



Volume 27, No. 3  
Summer 2011

Upcoming Events

Second Saturday  
at the Society Lectures

Saturdays  
July 9  
August 13  
September 11  
from 10:30 a.m. to noon  
at the Society

Save the Date for  
Open House Chicago  
October 14–16

Watch for more  
information in our next  
newsletter

Board of Directors  
Monthly Meetings

All meetings are held on  
the fourth Monday of  
each month at 7 p.m. at  
the Society—1447 W.  
Morse, and are open to  
all members

July 25  
August 22  
September 26

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# The Historian

Preserving and Promoting Neighborhood History

## Historic Morse Avenue and the Glenwood Arts District Explored at Society's 25th Annual House Tour

by Jonathan Dixon

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is proud to be a new part of the neighborhood on Morse Avenue so we decided to spotlight our new 'hood for our 25th Annual House Tour!

This year's tour took place on Sunday May 1st and featured homes, houses of worship, art spaces, and commercial buildings on Morse Avenue, Glenwood Avenue and the surrounding blocks. We welcomed many of our members and participants from the community for the Society's most popular annual event.

Each year the Society uncovers new features and points of interest in our Rogers Park/West Ridge community, and this year's tour was another milestone in that tradition. The history of Morse Avenue—notable for such well-remembered establishments as Ashkenaz Deli and the Top Hat—had not been included in the Society's prior tours. It was especially poignant to feature the commercial development of Morse in light of the strip's recent revival! It was also significant to acknowledge the extraordinary arts district that now exists along Glenwood Avenue, the artist studios and the Mile of Murals, which have brought an infusion of culture and beauty to the community.

It was an honor to include two significant houses of worship, which mark the religious culture of the community, past and present. The United Church of Rogers Park has been



The House Tour featured a number of lovely homes in the area, like this one on Lunt Avenue. (Photo by Ken Cronk)

operating for over a century and continues to be a pillar for social and religious services in the neighborhood. Congregation B'nai Zion's history reflects the development of the neighborhood in the early and middle decades of the 20th century. It was a pleasure to see that the building has been so well maintained and to share so many memories with former members of the congregation who attended the tour.

Since moving to 1447 W. Morse in October, 2010, the Society has been well received in the new neighborhood, and we are grateful to our new neighbors for participating in our successful 25th annual house tour! A very warm thank you goes especially to the homeowners and volunteers who made the event possible!

See all of you next year for our 26th Annual House Tour!

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Historical Society**

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2011-2012**

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## Second Saturday at the Society a Hit!

by Jonathan Dixon

*Second Saturday at the Society*, a new program launched this year in the Society's new museum space, is officially a HIT! Topics of interest from our past programs have included Angel Guardian Orphanage, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, the history of Chicago's L system, and the development of the area from farmland to urban neighborhoods. On June 11th we welcomed Will Rye and his colleagues from the Edgewater Historical Society for a discussion of the history of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered community on the North Side. The Edgewater Historical Society is launching a new exhibit on the subject entitled "Edgewater Pride: From Oppression to Expression." There are many more interesting topics planned.

On July 9th we will feature Society board member Samantha Hudson, who will be

speaking about how to research the history of your home. From the many inquiries we get on this topic we know that this will be a very interesting program, and we are pleased to bring it as part of an ongoing series for our members. This coming October *Second Saturday...* will feature "Open House Chicago," a joint project by the RP/WRHS and the Chicago Architecture Foundation that will be held in October 2011.

Held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Society, each *Second Saturday...* features a different topic and speaker. Attendance is free to Society members, with a suggested donation of \$5 for nonmembers.

If you haven't had the opportunity to attend the program, you won't want to miss one of our upcoming sessions.

*If it's the second Saturday of the month, we're meeting, and you're invited!*

## Society Honors Memorial Day with Talk from Author of *Finding Granddad's War*

by Jonathan Dixon

Building upon the success of our programs in our new museum space, the Society held its first Sunday afternoon event over Memorial Day weekend with a program by author Jeffrey Badger, who spoke about his book *Finding Granddad's War*. The inspiration for the book came from his grandfather's World War II stories. Unfortunately, his grandfather passed away before the author was born, but when he researched his grandfather's service in the war, it produced a gold mine. Some of

his grandfather's old war buddies were able to shed some light on the past with some unknown stories and details about his grandfather's life. Through this discovery, the author has gained a new appreciation for national service and family connections.

Thematically perfect for Memorial Day, the event was well attended by both Society members and nonmembers, as well as some first time visitors to the Society. All came to hear the author's story on this special topic, which touched upon genealogical research, American history, and his grandfather's Chicago roots.

## The Historian

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**Starting Next Issue:**  
*The Historian* will include a feature that welcomes and introduces new and continuing volunteers.

## From the President's Desk

by Paul Bluestone

You can choose your metaphor, grabbing the baton or jumping onto a moving train. They both describe my feelings about assuming the presidency from Jonathan Dixon at this point in the Society's history. Jonathan has led the Society tirelessly and well for three years and has seen it through times of remarkable change. Many of these changes are still underway. It will be a challenge for me to lead as well as he has and to keep up the pace and breadth of reinvention that has come to characterize us all.



But speaking of pace of change, let me change the pace for a minute and tell you a little about where I've come from. I have had a 25-year career in Chicago's museums, most of it at the Field Museum and Shedd Aquarium, where I helped see that institution through a similarly dynamic period of transformation as VP of Planning and Design for eight years. I then left to open my own office (which I still run), where we research, write, design, and build exhibits for museums, botanical gardens, visitors centers—just about anyone who will have me. My passion is storytelling, through exhibits and interpretive graphics, and what most intrigues me about my work is the chance to surprise an unsuspecting audience with stories they just didn't know were there. To be able to do that and to offer that experience to the public for free is the best of all worlds for me.

And that brings me right back to today and to what we are trying to do here in what some call the little sidewalk history store in the middle of Rogers Park. With the constant stream of pedestrian traffic moving by our windows, we now have the chance to bring the history of the West Ridge and Rogers Park neighborhoods to whole new audiences, many with little prior exposure to either history or museums. Just to watch as they slow down, peek warily into the windows at first, then stare and wonder before being welcomed in by one of our volunteer greeters is a very satisfying experience for me. Then, to watch their

faces as they begin to see and hear the hidden stories of their neighborhood—the birch forest, the streetcars, the ball fields, the greenhouses, and the movie palaces. Hearing the inevitable “That is really cool!” or “I didn't know that” tips you off that this grand experiment of ours is actually working.

We will welcome in our 1,000th visitor any day now. That means that 1,000 people have come in to check us out just since that stormy December 12th opening day. This amount of exposure is a new and exciting world for all of us. As I mentioned at the outset, we are reinventing ourselves. We have quickly adjusted to the new surroundings we find ourselves blessed with and we are working diligently to fulfill our vision for a new Historical Society; a vision that our Board and leadership group has hammered out over the past two years. We are all caught up in the excitement of this change. It is a grand experiment for us, and we're learning as we go. The laboratory for this experiment is at 1447 W. Morse. Why don't you come and see us? Or better yet, come and pitch in. We can use all the help we can get!

So, jump on the bus or grab a baton, but come over and check us out. And whatever you do, please don't jump on any moving trains!

See you at the HS.

Paul

### Membership as of June 1, 2011

#### Welcome New Members!

##### Individual

Oscar Arriola  
Rebecca Avick  
Ann Marie Caughron  
Patricia Duff  
Autumn Franger  
Terry Glenn  
James Hayes  
Ellie Kalish  
Richard Rouse  
Adrian Ruddock  
Sue Stupay

##### Family

Bradley & Marlese Adams  
Matt Badanes & Carolyn Hyson  
Rusty Burnette & Bill DeMarco  
Tom Cox & Stella DeAngelo and Zachary & Zoe Cox  
Larry Dieckmann & Joanne Sylvester  
Sara Johnson Family  
Kelly McNeas Family  
Roger Menning & Betsy Downs  
Colin Peters & Erica Ernst  
Rob & Liz Richardson  
Mark Rund & Susan Spreiter

##### Senior

Anthony Alfaro  
Ronald Heister  
John Keller  
Gary Miller  
Robert Postal  
*(continued on page 5)*

# An Oral History of Bob Luce

by Nancy Jane Lauren

*This article is based on a story that first appeared in the Winter of 2009 in “History Comes Alive,” a regular feature in the RP2000 newspaper.*

**B**ob Luce grew up in Rogers Park/West Ridge, like many of his ancestors. Although Bob grew up in the 1920s, his history really begins as far back as 1840, the year his great, great grandfather, Johann Peter Schmidt, left Germany and sailed to the United States. Johann built the first log cabin on Ridge close to Pratt in 1841. Later, his son, Peter Schmidt, Jr., built a home of his own just to the north and then in 1871 built another at 6836 Ridge. This home has remained in Bob’s extended family on his mother’s side for almost 140 years (now the home of David Fortman, a relative on his mother’s side). Close to the turn of the century, Peter’s son, Michael Schmidt, built a white farmhouse for his family that still stands proudly at 1954 W. Farwell at the bottom of the ridge. Bob Luce, Michael Schmidt’s grandson, spent his childhood and early adulthood in the Rogers Park/West Ridge area. Most of it was spent in that white farmhouse.

Bob Luce was born on October 1, 1922. His first memory of Rogers Park is of a cave. Oh, it wasn’t really a cave as much as a gangway that led to his back porch, but when Bob was just two years old, that’s what it looked like to him. His family first lived on Greenleaf and Paulina in an apartment across the street from the old firehouse, which is still there. He still remembers a public library across the alley, now long gone. Bob had several homes in the neighborhood as he was growing up, but when he was still in grade school, his family settled into that white farmhouse on Farwell. His



**The 1871 Fortman home on Ridge Avenue. (Photo by Nancy Jane Lauren)**

grandfather had long since passed away and his grandmother, living there alone, needed the family’s help. So Bob’s family took over the house and converted the top floor into an apartment for his grandmother. Bob ultimately lived there with his wife and two daughters until 1955, when they sold it.

Around the corner from the house on Farwell lived the Fortman family, cousins on his mother’s side. With their six or eight kids, Bob had no shortage of playmates. He remembers cherry trees, crabapple groves, his grandmother’s homemade crabapple jelly and lots of wide-open space. He and his friends had their choice of playgrounds. From Farwell to Pratt, from Ridge west to the alley—all was vacant land. There was also 200 feet of open space between his house and Ridge, where an apartment building stands today. A kid can do a lot with all that space! When Bob and a friend

became interested in archery, they had plenty of room to practice. They first made a straw target on the west side of the house but lost too many arrows to the brick wall. Next, they built a backstop several feet wide that was a foot from the wall. They stood on the high ground on the west side of Ridge and shot arrows across the street. After a year, the city voiced some objections; something about the backstop near his house and building codes.

Bob used to ride his bike everywhere, and he and his friends would play hide and seek in the open areas behind the weeds. That’s when he discovered the holes—huge holes. Holes big enough to hide in! And holes, he would eventually discover, that had actually been dug years ago by his uncles when they were children playing soldiers in the trenches.

Kids growing up in the years before World War II played baseball and kick-the-can during the summer but in the winter there was still plenty to do. For many years, the police would put up a barricade at the top of the hill where Farwell crossed Ridge, and they would open a fire hydrant to flood the street. Kids from all over would come by with their sleds. According to Bob, on a good day your ride would be two blocks long.

Preteen years for Bob were pretty exciting. During the years of the World's Fair (1933–1934), when Bob was 11, his father was with a soft drink company. He handled the mechanical end and had a fleet of delivery trucks that all used Goodyear tires. At age 11 Bob was able to enjoy one of the perks of his dad's job and was invited to take a free ride on the Goodyear blimp, an experience he never forgot. In 1934, when Bob was 12, his father taught him how to drive. On Sunday they would practice at a wide-open spot west of McCormick and north of Howard. The streets were paved but there were not many buildings yet.

Bob remembers that fruit and vegetables, milk, ice, and coal were all delivered by horse-drawn wagons, but he especially remembers the Bowman Dairy horses. They knew their routes by heart. Often the milkman would get off the wagon with his milk, cut across front yards to make deliveries and the horse would go on ahead and meet him at his next stop, even if the next stop had canceled delivery for that day!

Coal delivered to the house on Farwell was carried around back and dumped through a basement window into the coal bin. Bob remembers that his father got tired of shoveling coal to stoke the furnace and installed a stoker, a hopper with a tube at the bottom leading to the furnace. Coal was loaded into the hopper and was automatically fed into the furnace, quite a luxury after shoveling it by hand. But at



The Luce farmhouse on Farwell Avenue. (Photo by Nancy Jane Lauren)

times, the fire would go out as the stoker continued to feed coal and there would be quite a mess to clean up. Even with the mechanical stoker, Bob and his father still had to shake the grates and shovel out the ashes, which were dumped in the alley. Eventually the furnace was converted to burn oil.

Looking back on all these years, Bob said that growing up in Rogers Park, even during the Depression, was a happy time. He was surrounded by family and friends and, as a kid, had his share of adventures. Basically, life was good.

*You will soon be able to hear Bob's story in his own voice on recording at the Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society. This and many others like it are part of a growing collection of oral history interviews that the Society is conducting to preserve local history. Ultimately, these personal accounts become an important and treasured window to years past. They will offer our future generations a rare opportunity to hear about what life was like long ago in our beloved neighborhoods—they will hear it through the voice of the person who lived it.*

(continued from page 3)

**New Members**

**Senior (continued)**

Pat Shaw  
Malaika Tolford

**Senior Family**

Cleo & Pat Husband

**Student**

Samantha Hudson

**Business**

Tim & Sally Plum,  
Firehouse Studios

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**Thanks for Renewing!**

**Individual**

Jonathan Dixon  
George Glastris  
Barry Katz  
David Marshall  
Phillip McGovern  
Susan Olin  
Margaret Redlich  
Kathy Swanson  
Linda Winke

**Family**

John Corcoran &  
Laura Jenkins  
Christine Ellicott &  
Christine Inserra  
Edward Glen &  
Marcee Williams  
Harry & Robin Hunter  
Ed & Peggy Niimi  
Denis & Kathie Paluch  
James & Sandi Price  
(continued on page 7)

# Let's All Go to Kiddieland!

by Hank Morris

Those of us who lived in Rogers Park or West Ridge before 1975 probably remember Hollywood Kiddieland. This was a small amusement park, designed for kids, on the southeast corner of Devon Avenue and McCormick Boulevard. It was not affiliated with the Melrose Park Kiddieland, which closed last year.

Hollywood Kiddieland was hugely popular from the late 1950s into the 1960s. The park offered a “fire truck” home pickup for those neighborhood kids who were attending birthday parties being held on Kiddieland’s grounds.

Kiddieland offered an ample assortment of rides for the younger set, a small roller coaster, merry-go-

round, boat ride, helicopter ride, and train ride. There were also rides that could accommodate an accompanying parent or older sibling, including a tilt-a-whirl, roller coaster, Ferris wheel, and merry-go-round, to name a few. RPWR/HS member Glenn Sotzky remembers that most of the rides were not taken down and stored for winter; just covered up for protection from the elements.

Kiddieland was also a regular stop for teens in the area. Adjacent to the park were the popular batting cages, miniature golf, and a bounceland full of giant inflatables. Additionally, you could get your junk food fix at the concession stand. If the whole deal became boring to teens, they could just walk a block over to Thillens stadium and watch a baseball game.



Above Right: A 1956 ad promises fun for all. Above: Enjoying one of the many rides at Hollywood Kiddieland. (Photographer unknown)

## How it all started—

When he was a teenager, Edward L. “Buddy” Klatzco’s (1930–2000) parents and brother, Richard, opened Hollywood Kiddieland.

When Buddy returned home after serving in the army during the Korean War, he started Hollywood Miniature Golf next to Kiddieland and added batting cages in 1966. Also in the mid-1960s, the Klatzco family bought Novelty Golf and Games in Lincolnwood, which is still in business after 60+ years.

Retired Police Captain Louis Klatzco (1892–1956), the Commander in March 1950 of the Fillmore Police Station (3340 W. Fillmore Street, now closed), resigned in 1951 to become part owner of Hollywood Kiddieland and adjoining attractions.

**5<sup>c</sup> DAY AT**  
**HOLLYWOOD KIDDELAND**  
KIMBALL AND DEVON  
(NO BOTTLE CAPS REQUIRED)  
*Every Monday thru August*  
13 RIDES PLUS ARCADE  
**FUN FOR ALL**  
*Special Rates for Clubs and Organizations*  
We Pickup Birthday Parties  
with FIRE ENGINE  
Birthday Present and Favors for All  
**HOLLYWOOD KIDDELAND**  
KIMBALL & DEVON  
Art Gould IN 3-9446

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Jun 17, 1956 pg. N5

In 1955, the five Acciari brothers bought Hollywood Kiddieland from the Klazcos. Their purchase included 18 rides and the refreshment stands. They added an arcade for the 1958 season. The Klazcos kept title of the land, plus the batting cages and miniature golf course. (For forty years the Acciari family also owned Roma's pizzeria, then located on the corner of Sheffield and Webster, in the DePaul University neighborhood).

In the late sixties, ride tickets cost 20 cents each, six for a buck. Earlier on, Kiddieland offered free tickets in exchange for the cardboard caps from glass milk bottles. Mothers all over Rogers Park, West Ridge, and surrounding neighborhoods saved them over the winter. Opening day saw kids and moms arriving at the Hollywood Kiddieland ticket booth with their "pots

Above Right: A coupon for free popcorn brought 'em in in 1967. Right: The front gate (RPWRHS photo Ro44-2076).



Above and right: Many children fulfilled their fantasy of riding in a helicopter or flying a plane at Kiddieland. (Photographer unknown)



of gold," large bags bulging with milk bottle caps.

The Klatzco family closed Hollywood Kiddieland, the batting cages, miniature golf, etc. in 1975. It is now the location of a car wash and a now-closed movie theater.

Today, Hollywood Kiddieland lives on, but only in our memories.

(continued from page 5)

**Renewals**

**Family (continued)**

Christopher Rutt & Cheryl Bye

**Senior**

James Corman

Judith Gordon

Doris Hoyne

Gail Isaacson

Ken Kopper

Michael Pack

Carl Robst

Ted Roseman

Janet Royce

Mervyn Ruskow

John Schroeder

Suzy Travers-Byster

Susan Varno

**Senior Family**

Milton & Joan Blum

Leonard & Darlene Bock

Sandy & Carol Goldman

Harold & April Hansen

Roy & Norma Luce

Alexander & Katherine MacGregor

John & Pat O'Neal

Ashish & Colleen Taylor Sen

David & Ingrid Stalle

Renee & Jane Sullivan

Michael & Karen Tipp

**Sponsor**

Frank Pokorny & Nancy Jane Lauren

**Business**

Devon Bank



**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.

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 Nancy Jane Lauren to arrange an interview at: 773-338-5365 or [nancyjanel Lauren@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nancyjanel Lauren@sbcglobal.net)**

## Your Opinion Matters . . .

In the last year, the Rogers Park / West Ridge Historical Society has moved to a new home and launched a number of new programs. Over the last seven months, we have had nearly 1,000 visitors to our new home on Morse Avenue. The Second Saturday series has been a popular addition to our events schedule, and the organization is coordinating the North Side events for Open House Chicago, a city-wide event sponsored by the Chicago Architecture Foundation in October.

This revitalization could not be possible without the support of our members, volunteers, guests, and freinds. As we continue to grow our programming, we need to understand the interests of our members and patrons. So *we are preparing a survey to gather information that will help make our programs more responsive to the interests and needs of the community.* Watch for more information on our website regarding this effort.

## . . . and Your Help is Needed

It is your Society, and we can't do what we do without you!

If you are interested in assisting the survey team, send an email to [survey@rpwrhs.org](mailto:survey@rpwrhs.org). You can also stop by between 2 and 7 pm or call 773-764-4078 to indicate your interest.

### Do You Know?

What do you know about this house?  
Send your solution to [rpwrhs@aol.com](mailto:rpwrhs@aol.com).  
The first person that correctly identifies the house gets a copy of one of our two Society-published books.



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