



# The Historian

Preserving & Promoting Neighborhood History

Volume 28, No. 3  
Summer 2012

**Second Saturday  
at the Society Lectures**

Saturdays

September 8  
October 6  
November 10  
December 8  
January 12, 2013

from 10:30 a.m. to noon  
at the Society

**Board of Directors  
Monthly Meetings**

September 24  
October 22  
November 26  
December 17  
January 23, 2013

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

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## openhousedchicago – Year Two

by Hank Morris



Mile of Murals, Photo Courtesy of Chicago Architecture Foundation

In its inaugural year, openhousedchicago, produced by the Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) in partnership with your Society, was conducted over the October 15-16 weekend. Needless to say, it was a very successful event with 85,000 people visiting, 131 sites, city-wide. The Rogers Park/West Ridge area had 3,000 persons visiting our 22 locations some 12,000 times, in all.

So, this October 13-14 weekend, approximately 150 sites throughout Chicago will, once again, be open for visitation during this annual weekend festival of FREE behind-the-scenes

access to many of Chicago's greatest places and spaces. We will have 16 such sites in Rogers Park (11) and West Ridge (5) this year. The hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except where noted. Wear comfortable shoes.

The original premise for openhousedchicago was: you pass an interesting building and wonder, "What's it like inside?" That's what openhousedchicago is all about. This is not a house tour, per se. All of the properties visited are commercial. And, each has a special something that will be available for your inspection as you go from site to site. Like last year, it should be a lot of fun.

See Locations on page 6

Rogers Park /  
West Ridge  
Historical Society

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2012–2013

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## Our Second Neighborhood 'Gangsta' Tour

by Colleen Sen



Photo Courtesy of Colleen Sen

A spring shower didn't stop Society members from enjoying the Society's second neighborhood Gangster Tour on Sunday, May 2. The tour was conducted by Board members Glenna Eaves and Colleen Sen.

From the "Roaring Twenties" onward, West Ridge was home to some of the city's most notorious crime figures, who were attracted by the fine homes and peaceful environment. This was the stomping ground of North Side crime boss George "Bugs" Moran, Al Capone's main rival for control of the city's rackets.

Stops on the tour included the outsides of the homes of Big Tim Murphy, union organizer, racketeer, and North Side gambling baron; Jack Zuta, Bugs Moran's business manager and mob enforcer; and Joey Aiello, sworn enemy of Al Capone, and known as the toughest gangster in Chicago. Most of them met an untimely end. Murphy was even gunned down right on his own front lawn on Morse Avenue! You can see the bullet holes in the house to this day.

Just as they reached Colleen Sen's house (scene of a notorious break-in and murder in 1930), a violent storm broke out. So the group adjourned to Colleen's house for a glass of wine and an informal seminar on North Side gangster lore.

## Second Saturday Lectures *September -December*

### openhousedchicago 2012

September 8, 2012

Speakers: Caroline Stevens and Bas Bouma

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is proud to be a co-sponsor, along with the Chicago Architecture Foundation, of the second annual openhousedchicago. Join us on September 8 at 10:30 for a preview of this year's openhousedchicago, which plans to offer free, "behind the scenes" access to Gallery B.1.E, Casa Bonita, Cat's Cradle Bed and Breakfast, Loyola University's Mundelein College Building, Loyola University's Richard Klarchek Information Commons, Indian Boundary Cultural Center, Lifeline Theater, United Church of Rogers Park, Mayne Stage/Act One Pub, Park Castle and Park Gables, St. Scholastica Monastery Chapel, Uncommon Ground, and the Rogers Park West Ridge Historical Society.

### Giants in the Park

October 6, 2012

Speaker: Krista August

Chicago's Lincoln Park is one of the most celebrated and historic parks in the United States. Join us on October 6 for a presentation by author Krista August for a discussion of the significant history of the statues throughout the park. Copies of Ms. August's book, *Giants in the Park*, will be for sale following the presentation.

**Note:** October's "Second Saturday" presentation is being held on a special date due to openhousedchicago 2012 on October 13 and 14.

### Chicago Fashion History

November 10, 2012

Speaker: Mary Beth Klatt

Join us on November 10 for a fascinating look into the history of the fashion industry

in Chicago. Our featured speaker will be author Mary Beth Klatt, a leading local writer who is particularly noted for her historical work. Copies of Ms. Klatt's book, *Chicago's Fashion History*, will be for sale after the presentation.

### Oral History Project

December 8, 2012

Speaker: Nancy Jane Lauren

"Second Saturday at the Society" is pleased to wrap up its second year with another program spotlighting The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society's oral history project. Last year's oral history program was an audience favorite, and we aim to top that this year! We will feature an oral history demonstration and open our discussion to audience members' oral histories, also!

### Society's Annual House Tour Goes West!

by Jonathan Dixon

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society held its annual house tour on Sunday, June 10, 2012. This year's tour featured the unique history of the Deer Park development around Francisco and Pratt in West Ridge.

The homes of Deer Park were built in the late 1940s as a "Neighborhood of Prize Homes." The tour spotlighted 10 houses that were part of the original Deer Park development. Our intrepid and loyal tour attendees enjoyed learning about this little-known, yet fascinating, mini-neighborhood within West Ridge, and how each home was originally furnished by a different prominent downtown department store, and how the homes have been added to and changed over the years.

The Society extends warm thanks to all who attended, as well as to Hank Morris who originated the idea of featuring Deer Park on this year's house tour. The Society further acknowledges the planning committee, consisting of Colleen Sen, Jonathan Dixon, Margaret Ferguson, Sue Kilduski, and Kay McSpadden. Thanks go also to the many volunteers who assisted on the day of the tour to make it a success!

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### Membership as of September 1, 2012

#### Welcome New Members

##### Individual

- Wendy Bright
- Valerie Cantor
- Phil Carlsen
- Ruth Craig
- Marilyn Domsky
- Rita Horovicz
- Mark Mizell
- John Norquist
- Kathleen Sheil
- Jennifer Tyska

##### Household

- Azaka Ajanaku & Eileen Bellabe
- Anita Loomis-Yamaguchi Household
- Krisann Rehbein & Joe Sexauer

##### Senior

- Joyce Ovaert
- Linda Papish
- Kathleen Walsh White

#### Thanks for Renewing

##### Individual

- Stuart Alpern
- Wynne Delacoma
- Patricia Duff
- Judith Flapan
- Autumn Franger
- Christina Guswiler
- James Hayes
- Barry Katz
- Vicki Kruzel
- Phillip McGovern
- Suzanne Meyering
- (in memory of Hope Johnson)
- Donald Sprague
- Amy Windler
- Linda Winke
- Larry Yablong

##### Household

- Richard & Kathy Anderson
- Cheryl Bye & Christopher Rutt
- David & Leigh Ferguson
- Ann & Frank Glapa
- Harold & April Hansen
- Jeffrey & Molly Hapner and Helen Cleo & Pat Husband
- Carolyn Hyson & Mark Badanes
- Carl Lingenfelter & Stacia Smith
- Michael & Angela Morrow
- Edward & Peggy Niimi
- Michael & Sara O'Connor
- Jason & Kathryn Richards
- Dan & Cathy Schwegel
- Greg & Margaret Wojcick

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**Senior**  
Ed Bush

James Corman  
Robert Dostal  
Anthony Eberhart  
Joe Gutstadt  
Betty Hopkins  
Doris Hoyne  
Barbara Isaacson  
John Keller  
Ken Kopper  
John Lee  
Virginia Palmer  
Betty Raef  
Carl Robst  
Richard Rouse  
Janet Royce  
Pat Shaw  
Joachim Staackmann

**Senior Household**  
Milton & Joan Blum  
Fred & Sharon Egloff

Alexander & Katherine MacGregor  
Thomas O'Keefe Family  
James & Delores Patton  
Ed & Pamela Rappaport  
Tom & Ann Serb  
David & Ingrid Stalle  
Frank & Virginia Thinnas  
Don & Linda Zaloudek

**Premium**

Michael Glasser  
Kristine Westerberg

**Business**

Clark Devon Hardware

**Life**

Audrey McDonnell Spite  
Markham Sullivan

# From the President's Desk

by Paul Bluestone



*Change*, I think, would be the appropriate title for this last editorial of mine. A lot has been happening in and around The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society since our last issue this Spring, and I'd like to try to bring you up to date on some of it.

Late this Spring I notified the Board that I needed to step down as President of the Society due to the work load that I am trying to manage in my office. My heart is still very much in the work we do and with the people who give so much of their time and energy to our efforts, and I agreed to stay on our Board of Directors and on our Board's Executive Committee. The Board has asked me to wear the mantle of *President Emeritus*, which I will wear proudly until such time that I find out what it actually means. But I understand that part of what it entails is helping our new leadership steer a course for the Society through the next year, and that I will happily take on.

Which brings me to the next change for the Society. Two extraordinary men have stepped up to lead us through the next year as co-presidents. Ken Walchak, a member of the historic Walchak family that has owned and operated Clark Devon Hardware since 1924, and Frank Vodvarka, a Professor of Design at Loyola and author of numerous books on the subject have both offered to serve until our Annual Meeting in March of 2013. At that point you, our members, will elect a new Board of Directors who in turn will elect a new slate of officers to serve throughout that year. Both of these men have a combination of intelligence, experience, leadership ability, humility, and an interest in the history of these neighborhoods that we serve. We are lucky to have them on our team, let alone in leadership positions. I am grateful to both of them.

And speaking of leadership, we have some new faces on our Board of Directors who bring a breadth of experience to the Society that is already serving us well. I have introduced them in an earlier editorial and will not re-introduce them here except to say that your Society is in the best hands it's been in for years. As you meet them and come to see their work, I think you will agree. Our current Executive Committee includes some of those new faces. Frank Vodvarka, Ken Walchak, and Margaret Ferguson have joined Glenna Eaves, Colleen Sen and myself to serve as the leadership team of our Board of Directors.

One of the first issues that came to this current Board of Directors for deliberation and decision was The Engine 102 Firehouse at 1723 W. Greenleaf about which you have heard so much over the past several years. As many of you know, we applied to the city for a transfer of ownership on that property and early this year were in the process of doing our due diligence on the structure, including an architectural assessment of the building and an estimate of the costs that would be required to bring it up to an occupiable condition. We deliberated long and hard over several sessions, many of us having a long-term commitment to the idea of occupying that building as our permanent home. In the end, we had to face what in my opinion were undeniable realities and ultimately do what we felt was most responsible for you and the Society. The building had been badly vandalized over the past year, including the removal of radiators, electrical wire and conduit and smashing of nearly 100-year-old bathroom fixtures. This eliminated one of our most

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economical options, which was to secure the building and move into it in an unimproved state and begin to renovate it while we rented out some second-floor space in order to bring in some revenue to the Society. This development, combined with the costs of renovating and operating the building that became apparent to us through our due diligence process, led the Board to what we felt was an unhappy but necessary and responsible decision. The vote was 14:1 against pursuing the Firehouse as a permanent home. We know that many of you will be disappointed by this decision, but we feel that it is in the best interests of the Society and will serve us well as we continue to do our work over the years to come. Please understand that this decision does not mean that we are not interested in finding a permanent home for the Society in the future. We are, and will continue to discuss and consider this. We just need to make sure that in planning for the future we are always realistic about two of our most important resources: money and people. While we continue to envision new ways to tell the stories of our two neighborhoods to our members and the areas' residents, we will always need to be doing that within our means both in terms of what we can afford financially and what we are truly capable of doing with the committed group of volunteers we have.

Which brings me to our vision. Soon after we made the decision about the Firehouse, we all felt it was important for us to come together and revisit our goals for the future. We held what we called a *Visioning Session* in June, where about 25 of us including Board members, our most active volunteers and Bob Fuller discussed what our goals and priorities ought to be as we stepped back from pursuit of the Firehouse. It was a thoughtful, highly spirited and productive session. Among the initiatives that came out of the session were ways for us to become financially self-sustaining, a re-endorsement of our oral history and active events programming, and a new idea to create *Storefront History Exhibits* in abandoned storefronts throughout Rogers Park and West Ridge. We are all enthusiastic about the idea, as are Alderman Joe Moore's office and the RPBA. We are now pursuing two grants to make this program a reality. Already, there is active help from the Walchaks at Clark Devon Hardware, who are volunteering one of their storefront windows to serve as a "demonstration window" which will focus on the history of the family, the store and the immediate neighborhood; and the RPBA who is earmarking a storefront on Howard to help make a positive step in that neighborhood. Stay

tuned for more news on this project as we move to install 10 of them in the next 9 months.

We are also gearing up for another openhousechicago. This one will take place on October 13th and 14th and our Historical Society will serve as an information hub for the event in our neighborhood. There will be approximately 15 sites in Rogers Park and West Ridge this year. Last year, roughly 3,000 people visited our neighborhoods during the two-day event, with over 300 visiting our Historical Society on that weekend. We are looking for volunteers at our museum and throughout the neighborhoods, so please sign up for the event if you can find a little time to volunteer. You can call the Society at 773-764-4078 or log onto the Chicago Architecture Foundation's website and register there.

And finally, it is with some sadness mixed with pride that we say farewell to Bob Fuller. Bob has served us superbly as Volunteer Coordinator and Office Manager over the past year or more in addition to assisting with all of the work involved in the Firehouse application and due diligence process. Bob has found full-time employment and will be unable to continue in his part-time capacity with the Society. We will miss him both personally and professionally, and wish him all the best in his new work. We are searching for a replacement for Bob as I write this.

So that's a little of what is changing as I step down as President. It's been an honor for me to serve both you and the Society for this time. Thank you all for the chance. We continue to be a spirited and committed group with big ideas and a passion for telling stories about our neighborhoods. This is something that will not change. Why don't you come join us and help us do what we do?

All my best,  
Paul

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# openhousedchicago

*(Photos Courtesy of Chicago Architecture Foundation)*

Continued from page 1

**Note:** All times are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except where noted.

## Rogers Park Locations

### 1. Gallery B.1.e.

6209 N. Glenwood Ave.

Andy DeLaRosa's gallery provides workspace for local artists, whose art is displayed in a wonderfully eclectic sculpture garden next to the gallery and throughout Rogers Park on street corners, on building walls, and sometimes just hanging from trees. Much of the featured art is made from found objects: tennis rackets, wires, abandoned toys, and countless other oddities. The gallery is a delightful place to learn all about the remarkable profusion of art in Rogers Park.

**Special Access:** The artists will be on hand to discuss the inspiration and other details of their artwork with visitors.

### 2. Cat's Cradle Bed & Breakfast

7421 N. Sheridan Rd.

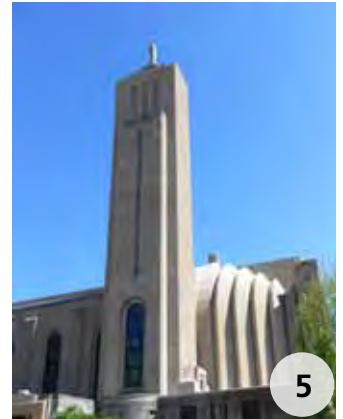
Once a private residence, today Cat's Cradle is one of Chicago's finest Bed and Breakfast facilities. Designed in 1919 by Edgar M. Newman in the American Four Square style, the stucco home's exterior is defined by its symmetry, large eaves and formidable entrance. Arts and Craft styled murals, mosaic decorated walls, hard wood floors and leaded-glass windows reflect a careful restoration of this historic property. The home once served as a rental property for female Loyola students.

**Special Access:** Tour this historic home turned Bed and Breakfast.

### 3. Lifeline Theatre

6912 N. Glenwood Ave.

An anchor of the Glenwood Avenue Arts District, Lifeline has been producing award-winning live theater since 1982. Lifeline moved into a converted Commonwealth Edison substation in Rogers Park in 1985. The facility includes an intimate 99-seat theater, rehearsal and office space, a scene shop, and costume, prop, and scenery storage. Lifeline



provides innovative programming for both children and adults with a focus on literary adaptations that are relevant to the neighborhood's diverse community.

**Special Access:** Visit back-of-the-house areas including set construction and costuming.

**Hours:** Tours every hour on the hour, Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### 4. Loyola University - Mundelein College Building Loyola Campus, 1020 W. Sheridan Rd.

This 14-story Art Deco building features larger-than-life size statues framing the entrance: Uriel, God of Light, points to the sky and Jophiel, Beauty of God, holds a torch of knowledge and a celestial globe. Constructed in 1931 and designed by Joseph McCarthy and Naime Fisher, the limestone clad building has a commanding presence along Sheridan Road. Stylized art deco embellishments decorate the building inside and out. The skyscraper was built to house Mundelein College, a Catholic women's college, and included an auditorium, pool, gymnasium, classrooms, offices and living spaces all under one roof. Today it is owned by Loyola University as a center for fine and performing arts. A major renovation of the building was just completed.

**Special Access:** Visit the building's green house and Cardinal Mundelein's suite.

**Hours:** Saturday 3:30-5:00 p.m.; Sunday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### 5. Loyola University - Madonna della Strada Chapel 6453 N. Kenmore Ave.

With its sinuous curves, geometric ornamentation, and lakefront entrance, Loyola University's Madonna della Strada Chapel is unlike any other in the city. Andrew Rebori designed the 1939 building in a peculiar version of the Art Deco style that combines streamlined forms with Classical details and ornament inside and out. Historic features include names of Jesuit saints on the outside walls and a crypt chapel that once had a tunnel approach from the Jesuit Residence. In its 2006 – 2007 renovation the Chapel added a new pipe organ, an inlaid Art Deco marble floor, an immersion baptismal font, and entirely new lighting and sound systems. The renovation enhanced the original artwork throughout with gold leafing and plaster borders.

**Special Access:** Admire the art deco detailing of the interior of this church before making a special visit to its crypt.

**Hours:** Saturday only: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### 6. Loyola University - Richard Klarchek Information Commons

501 North Kenmore Ave.

Designed by Solomon Cordwell Buenz, Klarchek Information Commons is Loyola University's first energy-efficient building. Completed in 2007, it is a great example of contextual architecture. The northern and southern sides feature concrete towers that correspond to the concrete facades of the historic surrounding buildings, while the central portion of the building is an impressive modern glass wall. The back of the building offers one of the best uninterrupted views of Lake Michigan in the city. This 69,000 square foot digital research center is one point away from a Gold LEED certification. The building's unique mechanical design harnesses natural ventilation, allowing it to use 50% less energy than code demands.

Connected to the building is the 1930 Cudahy Library – an example of architect Andrew Rebori's distinctive approach to early modernism. Inside find an Art Deco mural by John Warner Norton celebrating the late 17th century explorers of the Chicago region.

**Special Access:** Take a self-guided tour of the building's green elements, before walking into the connected Cudahy Library to admire its Art Deco murals.

**Hours:** Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### 7. Mayne Stage/Act One Pub

1328 W. Morse Ave.

Opened as the Morse Theater in 1912. This building began its life as a vaudeville and movie theater. In the 1930s, the facility was remodeled using an Art Deco theme and renamed the Co-Ed Theater because of its proximity to Loyola University. The Co-Ed closed in 1954, and from 1956 until 2008 the building served in various capacities from Congregation Beth Israel Anshe Yanova, a synagogue, to a shoe repair store. Now, with a recent multi-million dollar restoration and renovation project, this entertainment and dining venue is poised to be a magnet for significant development in this north-side neighborhood.

**Special Access:** Visit backstage and the state-of-the-art recording control room.

*Continued from page 7*

## 8. Mile of Murals

Heartland Café at 7000 N. Glenwood Ave.

The Mile of Murals (the block long CTA retaining wall on Glenwood Ave between Morse and Farwell on the east side of the tracks, and the north side of the viaduct on Farwell Ave.) is a community-based public art initiative in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, located on the far north side of the city. The project began in 2007, and is sponsored by the Rogers Park Business Alliance and the Clark/Morse/Glenwood Special Service Area #24 (SSA #24). When completed in 2017, the project will showcase 19 large-scale murals: ten block-long walls, seven viaduct walls, and two overpasses; and will feature local, national, and internationally respected mural artists.

**Hours:** Hour-long tours on Saturday and Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Tours start at the Heartland Café.

## 9. Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society

1447 W. Morse Ave.

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society collects, preserves, and shares the story of the diverse community of Chicago's far north side. Established in 1975 by local residents who believed their part of Chicago was a place with much to celebrate, the Society today serves the community through its publications, architectural tours, and various educational and outreach efforts. The society features a 24-foot timeline of events in Rogers Park/West Ridge history all the way back from the receding Wisconsin glacier up to the present, interactive exhibits and more, in its small storefront on Morse Avenue. The society is an entirely volunteer-run organization.

**Special Access:** Record your memories of the Rogers Park/West Ridge communities, and see historic images of other OHC sites in the neighborhood.

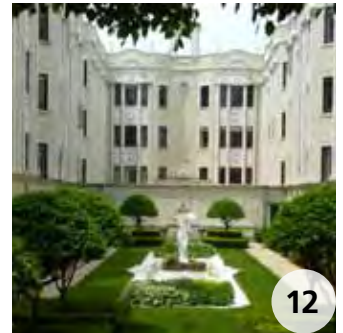
## 10. Uncommon Ground

1401 W. Devon Ave.

When it opened in 2008, Uncommon Ground on Devon had the distinction of being the first organic rooftop farm to open in the country. More recently, in 2011, The Green Restaurant Association awarded the restaurant the title of the "Greenest Restaurant" in the country. A trip to the rooftop of this building presents a lush array of vegetables sitting in beds constructed of reclaimed wood, large solar

panels, an apiary and more. Uncommon Ground is not only a delicious restaurant, but also a music venue and art gallery space.

**Special Access:** Meet Farmer Dave and his assistants who will lead you on a tour of Uncommon Ground's rooftop garden. Then feel free to stick around to eat a tasty meal made in part from the vegetables grown above the restaurant.



## 11. United Church of Rogers Park

1545 W. Morse Ave.

This United Methodist church with a neo-classical portico incorporates a painted interior-domed-sanctuary with in-the-round seating. Rogers Park is famous for its diverse population, and its diversity is clearly reflected in this church's congregation -- welcoming people of all races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. The United Church of Rogers Park makes a point of thinking globally and acting locally.

**Special Access:** Visit the church's sun-filled sanctuary and admire its grand painted dome.

**Hours:** Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Sunday 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

## West Ridge Locations

### 12. Casa Bonita

7340-50 N. Ridge Blvd.

Bedecked in glistening white terra cotta spandrels, other lavish ornament, and an extravagant courtyard, Casa Bonita is a jewel in West Ridge. The condo building was designed by Alexander Capraro and Morris Komar and completed in 1928 in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style. The building contains 66 units, a billiard room, library, and large indoor pool. The building was renovated in 1974 by Warner, Brejcha, Evans and Associates.

**Special Access:** Take a peek at Casa Bonita's historic indoor pool.



13



14



15



16

### 13. Indian Boundary Park Cultural Center

2500 W. Lunt Ave.

This quaint, Tudor-revival field house is the main building in the park which takes its name from the territorial boundary established by the Treaty of 1816 between the Pottawatomie Tribes and the US government. Designed by Clarence Hatzfield, and completed in 1921, the interior features Native American-themed ornament inspired by the park's name. The building suffered extensive damage from a fire in May of 2012. The landmarked building is currently undergoing a full restoration. A designated cultural center, the building will offer theatre arts, painting, piano, dance, and voice lessons when reopened.

**Special Access:** Learn about the restoration process of the field house from the Park Supervisor, Phil Martini.

### 14. Park Castle

2416-2458 W. Greenleaf Ave.

First opened in 1925, this crenellated structure was designed by architect Jens J. Jensen -- not to be confused with the renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen. With multiple towers and impressively kept grounds, the sprawling brick building looks much more like a castle than an apartment complex. Originally there was a pond, which resembled something of a moat, out front that was home to a couple of swans. Still remaining today is a charming European-style indoor pool, one of Chicago's best held secrets.

**Special Access:** Take a peek at this private pool with a fountain, decorated walls, and a unique tent-like ceiling.

### 15. Park Gables Apt. #1 on Indian Boundary Park

2452 W. Estes Ave.

This Tudor-revival apartment complex, designed by James Denson, first opened its doors in 1927. Named for its gabled roofs, this large condo building is reminiscent of an old English village. The apartments were designed around the naturalistic landscape of Indian Boundary Park. A walk through its courtyard, and a peek at the building's classically designed indoor swimming pool, is like taking a walk back in time.

**Special Access:** Admire the gables on this Tudor-revival building and see the indoor pool.

### 16. St. Scholastica Monastery Chapel

7430 North Ridge Blvd.

St. Scholastica Monastery opened its doors in 1906, and has played an important role in the West Ridge community ever since. The large, brick, turn-of-the-century (20th) building is home to the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago. The greatest treasure of this building is found inside the monastery's small chapel: brilliantly painted murals designed in 1938 by Josef Steinhage in the Beuronese style. Connected to the monastery is a school that opened in 1907 as St. Scholastica Academy, and which closed at the end of the 2012 school year. Starting this fall, the building will reopen as an Uno Charter School. The 14.7 acres of grounds for this complex contain a grape arbor, gardens, and a labyrinth.

**Special Access:** Take a look at the monastery's chapel before finding your way through the labyrinth-like gardens behind the property.

**Hours:** Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Sunday 12:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

# Indian Boundary Park Fire

by Hank Morris

Around noon on Sunday, April 20, 2012, the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) dispatched equipment to 2500 W. Lunt Ave., Indian Boundary Park. The Historic field house was on fire!

The fire was purported (no final report at press time) to have started when Park Manager Phil Martini turned on a fan in the upper level to help cool it off so that the next-scheduled class could have a little relief from the heat of the day. The cause of the fire was under investigation Sunday, but did not appear suspicious, according to Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford.

Black smoke issued forth from the upper windows and flames could easily be seen inside. Upon the arrival of the first units, the on-ground commander wasted no time in calling a second alarm (2-11) and more equipment dashed to the scene. There are different reports of how many pieces of equipment were on-scene ranging from eight to 15. Regardless, the firefighters quickly struck the fire—which is the important thing.

This was not an easy day to fight a fire as the noon time heat was oppressive, with all that equipment they had to wear just making things worse. Due to a floor collapse, two firefighters were sent to St. Francis Hospital in Evanston. A third, suffered from heat related causes and went to hospital, too.

## Damage?

Nothing appears to really be lost in the art studio area. Sadly, local musicians who were keeping their instruments there did not fare as well. The offices also seem reasonably well off. The damage was focused mainly on the auditorium and the storage space directly above it. Other than debris, the remainder of the field house seems to be okay. Amazingly, the piano survived and was not even wet!

## Where to from here?

The Chicago Park District (CPD) representatives in control of the project have stated that they confirmed that the building will NOT be altered in anyway, inside or out. The plan is to make it look exactly as it was prior to the fire

which in part is also a requirement of its Landmark status. What will change are things you cannot see. The building will be brought up to City of Chicago (COC) codes. So electrical circuitries will be replaced and upgraded along with plumbing, etc. Behind the walls is where the Indian Boundary Park Field House will actually enter the 21 Century.

The building is expected to be closed for about a full year.

Fortunately, the building was required to be fully insured by CPD as part of its historic designation. The building is expected to be closed for about a full year. Many previously scheduled future activities have been relocated to Warren Park with little inconvenience.

## Background:

Indian Boundary Park and Cultural Center, 2500 W. Lunt Avenue is a community treasure where visitors can discover a beautifully restored, duck-filled lagoon, a small public zoo area with goats, sheep, chickens and ducks, a children's spray pool, sandbox, and four tennis courts. There is plenty of open space for peaceful picnics.

As a designated cultural center, Indian Boundary thrives with various painting, piano, dance and voice lessons for both children and adults. Some classes take place on the park's back porch, so that artists can use the park's scenery as inspiration. Indian Boundary is a residency site in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago's program, offering free, family-oriented and interactive concert performances for the community throughout the year.

The Indian Boundary field house, designed by Clarence Hatzfeld, features Native American-themed ornament inspired by the park's name, taken from a territorial boundary established between the Pottawatomie Indians and United States Government. Inside is a beautiful auditorium with stage, used for programs, theatre productions, concerts, community meetings and private rentals.

The Indian Boundary Park field house was completed in 1929 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. It was named a Chicago Landmark in 2005.

## Indian Boundary Park Fire in 2011



Smoke pours out of the second story windows of the Indian Boundary Park Fieldhouse on May 20, 2011, *Photo Courtesy of Paul Lempke*



Flames pour out of the second floor windows on the west side of the Indian Boundary Park Fieldhouse on May 20, 2011, *Photo Courtesy of Jeffrey Moore*



Some of the equipment on scene at the fire of the Indian Boundary Park Fieldhouse on May 20, 2011, *Photo Courtesy of Paul Lempke*



Chicago Fire Department Squad 2A pour water into the second floor window of the Indian Boundary Park Fieldhouse, *Photo Courtesy of Jeffrey Moore*

Continued from page 11



A look inside the auditorium after the fire at the Indian Boundary Park Fieldhouse on May 20, 2011, Photo Courtesy of Beth Martin



A Chicago Fireman relaxing after the fire was struck, Photo Courtesy of Jeffrey Moore

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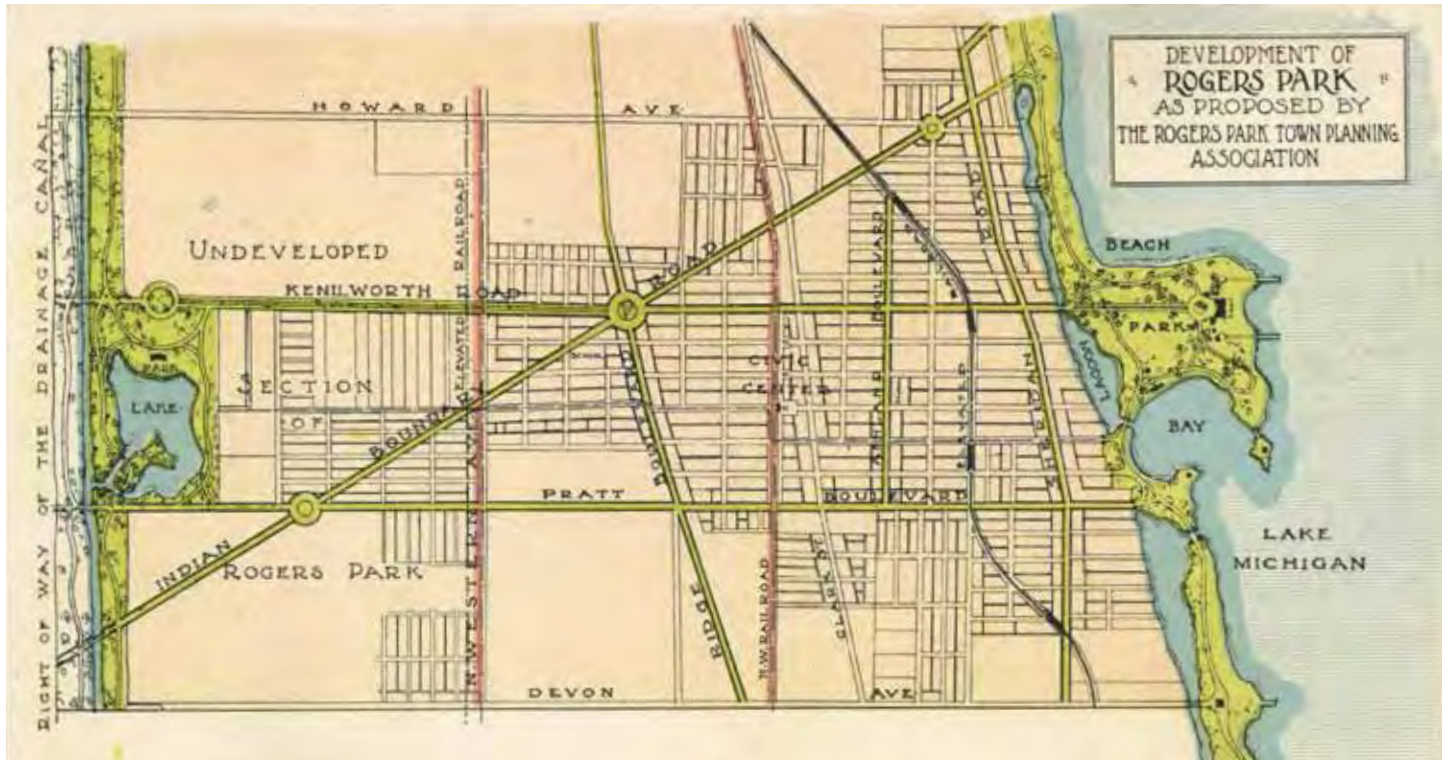
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# Community Planning in Rogers Park

by LeRoy Blommaert



Rogers Park Map Postcard

It may be thought that citizen involvement in community planning for Rogers Park dates no earlier than 1955, with the formation of the Rogers Park Community Council.

Actually, it dates much earlier.

The finding of a very unusual postcard issued by the Rogers Park Town Planning Association, depicted here, proves that Rogers Parkers were involved in an organized way as early as the teens of the last century. Several articles in the *Chicago Tribune* shed some light on the mystery postcard, which the author acquired a few years ago.

A letter to the editor written by Aksel G.S. Josephson and reprinted June 19, 1913, is the first reference to the Rogers Park Town Planning Association. It advised that at its executive committee meeting held the day before E.S. Somers, a landscape artist and chairman of the Association's committee on parks, boulevards, and playgrounds, presented a "plan for the development of a park on [man] made land along the lake shore and of a park and residence district

along the North Shore Channel." The letter went on to advise that the plan would be presented and discussed at the Association's next regular meeting. Another article referenced a meeting of the Association on November 6, 1913, at which Mr. Somers, among others, would discuss local improvements. A final article on February 9, 1914, advises that Myron H. West, formerly superintendent of the Lincoln Park District, would give an illustrated lecture on "Some American and European Parks" at the Association's annual meeting at the George B. Armstrong auditorium, Greenleaf Avenue and Morton Street (now Hamilton Avenue). After that, the trail ends and there is no further mention of the Rogers Park Town Planning Association in the *Chicago Tribune* archives.

The plan depicted on the postcard is interesting in light of recent and ongoing controversy regarding proposed changes in Rogers Park's lakefront. Obviously, the plan on the postcard was never implemented—otherwise today's controversy would be of a different nature, if it existed at all.

# Sheridan Road in Rogers Park: Celebrating a Century

by Susan Olin

At the turn of the 20th Century, Sheridan Road, in Chicago, was developed as a luxury lakefront boulevard. By 1902, the portion in Rogers Park was paved and improved. At that time, Sheridan Road was laid out for scenic, leisure travel by horse-drawn carriages well before the advent of the automobile. Consequently, even today in Rogers Park, this wide avenue still features its original tree-lined parkways and many outstanding vintage buildings. In addition, Sheridan Road in Rogers Park continues to be graced with a low-rise vista and street-end views to the nearby lake. Here are a few examples of the fascinating historic structures found on this exceptional street.

## Sister Acts

The New 400 Theaters on Sheridan Road at Pratt Avenue, and the Mayne Stage on Morse Avenue at Wayne Avenue, were designed by the same firm, Grossman & Proskauer, and constructed in the same year, 1912. Both of these cheerful terra cotta buildings were actually early nickelodeon theaters which have survived now for 100 years. The New 400 was originally called the “Regent,” and after 1930, the “400 Theater.” The Mayne Stage was originally the “Morse Theater” and after 1939, the “Co-Ed Theater” (a nod to nearby Loyola University). These sister theaters have outlived the later, celebrated movie palaces of Rogers Park such as the Granada Theater on Sheridan Road, the Norshore Theater on Howard Street, and the Adelphi Theater on Clark Street, all now gone.

The Mayne Stage building has been used not only as a theater, but also as a synagogue and as retail stores. Amazingly, it appears that the New 400 Theaters has been operated exclusively as a movie theater over the past 100 years. Both the New 400 and the Mayne Stage buildings will celebrate their centennials this year in 2012, while continuing to entertain the public as they have for so long.

## Luxury “Hotels”

Two luxury 1920s “residential hotels” still stand on Sheridan Road in Rogers Park. These buildings were constructed as rental apartments for the affluent during the Roaring Twenties. The first is the 1921 Rogers Park Hotel at Pratt Avenue – look for the large stone “RP” logo (for “Rogers Park”) on top of the Sheridan Road side of the building; and the second is the 1922 Sheridan Beach Hotel at Chase Avenue. These ritzy apartment hotels offered elegant dining rooms and lobbies, entertainment and concierge services for their well-to-do residents.

## Lifeguard “Stations”

The Leone Beach Park lifeguard station at Touhy and Sheridan is actually the original water pumping station for Rogers Park. This facility, constructed in 1889 by the Rogers Park Water Company, supplied water for some of the earliest subdivisions in Rogers Park and Evanston. The City of Chicago purchased the building in 1907, converting it into a field house shortly thereafter, and owns the building to this day. For over ninety years at this site, the city has

been educating children in lifesaving skills to become junior lifeguards for Chicago beaches. During forty of those years, the park was supervised by its adored namesake, Sam Leone.



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The Art Deco façade at 6560 N. Sheridan Road  
Photo Courtesy of Susan Olin

### The Best of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company

The Art Deco façade at 6560 N. Sheridan Road (now Bruno’s Bar, formerly the “Kirchbaum Building”) showcases a terra cotta scene from the time the building was constructed in 1922. This pictorial treasure is a view of Chicago’s skyline at that time. A small depiction of the original Fort Dearborn settlement in Chicago is portrayed as well.

This façade was created by the famous Northwestern Terra Cotta Company of Chicago which provided terra cotta decorations and facades for many famous architects such as Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. The company created the ornamentation for a myriad of Chicago landmarks such as the Chicago Theater and the Civic Opera House. Shown in this skyline relief are several illustrious Michigan Avenue edifices for which Northwestern Terra Cotta provided exterior decoration including the Railway Exchange (Santa Fe) Building, the Blackstone Hotel and the Wrigley Building. (Northwestern Terra Cotta’s smaller scale commissions include both the previously mentioned Rogers Park Hotel and Sheridan Beach Hotel.)

Thus, apart from its gorgeous tile work, this Sheridan Road facade documents the heyday of Chicago’s world-famous terra cotta architecture, and the artisans of Northwestern Terra Cotta, at the beginning of the 20th century. The elaborate building also provides proof of Rogers Park’s glory days as a neighborhood of distinction at that time.

### Frank Lloyd Wright, and more

The 1915 Frank Lloyd Wright-designed “Emil Bach Home” at 7415 N. Sheridan Road is an official Chicago Landmark and a National Register Historic Landmark site as well. The Emil Bach Home is a rare example of Wright’s late Prairie-school, compact urban design. Several other homes on Sheridan Road north of Touhy, in what was known as the early 1900s “Birchwood Beach” subdivision, are listed as significant buildings in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. For example, the 1919 Mediterranean-style “villa” next door at 7421 N. Sheridan Road, now the Cat’s Cradle Bed & Breakfast, is also recognized on this authoritative architectural list.

The varied architecture on Sheridan Road in Rogers Park reflects the many wonderful eras and activities of the neighborhood. The numerous vintage buildings include a long-standing, beloved neighborhood movie theater, opulent turn-of-the-century homes, posh 1920s apartment hotels, terra cotta masterpieces and a late 1800s water pumping station converted long ago into a public beach recreational facility. All this marvelous history is preserved on this one-of-a-kind Chicago lakefront street. So take a stroll down Sheridan Road in Rogers Park and revel in a remarkable century of history.

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# A Famous Novelist Launches His Career in Rogers Park

by Colleen Sen

A popular and prolific author of 30 books and hundreds of short stories and articles, (Benjamin) MacKinlay Kantor (1904-1977) is best remembered for his Pulitzer-prize-winning Civil War novel *Andersonville* and a book that became the movie *The Best Years of Their Lives*. But few people know that his career was launched in Chicago and that he lived in Rogers Park, which was the setting for his second novel, *El Goes South* (1930). His descriptions of the neighborhood provide a fascinating insight into the way that a writer transforms his personal experiences and surroundings into fiction.

Kantor was born in Webster City, Iowa. His father, John Martin Kantor, who was of Swedish-Jewish descent, abandoned the family before he was born but returned when Kantor was 14 and moved the family to Chicago where he hoped to make his fortune in various dicey schemes. The family lived in the Fernwood Apartment building on Sheridan Road; Kantor attended Senn High School where he was an indifferent student. His parents divorced, and Kantor and his mother, Effie (McKinlay) Kantor, returned to Webster City. All the time he was writing stories and poems, some of which were published in the *Chicago Tribune's* popular Line o' Type column.

Determined to pursue a career as a journalist, Kantor moved again to Chicago, when he was in his early 20s, and lived there for several years. He held many jobs (albeit none as a journalist): as a surveyor for Cook County, copy writer for toy train manufacturer, American Flyer (2219-2239 S. Halsted Street), and claims processor in the Mandel Bros. Department Store at the corner of State and Madison Streets (which operated until the 1970s). He lived in a boarding house on Diversey Avenue near Broadway, which provided the setting and characters of his first novel *Diversey* (1928). The hero, a young journalist from Iowa, comes to Chicago to seek a job, and in the process encounters various facets of Prohibition-era Chicago, including gangsters and city-hall politicians.

Kantor married and moved to the second floor of an apartment building at 1341 W. Estes Avenue. Here he wrote his second novel, *El Goes South*. Much of the novel's action

takes place on the “L”, which the characters use to commute to their jobs in the Loop; in downtown Chicago, where the hero, Lester Troutwine, works as a claims processor in a department store; and on the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Estes Avenue.



MacKinlay Kantor

The story centers on the relationship between Troutwine and Irma Pavrick, who lived at 1341 W. Estes Avenue (the same address as Kantor!). She had just lost her husband, a policeman, who was shot during a raid at 1118 W. Juneway Terrace. Troutwine, a widower, lived with his grown children (all of whom attended Senn High School) in a large house at 1498 W. Estes Avenue. The rather flimsy plot centers around the responses of his children to their marriage and their own personal and professional experiences.

The most interesting parts of the novel to modern Rogers-Parkers are Kantor's vivid descriptions of the neighborhood. Troutwine's house, located on the northeast corner of Greenview Avenue and Estes Avenue, is described as having four bedrooms, a side entrance, a driveway and a garage. It is a frame house, “lumped oer with pebble dash” like several other houses on the street, with a row of black windows along the front that opened onto a sun parlor. In reality, the address 1498 W. Estes Avenue does not exist; however, the Troutwine house is a composite of several houses on the south side of the street which share all these features.

Kantor's descriptions of the weather will sound familiar to anyone who has lived through a Chicago winter. When Irma hears of her husband's death, she rushes out into the frigid winter night.

“The lights on the “L” platform three blocks away all seem to jump and leer with poisonous glee. It's cold. And you never meet God on Estes Avenue, day or night.”

Troutwine, returning from work the same evening, gets off the “L” at Lunt Avenue:

“Out into the howl of it, the dense dark force of liquid polar caps all melting, all poring against the one platform. He huddled along behind rows of signboard, and banged

through the Lunt Avenue door, and down the clammy staircase. He'd take the east side of Glenwood: the buildings would protect him from the shrill wind. . . He skated on dangerous, glazed surfaces. The signboard of the little store at this right hand was banging crazily."

He bumps into Irma on the street, finds her a cab on Morse Avenue near the "L" Station and gives her the money to take her to the hospital.

Troutwine is intrigued by the woman he meets in such dramatic circumstances and when he learns her name and address from her husband's obituary, decides to visit her.

"Determinedly, he marched forward [east on Estes Avenue]. That block was solid with apartment buildings – a wide ravine with blunt, square-hewn sides into which the courts abutted, and all sprinkled with square slabs of light where people were at home . . . In some places the snow had drifted into sharp windrows, concealing iron pipes and loose-hung strands of wire."

In late March they are married and the same evening, go for a walk ". . .through the damp sand of the Lake Shore, south from Touhy Avenue to Greenleaf Avenue, stumbling over soggy windrows that were stuffed with paper plates and decaying cigar butts. Whitecaps swished against the sea wall on their left, oily and gray, sliding out of the mystery and rawness of inland seas."

While Troutwine is content with his life, one of his sons, who works in the catalog department of the Dixie Flyer company, longs for a more exciting existence. "Rogers Park – it was flat and mediocre," he thinks. "There wasn't any pulse to it. Just old houses and cheap new apartments, some of them not so cheap, either, but they are all alike. Rogers Park didn't have any visible soul. And home was just a boarding-house. He didn't want to stay around there in the evenings."

This son, who is depressed and drinks too much, precipitates a near tragedy at the end of the book, so perhaps his views of Rogers Park should not be equated with those of the author himself. In 1929 Kantor's fortunes turned around. He sold *El Goes South* to a new publishing house in New York, Coward-McCann, and in 1932, moved to the East Coast. He lived in various places but never returned to Chicago, and died in Sarasota, Florida, at the age of 73.

*Colleen Taylor Sen is a member of the Board of Directors of the RPWRHS and the author of many articles and several books on world cuisine.*

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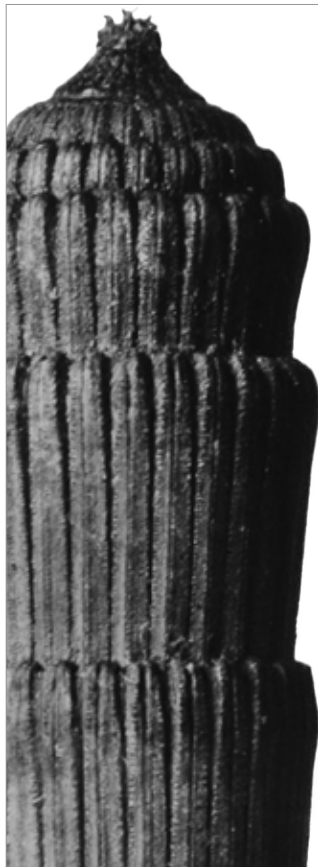
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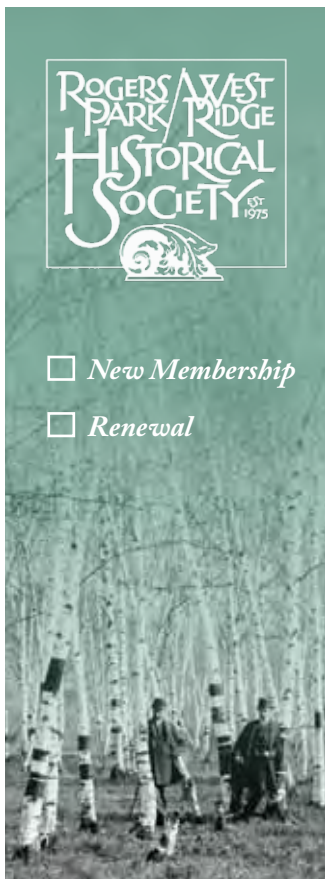
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Oral histories are a wonderful way to learn about our neighborhoods before all the complexities of "modern life" settled in.

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)

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

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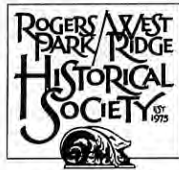
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