnham seniors apartments

The Mary Bartelme Elementary School branch of **George Armstrong School** was named for **Mary Margaret Bartelme** (Tuesday, July 24, 1866 - Thursday, June 25, 1954) who was the first woman appointed Cook County Public Guardian in Illinois, and the first woman elected judge in a court of high jurisdiction in our state.

In September 1957, a new elementary school opened. It was named for Mary Margaret Bartelme. It was built to accommodate more than 400 students. Mary Bartelme Elementary School was located at 1914 W. Loyola Avenue.

By 1981, Chicago and some suburbs found that there was a surplus of school buildings that should be closed because of declining enrollment. The post war baby boom had leveled off, and there were fewer children being born, so schools were being consolidated; leaving many empty school buildings. Originally built to accommodate the growing school population, when the enrollment declined, the **Board of Education** faced the need to rid itself of the excess capacity.

So the Mary Bartelme branch of George Armstrong School was no longer needed. The **Chicago Housing Authority** bought the school and spent \$707,000 to build the Loyola Ridge Apartments. The building is now named the Daniel Hudson Burnham Apartments, a senior citizen apartment home at 1930

W. Loyola Avenue. The **Daniel Hudson Burnham Apartments** were named after the famed urban planner and architect of many projects in Chicago. The mid-rise elevator buildings were built in 1983 and feature 181 one bedroom homes. The building is age-restricted.

The school was torn down sometime around Thursday, June 25, 1981, only 24 years after its construction. Although not in Rogers Park or West Ridge, there is a **Mary Bartelme Park**, 115 S. Sangamon Street, in Chicago to honor her memory. ☐



Judge Mary Bartelme

Protecting Cold War Chicago

By Hank Morris

The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc (the United States, its NATO allies, and others) and the powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Pact). Historians do not fully agree on the dates, but 1947–91 is common.

Starting around 1950, large American cities were deemed as targets for the Soviets to launch ICBMs and airborne bombers at. So, AAA (anti-aircraft ammunition) batteries were strung around these cities to offer some level of protection to the populace from “enemy” attacks. This was also the time that “Duck and Cover” became the de facto standard for protection of Americans in the new Nuclear Age.

The ring of **AAA batteries** was considered as the “last ditch” stand against an enemy air attack. While they pretty much spelled the end of 4-engine bombers, AAA batteries were entirely useless against missile attacks. And after a few years of their installation, they were replaced by **Nike-Ajax** anti-aircraft missiles. While Nike-Ajax missiles were a start, they were too limited in altitude (70,000 feet) and range (25-30 miles). Four years later in 1958, Nike-Hercules nuclear-tipped missiles were deployed. **Nike-Hercules** had a range of over 75 miles and altitude of 100,000 feet.

In Rogers Park, one AAA battery was located at the **Farwell Pier** (referred to in news media as “Loyola Park.”) Farwell Pier is not named after the street. Both the street and the pier are named after **John V. Farwell**. He was one of six investors who formed the **Rogers Park Building & Land Co.** in 1873, five years before “Rogers Park” was incorporated as a Village and twenty years before it was annexed as part of Chicago.



Photo of today's Farwell Pier



Aerial photo of today's Farwell Pier

The AAA batteries began with 90 mm and 120 mm left-overs from World War II and over time, they were replaced with new 75 mm **Skysweeper guns**. The 90 mm guns could hit a plane up to 33,000 feet up and 10 miles away while firing 25-30 projectiles a minute. The 120 mm guns were the largest and could hit a plane 15 miles away and up to 40,000 feet high. They fired 12 rounds per minute.

The newer Skysweeper 75 mm guns fired at 45 rounds per minute, could hit planes 4 miles away, and could hit them with a high degree of accuracy due to their radar guided aiming systems.

The Skysweeper AAA battery at Farwell Pier was a part of the 22nd AAA group. The equipment was from the U.S. Army and the personnel were from the **Illinois National Guard**.

On Saturday, May 16, 1953, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. there was an open house in honor of **Armed Forces Day**. Visitors learned that in addition to the AAA guns there was also a radar truck. The radar in the truck was used to aim the guns at the aerial threat. Visitors watched as the soldiers ran aiming exercises and rotated the guns, but there were no firing exercises.

On Wednesday, October 9, 1957, it was announced that four AAA batteries were to be deactivated as part of a nationwide plan to deactivate 101 outmoded AAA sites in favor of new Nike-Ajax anti-aircraft missiles. Four Nike bases would remain on the lakefront. Farwell Pier was one of the sites that would not be converted over to a Nike base.

The four new Nike-equipped bases were two at **Montrose Harbor**, one at 26th Street in **Burnham Park**, and one at 63rd Street in **Jackson Park**. The four AAA installations occupied 20.8 acres. Farwell Pier was only 3 acres. The **Chicago Park District** landscaped the four sites and the U.S. Army paid the costs according to **Robert A. Black** the Park District's Chief Engineer and the man for whom the **Golf Course** at Pratt and Ridge Boulevards is named. □

Devon Streetcar Barn

By Hank Morris



Two streetcars ready to go to work. The right car has a wide white stripe on the front which indicated to passengers that it was a PAYE (Pay-As-You-Enter) car. They were designed for passengers to board only at the rear of the car. The conductor was stationed there and passengers paid their fare to him as they came aboard. The large platforms at the ends of the car permitted passengers waiting to pay their fares to wait in the car, rather than in the street.

Incorporated 1891 as Chicago & Evanston Electric Railway Co., the name was changed 1892. Acquired by North Chicago Electric Railway Co. in 1894. The Chicago North Shore Street Railway housed its streetcars at 5847 N. Broadway (near Ardmore Ave.) in Edgewater. The car barn opened in 1893 and was replaced by the Devon car house in 1901.

Chicago North Shore Street Railway Co. was sold in 1894 to North Chicago Electric Railway Co., and merged in 1899 into Chicago Consolidated Traction Co.

The Devon Avenue Car Barn, also known as the Devon Avenue

Car House, was located at 6454-64 N. Clark Street. It was built by the Chicago Union Traction Company and opened Tuesday, April 2, 1901, and closed on Saturday, September 7, 1957.

The new barns are the largest in the city. The streetcars that cruised through Rogers Park and other districts were housed in the Devon Avenue car barn. These routes were Clark (22), Broadway (36), and Western (49B).

Until June 1914, the Evanston Railway Company's streetcars were also housed at this location. Afterwards, they were housed and maintained in the Evanston Railway Company's new car barn at Central Avenue and Asbury Avenue.

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The Devon Avenue car barn was really on Clark Street. The building is now gone and part of the real estate is now occupied by the 24th District-Rogers Park of the Chicago Police Department, 6464 N. Clark Street.

The Devon Avenue Streetcar Barn

A major fire on Thursday, January 26, 1922, destroyed 90 streetcars. Because at that time all of the various streetcar lines in Chicago had been consolidated under the umbrella of the Chicago Surface Lines, and was the largest streetcar system in the world, sufficient surplus streetcars were available so that the



The front car is Pullman-Standard Built Chicago Surface Lines experimental streetcar 4001. CSL tested this car all over the system, one of two prototypes built for the CSL. A second experimental streetcar, built by J.G. Brill, the CSL 7001 was also tried out over the system at the same time. These two were one-of-a-kind cars from different manufacturers and were prototypes that led to the development of the "Presidents' Conference Committee," known to passengers as "Green Hornets." These were the most successful streetcar design, with over 20,000 streetcars the world over.

service that would normally have extended from the Devon Car Barn was fully restored the next day.

To replace the destroyed cars (and add more capacity) the Chicago Surface Lines (CSL) ordered a group of new streetcars known by the name "The 169 cars" because of their total number. Because CSL was only an operating company and owned no equipment, actual ownership belonged to two of the underlying companies that made up the Chicago Surface Lines. Chicago Railways owned new cars 1721-1785 (built by CSL's West Shops), 3119-3160 (Brill) and 3161-3178 (Cummings) while Chicago City Railway owned 6155-6158 (West Shops), 6159-6186 (Brill) and 6187-6198 (Cummings.)

Car 3142, the last survivor, continues to operate, carrying visitors around the streetcar loop at the Illinois Railway Museum, 7000 Olson Road, Union, Illinois.

The Devon car barn was closed in 1957. After it was torn down, the 24th District-Rogers Park police station, 6464 N. Clark Street, was built on the site. □



Devon Car Barn 1.jpg The employees kept the looks of the car barn pleasant with flowers.



Track doors were closed.



The Devon Car Barn after the fire.

Your House Has a History, Presented by Grace Du Melle

Rogers Park Public Library, 6907 N. Clark Street,
April 18 @ 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

By John Fitzgerald

Did you ever wonder about the history of your house? Amateur historians and local housing buffs were treated to a compelling presentation concerning the basic steps involved in researching the history of Chicago houses and residents. The PowerPoint lecture was provided by recognized local author Grace Du Melle on Monday evening April 18 at the Rogers Park Library. A nice crowd of over fifty adults almost filled the attractive meeting space on the library's 2nd floor for the RP/WRHS-sponsored talk.

The 60-minute presentation was divided between segments on how best to “do it yourself” when researching the history of local houses and how to find information about one’s ancestors. Either topic could prove elusive but enlightening when pursued with diligence and curiosity. In a built up and often transient community like Chicago’s North Side, current residents often have minimal information about the structures in which they dwell and about their own family histories.

For the curious minds that wish to know, Grace Du Melle pointed out the paths to take and the resources available to begin the research journey. Because of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, few property records exist which pre-date 1870. But searchable records do exist at places like the Newberry Library and the Chicago History Museum. But the author suggested that a good place to start would be the free Daley Library at the University of Illinois-Chicago which keeps records of construction permits (the “birth certificate” of a house) on microfilm. For dwellings “born” after the 1870-1954 period, folks must go to City Hall and submit a FOIA request to the Buildings Department—a task not as daunting as it seems, according to Ms Du Melle. For even newer dwellings, post 1985, permits can be found free on line at the County Building in the Recorder of Deeds office. But to accomplish this, one must first know the legal description of the subject property.

Many, if not most, of the steps involved in the research of a property can be found in the multi-page document *Your House Has A History*, which can be freely downloaded from Google or taken from the RP/WRHS website.

The second part of the evening’s talk involved tracing one’s ancestry (or a neighbor’s) through census records (the 1940 www.rpwrhs.org



We had a record attendance to hear about how to research the history of your home.

decennial census is the latest available) and through historical sources such as local newspapers. The Chicago Public Library provides free online access to the *Chicago Tribune* archives (back to 1849) and other papers as well. Using dates, names, cross-referencing with addresses and the like, one can find death notices, obits, news articles or, perhaps, even juicy gossip about grandparents or previous occupants of our houses.

The presentation to the attentive audience was followed by a question and answer period concerning architectural drawings and styles, building and subdivision plans, and further research possibilities. The audience was directed to helpful resources like the Chicago Bungalow Association and, per Hank Morris and others, our own RP/WRHS website and HistoryWiki.

After the session Ms. Du Melle was pressed by individual questioners as well as folks anxious to purchase her book *Finding Your Chicago Ancestors*. She was delighted to sell 31 of her books and said that this was “one of her largest audiences” she’s had - “a testament to the Society.”

It was a worthwhile evening for all who attended, perhaps to be followed by additional RP/WRHS-sponsored workshops on the topics which will be announced in the coming weeks. Regardless of the future, listeners left knowing much more about how to learn where they are and who they came from, a good way to stay rooted in reality when the political world stirs feelings and thoughts of temporary vertigo. □



Grace Du Melle introducing the audience to the topic.



Grace had copies of her book available for sale.

www.facebook.com/RPWRHS

Is the City Overdue in Renovating the Library in West Ridge? A Look at the History of the Northtown Library

By Matthew Amyx

Over the summer of 2015, a *Change.org* petition to expand or rebuild the **Northtown Library** collected over 600 signatures from the residents of West Ridge. The one-story building at 6434 N. California Avenue hosts 140,000 visitors each year, but it has not been renovated since opening in 1962. Petition-signers complain that the library, despite its popularity and the hard work of its staff, lacks space, needs more up-to-date technology, and offers insufficient community resources that reflect the diverse demographics of West Ridge. Additionally, they claim the library's parking situation, practically limited to street parking in a busy neighborhood, severely inconveniences patrons. While the petition has received considerable support and is backed by **50th Ward Alderman Debra Silverman**, residents will need to exercise patience. Pamela Stauffer, **West Rogers Park Community Organization** Chairwoman, anticipates a minimum budget of \$6 million for the endeavor, which is still in its planning phase, and recent library projects in Chicago have taken four years or more to complete. The petition signers should not lose hope, however, as very similar grassroots appeals created the very successful previous incarnations of the Northtown Library.

The first Northtown Library opened on July 31, 1939 at 2502 W. Devon Avenue. It had taken seven years of organizing and petitioning by the local Kiwanis Club, Northtown Women's Club, Northtown Business Men's Association, and PTA groups. By its one-year anniversary the branch, led by head librarian Marion Smith, had issued 6,200 library cards and hosted 145,000 visitors and circulated nearly 200,000 books. The library building, a double storefront, quickly became one of the most popular in the city, attracting patrons from far outside of its district boundaries which ran west from Ridge Blvd. to the North Shore Channel and south from Farwell Avenue to Bryn Mawr Avenue.



2200 w. Devon Avenue looking east from Bell Avenue

The library's programs quickly outgrew its space. In January 1942, Smith started a very popular Book Review Club, but it had to meet in clubrooms on Maplewood Avenue. The library offered very strong children's programs, such as a "Bring Your Dolly" story hour started by Children's Librarian Bernice Perley in January 1942. Soon the weekly story hours were drawing an average of 233 children, but the space only accommodated 60 chairs. This unacceptable situation led West Ridge community leaders to petition Mayor Edward J. Kelly for an enlargement. Sponsors included pastors, Boy Scouts, business groups, women's clubs, Kiwanis, and the American Legion. The city approved the purchase and conversion of the adjacent corner building, a tavern and store, into staff space and a much needed children's room.



2502 W Devon Avenue, North Town Library -Children with Army Lt. Godlewski.

The Northtown Library made important contributions to community morale during World War II. It provided technical books to educate the defense workers that had flooded to Chicago. Families with members serving abroad checked out books on the countries where their loved ones were stationed. Smith told the *Chicago Tribune* that the library helped residents “take their minds off things for a while... These persons usually ask for mystery books – something which will challenge their brains and keep their minds occupied.” The library also offered avenues for the West Ridge community to aid those affected by the war. In July 1941, the library collected books to donate to locally stationed troops, and Perley organized a Girls’ Club that collected dolls for English war refugee children. In June 1945, the Northtown Library took part in a University of Chicago adult education program based on reading the classics, the first of several very popular Great Books programs that would occur on and off throughout the remainder of the 20th Century.

In 1946, the library lost its lease on 2502 W. Devon Avenue, and moved two blocks over to 2710 W. Devon Avenue, away from the bustling business district. The library was still outgrowing its space, and in July 1947 the Edgebrook Library opened as a sub-branch of Northtown, with Elizabeth Wieser as assistant librarian under Smith. The space was painted blue and white and contained 3,000 books, half for adults and half for children, with Northtown’s children’s librarians conducting the story hour there once a week. (The Edgebrook library has since moved three times and is now its own branch at 5331 W. Devon Ave.) Like today, space was constantly an issue during the period, with staff having to cram patrons in or find venues outside the library for programs. The advent of television

dropped circulation some, but a fresh influx of families during West Ridge’s growth in the 1950s and 1960s brought it up again. Many empty-nesters became avid readers and brought their grandchildren to the library, bringing circulation in 1957 to 215,000. The demographics of the neighborhood were also becoming more diverse, and community members began organizing to petition the city for another expansion.



North Town Library -Children with rag dolls



North Town Library - Women looking at newspapers.

Construction bids began in September 1960 on the library's current location, 6435 N. California Avenue, which opened January, 1962. 125 feet wide with red brick, the new building included space for 50,000 books (up from 28,000 in the previous location), a multi-purpose room for library-sponsored activities, citizenship and Americanization classes for West Ridge's growing immigrant population, and air conditioning. This was the first location intended as a permanent space, as the Devon locations had all been rented. Interestingly, the 2710 W. Devon Avenue location suffered a \$10,000 fire the week before the move, although most of the books had luckily already been transported. The new library opened with a new Chief Librarian as well, Mrs. Gertrude Gscheidle. Designed by City Architect Paul Gerhardt Jr., the building cost \$174,438.00 to construct and \$56,490.70 to furnish. Despite the expansion, the Northtown Library still struggled with containing and staffing its programs; by 1965 it had the largest circulation of any library in the north side district, with 272,051 books

loaned. The library's popularity continued throughout the century, claiming the highest circulation of any library in the system in 1986.

As the history of the library demonstrates, the Northtown branch has always struggled to find space for its programs. This difficulty was only exacerbated by the growing needs of an increasingly diverse population, and was made considerably worse by the lack of available parking. The library has very few dividing walls, and while this trait gives it an open feel it also

prevents the existence of private study space. In the comments section of the Change.org petition page, many of the signers sadly stated that they drove to other libraries in the suburbs because they did not feel the present building could meet their needs. The petitioners can take heart, however, in knowing that the city has listened to West Ridge petitions in the past to expand or renovate the Northtown Library. □

The Rogers Park / West Ridge Historical Society Store

Your purchases help to support the Society's mission. We have a wide selection of books and other merchandise available for sale at the museum. Below are four of our items.

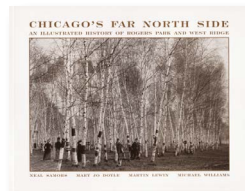
You may order by phone, mail, in our store, or from our website. **Please note, for orders in Illinois, we must charge 9.75% sales tax.** For orders to be shipped, please include \$6 shipping and handling per delivery address.



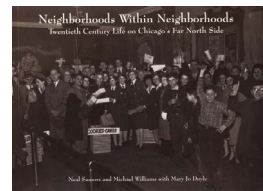
Ceramic "Birches" Mug
Nonmembers: \$4
Members: \$3.25



Canvas Tote Bag
Nonmembers: \$12
Members: \$9.45



Chicago's Far North Side
Nonmembers: \$25
Members: \$20



**Neighborhoods within
Neighborhoods**
Nonmembers: \$25
Members: \$20

Ship to

NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

CREDIT CARD TYPE ☐ MC ☐ VISA ☐ DISCOVER ☐ AmEx

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ BACK _____ EXPIRATION _____

QTY	ITEM	PRICE	S&H (\$6)	TAX	TOTAL
TOTAL ORDER:					

Been in the "hood" a while? Know somebody who has?

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is conducting an ongoing oral history project. We are collecting the memories of those individuals who remember what life was like in Rogers Park and West Ridge "way back when."

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.

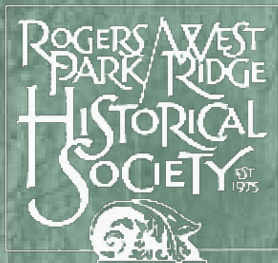
It's one of our most valuable resources. Why not add your old photos to our collection? We will scan them and put them in the Photo Archives. Future generations and today's researchers will thank you for your efforts.

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.

Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society
7363 N. Greenview Avenue, Chicago IL 60626-3481
Call 773-764-4078 or e-mail us at **info@rpwrhs.org**



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| <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL SENIOR MEMBER \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL BENEFACTOR \$250 | |

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I would like to volunteer at the Society