



The Historian

Preserving and Promoting Neighborhood History

Volume 24, Number 1

Chicago, Illinois

March, 2009

Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society Calendar of Events

Save the Date!

**Spring House Tour:
Germania and East Lake Terrace**
Sunday, May 3, 2009

Board of Directors Scheduled Monthly Meetings

Board Meetings are open to all members and are held at the Society offices, 7344 N. Western Ave. (additional meetings may be called as needed)

Monday, February 23, 7:00 p.m.

Monday, March 23, 7:00 p.m.

Monday, April 27, 7:00 p.m.

Monday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.
(a week early due to Memorial Day)

At press time, no other meetings had been scheduled.

About this issue . . .

This issue was supposed to be out in February. Since February is Black History Month, we had scheduled an article about the Pollard family, the first family of color to move into Rogers Park. Read Afia Ohemeng's account beginning on page 4.

Hank Morris, the Society's new Publications Director, introduces the new publications committee and describes their work. The article begins on page 2.

Jonathan Dixon announces our Spring House Tour on May 3, 2009 on page 10.

The Society's 2009 Annual Meeting

By Jonathan Dixon

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society held its Annual Meeting on Thursday, February 12, 2009, highlighting the Society's achievements in the past year and announcing some major projects in 2009. Since this year's Annual Meeting fortuitously fell on February 12, the Society took the opportunity to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, as well.

The status of the firehouse at 1723 West Greenleaf as our potential new home was a prominent topic. Paul Bluestone, the Society's permanent home task force chair, offered a detailed report on current negotiations with the city in obtaining the firehouse as the Society's new permanent home. He shared some photos and drawings of the building, explaining that the process was underway and would take several months. The presentation answered numerous questions and raised a great deal of interest.

Glenna Eaves, Nancy Jane Lauren, and Maribeth Brewer, also of the Board of Directors, touched upon other initiatives of the Society, including the archiving project, the oral history project, and the important administrative organization of the Society.

The ostensible purpose of the meeting is to have an Annual Election. The slate of candidates included:

- ✓ President: Jonathan Dixon
- ✓ Vice President: Glenna Eaves
- ✓ Treasurer: Carl Lingenfelter
- ✓ Secretary: Sue Kilduski
- ✓ Membership: Karen Tipp
- ✓ Resource Development: Nancy Jane Lauren
- ✓ Events: Colleen Sen
- ✓ Publications: Hank Morris
- ✓ Museum/Archives: Maribeth Brewer
- ✓ Diversity Development: Marcia Hermansen
- ✓ Volunteer Services: vacant
- ✓ Ad Hoc: Paul Bluestone and Jo Stavig

The slate was duly elected.

While everyone enjoyed birthday cake in honor of President Lincoln, Glenna Eaves shared a PowerPoint presentation on the history of Rogers Park she prepared for high school students visiting the Society. With captivating historic photos of the area through the years, and a substantive description of the history of the neighborhood, everyone at the meeting came away with a deeper appreciation for their neighborhood and the Society's mission.

Meet Your New Publications Committee

by Hank Morris, Director of Publications

With the passing of Marty Lewin, the Society had to reexamine the way the newsletter was being produced and how future publications issued by the Society will be handled. To that end, a new Publications Committee was formed. The team will be responsible for:

- ✓ Production of the paper and web-based newsletters.
- ✓ A standardization or "family appearance" of our publications.
- ✓ Production of our publications, such as the House Tour booklets.
- ✓ Sales of the existing and future Society-produced publications.
- ✓ Other such projects as deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.

How are we organized?

The full Publications Committee will be responsible for the various tasks. But, because not everyone is needed to work on every project, some members will be involved in one or more smaller sub-committees, such as the Newsletter Committee, e-Newsletter Committee, etc. Sub-committees will be

established as needed, either permanently or temporarily, to accommodate the various projects requested by the Board of Directors.

Who are we?

The full Publications Committee comprises the following members in alphabetical order:

Maribeth Brewer is the Museum Director and the initiator and manager of our new Constant Contact e-newsletter and is a source for historical content;

Nick Dorochoff has a wide array of IT and publishing skills. He currently assists the Society as our website specialist and technology consultant;

Sharon Hyson is an art therapist and educator as well as the founder of Art for Life. She is a source for art work and oral history content;

Nancy Jane Lauren is the RP/WRHS Resource Development Director, Oral History Program leader and resource for oral history content. She is also an experienced writer, edi-

tor and proofreader currently working on a free-lance basis;

Hank Morris was an engineer for 15 years and a trade-journal editor for 20 years. He has written several books and over 200 by-lined magazine articles.

Denis Paluch is a third-generation printer with experience in printing newsletters. With Kathie, he is a founder of the Greenleaf Art Center. He will assist with general editing and publication activities;

Kathie Paluch is an artist with experience in printing and design. With Dennis, she is a founder of the Greenleaf Art Center. She can assist with layout and graphic design; and,

Sue Sosin was past editor of The Historian and currently acts as proofreader for the newsletter and other publications and maintains our membership records. She will continue as proofreader and is a source for membership information.

(continued on page 10)



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Do We Have Your Email Address?

So far we've sent two issues of our new
Electronic Newsletter.

If you didn't get yours it's because we don't have your email address.

It's a simple enough problem to fix; just send an email asking to be added to the list.

Send it to: rpwrhs@aol.com

The Historian is published
three time a year by the
Rogers Park/West Ridge
Historical Society

Newsletter Staff:

Editor Hank Morris
Managing Editor Nick Dorochoff
Production Nancy Jane Lauren,
Sue Sosin

E-Newsletter Staff:

Editor Maribeth Brewer

Printed by Weber Press
Subscriptions are a benefit of
Society Membership
Circulation: 1,000

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First Thurs. 7 pm – 9 pm
Other Times by Appointment

From The President's Desk

You and I, and all of us, have something in common: we're members of the Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society. We're members of the Society for a lot of reasons. We come from all walks of life, some of us live in the area, some used to live here, and we're different ages and from different backgrounds. But, as members of the Society we share an interest in our community, it's history, and the trajectory of its future. As Society members, we are a meeting of like-minded people with a shared investment in our community.



In the past year, serving as the President of the Society, I have seen again and again how emotionally invested our members are in the Society's success. I'm blown away by that – amazed and delighted. Our community and the Society is in such good hands with so many individuals committed to our success and willing to back up their interest with their time, talent, and dollars.

The proof of such dedication is in your hands right now. This issue of *The Historian* is the result of the hard work of some very important people who have pitched in to fill a vital role, and I want to thank them. You'll see their names in the masthead of the newsletter. The articles in this issue cover the wide range of projects and initiatives the Society has undertaken. Each of those projects involve many hours of dedication from so many Society members, and we extend our gratitude to them, also. I have been so proud of everyone on our Board of Directors and our volunteers who have contributed so much and made such positive things happen.

If you are curious about how you might become more involved in the Society's efforts, we hope to provide you with multiple opportunities to explore that. In future issues of *The Historian* and in our email announcements, we will invite members to participate in particular initiatives and projects. We simply want to provide an avenue for our members to get more involved in activities that interest them, in order to get the most of their membership in the Society, if they are available and interested. We appreciate all levels of membership and participation in the Society.

I feel very happy and am confident that 2009 is going to be a banner year for the Society. I am honored to be a member of the Society along with each of you, and together we can look forward to many good things coming down the road.

—Jonathan

The Forgotten Pollards

By Afia Ohemeng, Loyola U.

Frederick Douglass “Fritz” Pollard (1894-1986) was the first African American head coach to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame (Canton, OH). This honor came in 2005, 19 years after his death. He was a pioneer in the National Football League, and broke racial barriers wherever he went. This world-class athlete was born in Rogers Park on January 27, 1894.

To better understand how Fritz became who he was, it’s important to examine the most influential people in his life, his family.

John William Pollard

Fritz’s father, John William Pollard (1846-1932) was born in Virginia and when he was eight due to a series of incidences in which pro-slavery zealots kidnapped and sold blacks into slavery John’s mother sent him and his sister to be raised and educated in Kansas. John grew up in a time of great instability in this country.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska, opened new lands, repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and allowed settlers in those territories to determine if they would allow slavery within their boundaries. This contributed greatly to the advent of the Civil War in which John participated. In 1862, he was among the first group of blacks to join the Union Army, serving in the 2nd Colored Kansas Regiment.

After service John returned to Kansas. It was during this time that he was encouraged by Hiram Rhodes Revels (1822-1901) and Blanche Kelso Bruce (1841-1898), who would later become the first black U.S. Senators (both from Mississippi), to further his post-secondary education. He was determined to attend Oberlin College (Oberlin, OH) and become a lawyer. However, his quest to obtain a law degree ended when he contracted smallpox. After he recovered, he learned the barber trade from a white man and moved to the town of Mexico, Missouri to ply his trade. It was there that he met his future wife, Catherine Amanda Hughes (1856-1937).

Catherine Amanda Hughes Pollard

Born in Middleton, Missouri, Amanda, as she was called, was an amazing woman of African American, Sioux and French descent. She also finished her schooling, and after marrying John had her first three children: Artissmisia, Luther J., and Willie Naomi. John and Amanda understood the importance of education and did what they could to provide the best for their children.

Settling in Rogers Park

So it was that in 1886, due to rising racial tension in Missouri, John and Amanda decided to move for more educational opportunities to the all-white Village of Rogers Park, Illinois, which was annexed to the City of Chicago in 1896.



John William and Catherine Amanda Pollard

After settling in at 1928 W. Lunt Avenue, Amanda and John had five additional children. The *Chicago Defender* of Sunday, October 9, 1937, says on page 2, “Highly respected, the family enjoyed the distinction of being the only Race group in the entire Rogers Park community.” John set up his barber shop at 7017 East Ravenswood Avenue, which was then in Evanston Township.

Amanda Pollard was an extraordinary strong-willed woman, who was ahead of her time. She was not like most women who stayed at home, took care of children, and performed domestic chores. She defied the concept of conventional roles society had assigned to her, seeking fulfillment outside of the home, and eventually becoming a successful seamstress. Not only did she command at work, she also

managed her priorities at home. She kept the family together through her tough love and high expectations.

According to family members, Amanda never answered the door without carrying a handgun in her apron pocket. Not only did this speak to her bravery and protective behavior, but also, sadly, to the racial discrimination and prejudice of the time. Looking through family documents it is evident that Amanda played a significant role in the family's finances. Many tax documents and checks bear her name, which demonstrates her unconventional role as a woman during the 19th Century.

Artissmisia Pollard

Being fortunate enough to have the support of parents like Amanda and John, it's easy to see how their children set high goals in academics, music, and athletics. The eldest was their daughter, Artissmisia

who attended Brown University and earned a degree in nursing. Just like her parents, she had her own business and was the first black registered nurse in Illinois. Being the oldest and having success, Artissmisia put pressure on her siblings to also do well.

Luther Pollard

Luther, the second born of John and Amanda, was an all-star athlete. In high school he played on the football team and was one of the best pitchers on the baseball team. Luther tried to become a professional baseball player in the major leagues, but was not signed. At that time, no African Americans were allowed on any professional major league baseball team. When he failed to convince the scouts that he was actually a Native American, his baseball dreams were over. This was another racial incident that blacks of this time had to face. Despite the disap-

pointment, Luther still played on an organized Rogers Park team.

Professionally, Luther became a life and accident insurance agent, then worked as a manager of an advertising department. These careers did not completely satisfy him, and so in the spirit of his entrepreneur parents, he launched a lucrative moving picture production company called Ebony Film Corporation. According to stock certificates, his company was worth about \$500,000 which translates to about \$25 million today.

Naomi Pollard

Willie Naomi, the third child of the eight, was one of the first black women to graduate from Northwestern University. According to family members, she was denied admission to Phi Beta Kappa because of her color. Reflecting the value placed on education in her family, she became a school teacher, and then a professor at Wilberforce University (Wilberforce, OH).

Leslie Pollard

Leslie was another star athlete. When he was younger, he played baseball for Grace Sunday School at Washington Park in Chicago's Presbyterian Church League. He went to the North Division High School (aka Lane Tech) and later attended Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH) where he had a superb football career. He helped break racial barriers in college football. He also played a major role in his little brother Fritz's successful professional football career. Leslie, along with older brother Luther, taught Fritz how to



The Pollard Home today, at 1928 West Lunt Avenue

(Continued on page 8)



A vintage photo of the Pollard's home.



John William Pollard.

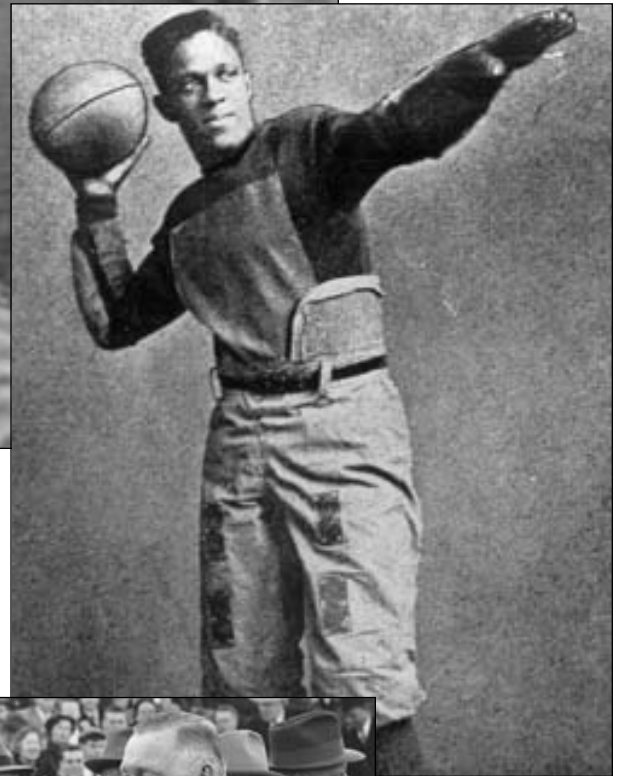


Above, Fritz delivers a speech, with Richard Nixon in attendance. Right, Frederick ("Fritz"), Fritz Jr., and Luther Pollard.





Pollard at Brown University in 1915.



Pollard turns pro in 1919 for Akron. he was also a good passer.



After the 1921 season Pollard was player-coach. Above, he is inducted into the College Hall of Fame in 1954.

(from page 5)

play football. When Fritz wanted to join the Indians, the football team at Albert Grannis Lane Technical High School, the coach initially worried that his small size would be a hindrance. Leslie, who turned out to be a top player on the team, insisted that his brother Fritz be selected; otherwise he would quit the football team. He also gave Fritz tips on using his small stature to his advantage.

Ruth Pollard

Ruth, who unfortunately died at a young age, was another Pollard family athlete who sprinted on the way to glory at Lake View High School.

Hughes Pollard

Hughes was an outstanding football player, but decided a career as a musician better suited him. This flamboyant gentleman joined the highly popular Chicago jazz group called the Melody Four as a drummer. He performed all over Europe and Australia with the group. Then Hugh joined the French army during WWI. Unfortunately, he died of complications as a result of a mustard gas attack.

Frederick Douglass “Fritz” Pollard

Fritz was the best-known of all the Pollard children. He was named for the famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, and was affectionately called Fred until neighborhood residents nicknamed him “Fritz,” a name that stuck with him throughout the rest of his life. In 1912, after a legendary football career at Lane Tech High School, where he was also a baseball play-

er and three-time county track champion, he graduated.

After Lane, Fritz played football briefly for Northwestern, Harvard, and Dartmouth. In 1915, he received a Rockefeller scholarship to attend Brown University (Providence, RI). At Brown, Fritz was one of two blacks enrolled in the school. The other was Mayo “Ink” Williams who played end on Brown’s football team, the Bears, while Fritz played halfback (1915-1916). This was during a time when only 50 blacks attended predominantly white American universities. Due to the intense racial prejudice of that time, competitors and spectators assaulted him physically and mentally both on and off the field. Fortunately, Fritz was able to rise above these obstacles.

Fritz’s high-level of skill made him one of the top players in the country. He was the second African-American to be named to a college All-American team, with the distinction of being the first in the backfield position. In 1916, he was the first black to play in the Rose Bowl, the premier college football game. Although Fritz was unable to continue at Brown due to “academic neglect,” among his many lifetime accomplishments, he was the recipient of an honorary doctorate from Brown University in 1981.

In 1954, Fritz was the first African American to be elected into the National Football Foundation’s College Football Hall of Fame (South Bend, IN).

Fritz had the potential to become a great major league baseball player, but encountered the same racial problems his older brother Luther

had faced. He was the first black quarterback in the American Football Association, later to be known as the NFL. He feuded with the well-known Bears owner and coach George Halas, who lived in West Ridge, claiming that Halas was a racist.

After his football career ended he helped found the all-black football team called the Chicago Blackhawks (1929-1932) which played against white teams around Chicago, but enjoyed their greatest success by scheduling exhibition games against West Coast teams during the winter months. He was ultimately inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

Fritz was involved in several business enterprises. He began an investment firm that served the African American community in 1922, and after its bankruptcy in 1931 he ran a coal company in New York. He then entered journalism where, in 1935, he founded the *New York Independent News*, which was the first black tabloid. It survived until 1942.

Following his brother Hugh’s lead, Fritz tried his luck in the entertainment business. He became a casting agent during the production of the 1933 film *The Emperor Jones*. Later on he began producing short music videos, called “Soundies,” featuring black entertainers for the Soundies Distribution Corporation of America. The company was sold after World War II.

Frederick Douglass “Fritz” Pollard, Jr.

Talent, as we’ve seen, ran in the Pollard family, so it is no surprise that it was passed on to Fritz

Pollard's son Fritz Jr. (1915-2003). As an outstanding student and athlete in football and track at Nicholas Senn High School, he was able to work his way into the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He shared the track with fellow well-known running mates and friends Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalf. Along with his teammates, Fritz, Jr. was able to discredit odious claims that blacks were inferior in sports. Even though Fritz, Jr. brought home a bronze

medal in the 110 meter low hurdles, he was still ridiculed. A 1936 article in the *New York Evening Journal* pokes fun at black Olympic athletes with the headline "All Gods Chillun' Got Wings."

Fritz, Jr. attended the University of North Dakota where he was a running back on the Fighting Sioux, their football team, and in 1938, like his father, was named to an All-American football team

Seeing how they have fought through obstacles to achieve accomplishments that are amazing even by today's standards, Rogers Park's Pollard family exemplified excellence in every sense of the word. The family produced some of the best athletes, business people, and healthcare providers. Unfortunately, today these great people are hardly recognized and have all but been forgotten in time.

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About the author: Afia Ohemeng is a second-year Chemistry student at Loyola University, Chicago. She is from Oak Park, IL. This is her first published article.

Do You Know?

"From time to time, we receive inquiries from the public on specific historical topics. Unfortunately, we do not always have the internal resources to answer the question." Thus began an e-mail that resulted in this new feature. Each issue we will pose a question or publish a photo we receive that we need to research further to be able to provide an answer. So we're asking the members if they have any knowledge that will help unravel these mysteries. We intend to publish the correct answers in a subsequent issue.

As space permits, we will publish a question or photo or, in some instances, both. Send your replies to Hank Morris, c/o RP/WRHS, 7344 N. Western Ave. or to rpwrhs@aol.com. Those providing the correct answers will be credited in a following issue.

This issue's question was received over the phone.

A woman who grew up in the area asked for "any information there is to be had about Pingree Street, when the street name change took place and what happened to the individual for whom the street was named?"



"What and where is mystery photo 1 located?"

Annual House Tour Announced

By Jonathan Dixon

Mark your calendars for the Society's Annual House Tour on May 3, 2009!

Where did WBBM radio get its call letters? Why is Howard Street the boundary between Chicago and Evanston – except east of the “L”? Who is Willye B. White? Where is “Germania”?

The answers to these questions are tied to the unique history of the far northeastern corner of Rogers Park. The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is pleased to announce its 2009 House Tour and History Walk featuring Germania and Eastlake Terrace. This year's tour will feature homes, condos, historic sites, and commercial buildings along Howard Street,

north of Howard, and along Eastlake Terrace. This corner of our community boasts some spectacular architecture and some very intriguing historical secrets. This area also has an exciting present and future, with a brand new “L” stop at Howard Street and a number of new developments with an influx of new residents.

This year's tour will feature guided tours as well as self-guided tours, so attendees can feel free to go at their own pace, or they can take in the sites as a group. The Society is partnering with a number of community organizations to present a fun, safe, educational, and secure event – and a number of surprises are in store! This is a house tour that you can't miss!

Publications Committee

(from page 2)

We are fortunate that the various members of the Publications Committee come to us with wide and varied talents and experiences in the printing and publishing industries. Their abilities will be put to great use for the betterment of all concerned.

The Newsletter Committee will, for now, be made up of Nick Doro-choff, Jr., Nancy Jane Lauren, Hank Morris, and Sue Sosin.

The e-Newsletter Committee will be Maribeth Brewer, Nick Dorochoff, Jr., and Hank Morris.

The Committee wants you to know that we're constantly looking for article submissions and article ideas. You don't have to be a writer. We can do this for you. Likewise, you don't have to be a great researcher. We know how.

We want your input and will work with you to ensure that, whether you submit an article or an idea, it will be given whatever assistance it needs to make the final results something of which you'll be proud.

Do We Have Your Email Address?

So far we've sent two issues of our new
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(Continued from page 12)

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 for your continued
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Memberships through Jan. 31, 2009



Been in the "hood" a while?

Know somebody who has?

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is conducting an on-going oral history project. We're 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 about our neighborhoods before all the complexities of "modern life" settled in. You'll gain a personal insight into peoples' lives that help characterize the area in a way history books can't.

Memories are precious. Whether they're yours, a friends or a relatives. Help preserve our community's past through oral history today.

You can reach Nancy Jane Lauren to arrange an interview at:

773-338-5365

or

nancyjanel Lauren@sbcglobal.net



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Swanette Triem
Lily Venson
Margo Viscusi
Gary Widen
Jerome Yanoff

Family

Greg & Maribeth Brewer
Jim Brusek & June Macchiaverna
and Jana Brusek
Nick Dorochoff & Joe Beason
Dan & Carolyn Goffman
Edward & Emily Gross
Michael & Molly Hapner and
Helen & Brigit
Chris Kopp & Martha Campbell
Michael O'Connor & Sara Mauk
O'Connor
Joe & Peggy Penkrot
Ed & Em Rappaport
(Continued on page 11)

*3 year membership

Memberships through Jan. 31, 2009



Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society
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Hours: Open Wed. & Fri. 1 pm – 5 pm
First Thurs. 7 pm – 9 pm

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Spring House Tour—May 3
See page 10 for details