

From the President

I am really happy to finally be able to let all of you read our very first newsletter. Last year when we were celebrating our 10th anniversary, some people were still making the comment "I didn't even know that there was a Rogers Park Historical Society." We felt that we had a great deal of exposure, especially during the last five years when the society participated in many neighborhood street fairs. As far back as 1976, we have presented many programs at the Rogers Park Library, our meeting place, and at various Rogers Park organizations. We have had two historical walks, one down our beloved Rogers Avenue (North Indian Boundary Line) and one to several churches with a reception at the lovely Rogers Park Woman's Club. We helped celebrate the 100th anniversary of the village of Rogers Park with a party in 1978.

Due to the generosity of many long-time residents and friends of this neighborhood, we have been able to collect over 900 photos of this area going back to the 1870's. Copies of these photos are available to students for history projects, to collectors interested in certain topics and to anyone who desires to just purchase one as a fond memory. For that is truly the purposes of our society: To gather and preserve the history of the area known as Rogers Park and to foster and perpetuate an interest in the history of this area.

Along the way, we were also fortunate enough to receive many items regarding farms and greenhouses, churches, schools, businesses and our wonderful directories dated 1897, 1901 and 1915 that contain a wealth of information.

Our hope is that you enjoy the newsletter and if you feel there is something we should cover, please let us know.

Historically yours,
Mary Jo Doyle



Historic Memorabilia

Any visitor to the Rogers Park Library main meeting room generally comments on the Society's permanent collection on display.

It offers a varied collection of memorabilia from the past history of Rogers Park. The collection is periodically updated and we are always looking for additions to our collection.

Take a look around your home or attic for any old photos or small items that may be of interest to the Society.

We will gladly copy the photos and return them to you, if you do not wish to donate them.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thur. May 1- Sat. May 31	Chicago Jewish Historical Society "Maxwell Street — Early Views" at Rogers Park Library
Sat./Sun. May 3-4 Sat. May 17	Prairie Avenue House Walk Oak Park (Wright Plus) House Walk
Sun. May 18	Winnetka Historical Society House Walk
Sat. June 14	Chicagoland Historical Fair (See article on page 3)
Sun. June 29 Fri. July 4	Howard Street Alive! RP Community Council Celebration (Watch for further info)
Sun. Sept. 7	RP Morse Ave. Street Festival
Sun. Sept. 21 Sat. Sept. 27	RP Hist. Society House Tour Loyola-Sheridan Street Fair



Famous Rogers Parkers

Fame is a very **large** word. So can we decide to put our best known friends and neighbors into four groups?

First, those known to us all, fondly, and to Rogers Park, no matter if they were known coast to coast or no further than Evanston: **Next**, those who grew up here and went on to fame . . . they will always be ours. **Third**, those who lived here for awhile, or a lifetime, as famous people.

Finally, those earliest Rogers Park residents who ought to be more than names in a history book.

This column hopes that if you have a "famous favorite" you'll let us know who it is, and what you remember or remember hearing. We'll be keeping a file and it would be wonderful to add details that might otherwise be lost.

We will be mentioning All-Americans and authors; senators and movie stars; a first lady and a heavyweight champ; radio pioneers and explorers; plus the Rogers Parkers you know.

For our first **Famous Rogers Parkers**, we salute two absolutely outstanding men from the group of those who grew up among us. Both have announced retirement and we certainly add our good wishes. The Right Reverend **James Montgomery**, Episcopal Bishop of Chicago, went to Field School. **Norman Ross**, of the First National Bank and a zillion good causes, went to Gale School. We hope that some of their classmates will send some first-hand stories. We promise to share them next time.

Jackie McNicol

What We've Been Doing

Society's 10th Anniversary — In July 1985, the Rogers Park Historical Society celebrated 10 years of growing. We enjoyed an old-fashioned lawn party at member Larry Calhoun's 112 year old home. An enthusiastic gathering of over 100 members and guests enjoyed the catered meal and historic reminiscences.

Historic House Walk — September 1985 brought the first of what we plan to be an annual event, an opening to the public of various historically significant homes in our area. The turnout was more than expected.

Street Fairs — From June to September you could see the Society's booth and displays featured at Howard Street Alive, the Clark Street Merchants, the Morse Avenue Rogers Park Festival, and the Loyola-Sheridan Street Fair to mention a few.



Historic Rogers Park Locations

The first Rogers Park Library was established in 1874 on Clark Street. It was opened by the Rogers Park Woman's Club, who worked as librarians until 1917. It was then taken over by the Chicago Public Library as a deposit station. In December 1917, a circulating branch was opened on Clark Street near Morse Avenue. By 1922, it had outgrown its home and moved to Greenleaf Avenue, east of Clark Street.

In August of 1928, 21,827 were loaned, 2,000 more books than any previous period. A remarkable achievement for the time.

In 1929, the North Shore News proposed a new library as the one on Greenleaf was inadequate. However, it remained there through the Depression and the post war era. During the Depression, the library found it necessary to appeal for donations of books. At one time, the city wanted to close the library.

A disastrous fire struck on January 30, 1951. Though the library was next door to the Fire Station, it burned since it was so cold the hydrants were frozen. Damage was \$45,000. It reopened in 1951 in a store front at 7015 Clark Street.

It wasn't until 1958 that the first library owned building was erected at its present location.

Rogers Park is one of the busiest branches in the system. Between 1958 and 1968, over 2,779,800 books were circulated. Today, the number is approximately 192,000 volumes per year.

Ruth Shatzel

The Way It Was

Summer Evening — two magic words which send my mind racing and my heart surging. It was in the 1940's, and I remember so well the gentle aroma and warmth of summer.

We lived on Albion Avenue — just east of Ravenswood — my husband and myself, and at that time we had two children.

As soon as summer returned, we would walk down to Clark Street, together, meeting and greeting families, many of whom we had not seen through the long winter months. All of us were bound for the same destination — Oris's Pharmacy, at the Southwest corner of Clark and Wallen. It was a small drug store and Alex Oris was a fine pharmacist. However, his second claim to fame was for the homemade ice cream which he dispensed. It became a meeting place for the people in the neighborhood.

As I think back to those days, feelings of both joy and sadness come over me — joy for the beautiful memories it brings to mind and sadness because those days are gone forever.

Jeanette Statland



Spotlight On

During the eighty one years that **Joseph A. (Bill) Fortman** has been a resident of Rogers Park, he has seen it develop from an area of privately owned green houses to a thriving residential and business community.

He and his wife (now deceased) raised three children in the same home where he lived as a child.

In 1842, when his ancestors arrived in the area that is now Rogers Park, land was being sold by the government for \$1.00 to \$1.25 per acre. They subsequently bought a section of land bounded by what is now Pratt to Lunt and Ridge to Western Avenue.

The land was on the "ridge" and was more suitable for farming as the land east to the lake was heavily wooded with considerable marshland. In later years, the property was sold and divided among descendants.

The ancestral home, which Mr. Fortman occupies, was built in 1871. Bricks that survived the Chicago Fire were used for a portion of the building. The Italianate Style, prominent in the Tea Room, has been maintained in its original design throughout the house and attests to the builder's splendid workmanship.

Mr. Fortman is retired from business in the Chicago wholesale flower market, but is active in several community organizations.

He is a member of the Rogers Park Community Council, The Rogers Park Historical Society, Treasurer of St. Henry's Men Club and is the oldest member of the Rogers Park Senior Citizen Advisory Council.

Roseanne Luschnig

CHICAGOLAND HISTORICAL FAIR

On Saturday, June 14th, there is going to be a wonderful event. This first historical fair is being sponsored by the Rogers Park, Irving Park, Norwood Park, Ravenswood-Lakeview and Uptown Historical Societies and by the History Department of Northeastern Illinois University (UNI). It is open to the public free of charge, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm in the Commuter Center Building at the university, which is located at 5500 N. St. Louis (3500 W). In addition to the more than thirty historical societies and related organizations that will be displaying their collections, there will be many programs of general interest (house research, genealogy, history of the Chicago Fire Department, Landmark Preservation, etc.) going on in several classrooms right near the main hall. There will also be displays that were created by some of the students who were winners in the Metro History Fair and some arts and crafts. The hall is located on the ground floor and is easily accessible. Please spread the word to family, friends and neighbors and come out and enjoy the fair.



NOTICE

This newsletter is published by the Rogers Park Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1975 to preserve the roots of our community. Correspondence may be directed to the editor: Laurence A. Calhoun, 1629 W. Morse, Chicago, IL 60626. Contributors: Larry Calhoun, Mary Jo Doyle, Roseanne Luschnig, Jackie McNicol, Martin Schmidt, Ruth Schatzel and Jeanette Statland.



REMEMBER

MEETINGS

1st and 3rd Saturdays
11:30 am — 1:00 pm

Rogers Park Library
6911 North Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60626
764-0156



MEMBERSHIP

Any viable organization thrives on a growing membership. Your annual dues assist greatly in supporting our programs, copying photos and creating the newsletter. We have several projects that are temporarily "on hold" due to a lack of volunteers to assist. Will you pledge an hour a month to help in one of these projects? Please contact Mary Jo at 764-2401.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual dues are \$6.00 per person and
the membership period is from January 1st thru December 31st.

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Home Telephone

Work Telephone

I would like to help the Society when I am available.

Mail to: Mary Jo Doyle
Rogers Park Historical Society
2555 W. Farwell
Chicago, IL 60645

D5



LOVE
USA 22

MEMBER
WORLD'S FAIR
5/22-6/10
CHICAGO, IL

CHICAGO IL 60605
PM
21 APR 1966

Rogers Park Historical Society
2555 W. Farwell
Chicago, IL 60645

ROGERS
P*H*R*K
Historical
Society
Established 1975

072

D7

Our Special Thanks to those who continued to support us throughout the years.

Ace Hardware on Clark
Atlas Stationers
Benefit Trust Life (BTL)
De's Market on Paulina
Graphic House Printing
Hi Neighbor Foods on Howard
Jewel Food

Kadel Drugs
LaChoza Restaurant
Lerner Newspaper
Northshore Camera
Northshore National Bank
Pinewood Lounge
West Ridge News Agency