



Early bridge on Genesee Street.

March 2008

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society



The WHS board celebrates the fifth anniversary of the society in 1973.

President's Letter

by Harry E. Came

Spring will be here soon and along with it comes the end of my term as President of the Waukegan Historical Society. It has certainly been an honor to serve the Society and be able to accomplish so many things with our hard working Board of Directors. Ty Rohrer, the Museum Supervisor, is doing a great job in keeping us on track, and the support we get from the Waukegan Park District and Claudia Freeman, the Director of Cultural Arts, is a great help to the Society.

The year 2008 is the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Historical Society and the Board has arranged for a reception to be held for all members on Sunday, April 6 at Bacci's Restaurant on Genesee Street. All members will be getting an invitation in the mail, but please go ahead and mark it on your calendars. This will be a special thank you to all of our members and especially to the founding members of the Society. The Anniversary Committee has been busy choosing appetizers and flowers and it should be a very special afternoon.

On Sunday, May 18, we will be presenting a slide show on old Waukegan which has not been seen in many years and was always a very popular event. Please come at 2 PM to the Schornick Theater at

the Jack Benny Center and be prepared to add your comments to the presentation. This is one time when we all want to hear from the "peanut gallery." As always, the program and refreshments are free. It is a great opportunity to see your friends and to take a nostalgic trip to old Waukegan.

Our Annual Tour of Homes will be held on Sunday, June 22, and we have quite an interesting selection of homes scheduled for this year. This is the Society's most successful fund raising event, and we count on your support to sell tickets and to help at the tour locations. Please contact Ty at the Museum if you can help on the day of the tour.

There are several new exhibits being organized and researched for this year's 40th anniversary of the Society and next year's 150th anniversary of Waukegan. There will be exhibits ready this spring on Waukegan's history, treasures that we have unearthed from the Society's collections, along with many items made in Waukegan. There will also be a special emphasis on the history of the Waukegan Historical Society itself and how the Museum has been restored over the years. We hope you will be able to join us for these exciting views into Waukegan's past.

WHS Board

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Lilac Cottage Gets Historic Marker

Lilac Cottage in Bowen Park has received an Historic Marker from the Historical Society to recognize



its special place in the history of Waukegan. Built by Louise deKoven Bowen for herself and Jane Addams to use during the years of the Bowen Country Club, Lilac Cottage is now used by the Waukegan Park District for events such as wedding receptions, parties, children's activities, meetings, and classes. It also houses the society's Raymond Library. Claudia Freeman accepted the plaque on behalf of the Park District.

You will probably notice that our Historic Markers are beginning to show up all over Waukegan denoting properties of notable architectural significance or historic importance. They make a great gift or addition to your beautiful historic home. Go to www.waukeganhistorical.org for more information and an application.

Help Us Celebrate

The Waukegan Historical Society celebrates its 40th Anniversary this year, and our members are cordially invited to a special reception to celebrate. The reception will be held on Sunday afternoon, April 6, at Bacci's Restaurant on Genesee Street in downtown Waukegan. Please make sure to mark your calendar and be prepared to meet with old and new friends and honor our 40th year. You will be receiving an invitation in the mail and please make sure to respond so we will know how many of our friends to expect. There will be great food, a special anniversary cake, a champagne toast, and a cash bar.

New Jack Benny Exhibit

The exhibit, *Jack Benny: From Waukegan to Hollywood*, opened February 14, 2008 in honor of Jack Benny's "39th" birthday, at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, 39 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park in Waukegan. The exhibit is presented by the Waukegan Historical Society as part of their community outreach program. There is no closing date scheduled for the exhibit.

Memorabilia from the exhibit includes historic photographs of Jack Benny, programs from Jack Benny performances, and autographed items by Jack Benny, Mary Livingstone, and others. Stop by to learn about Benny's early days in Waukegan, his radio and television career, and the impact that he had on Hollywood and his hometown of Waukegan.

The Jack Benny Center for the Arts is open to the public Monday through Saturday. To contact the Jack Benny Center, please call 847-360-4740.



Volunteer Highlight

The Waukegan Historical Society would like to welcome Carolyn Bergman as a new museum volunteer. Carolyn is currently assisting with the inventory of the museum's collections.

Historically Speaking

Genesee Street Bridge

by Ed Link

Waukegan has several ravines within its landscape. Besides their natural beauty, they contained mineral springs and were advertised as tourist attractions in the 1800s. However, they were difficult to cross and were impediments to both recreational and commercial traffic. Bridges were needed.

The newspaper, *The Little Fort Porcupine*, announced in April, 1845 the completion of bridges on all streets below the bluff and urged the same for streets on the bluff. It was hoped that such work would soon be underway.



The first Genesee Street bridge must have been constructed around that time, although the exact date is unknown. It was wooden and lasted until heavier traffic spelled its doom. The replacement bridge was partially made of steel, purportedly from one of the buildings in Chicago's 1893 World's Fair. But the safety issues did not end.

In his 1899 journal, Hobart Yard noted that street cars stopped running over the bridge until it was repaired. In 1911 the city condemned the bridge for



heavy traffic. Fire Chief Sars O'Farrell instructed the drivers to use Sheridan Road instead. Concerns over passenger safety forced the streetcar riders to disembark at one end of the bridge, walk across and re-board. The streetcar would cross empty of riders, or as concerns grew, a different car would pick up the riders on the opposite side of the bridge.

Streetcar traffic and the increasing number of automobiles made building a new bridge imperative. This time concrete was used. When it was opened to traffic on November 20, 1913 the bridge was 72 feet wide and 140 feet long. The cost was \$72,500.

A more recent renovation of the bridge took place in 1984. This time the project cost in excess of \$1 million.

Waukegan Historical Society Museum

By Harry E. Came

I find it surprising that many first-time museum visitors say that they have often driven by on Sheridan Road but never actually set foot in the building. These are often long-time residents of Waukegan who never even knew we were there. After having seen the Museum, they compliment us on the period rooms and exhibits. The beautiful Museum that pleases visitors today had very humble beginnings back in 1968.



The museum in Fall 2007; view from Sheridan Road. The original building and door is to the left.

The nineteen founding members of the society had a vision to protect the history of Waukegan through artifacts and a library of books and photos that would tell the story of the city from its beginning as a trade center, through the industrialization of the lakefront, and then the struggle to find itself after the industry left. What began with a store-

front office at the Genesee Theatre, then moved to Franklin Street in the old Meadow Gold (Callahan) Dairy, finally found a permanent home in the current building in Bowen Park with the ongoing help of the Waukegan Park District.

The Waukegan Historical Society Museum is the end result of 40 years of hard work by members and volunteers. Over the past fifteen years we have transformed the building, upgrading the mechanical systems and decorating much of the building to reflect the 1870s (when former Chicago Mayor John Haines added a huge addition to the south side of the existing 1840s Greek revival home).

If you stand in front of the building today, you will notice a second front door on the north side of the building. This was the original front door to the much smaller home. When the large Italianate additions were added to the south, a new double front door was also added. Also added was a decorative tower with arched windows and a pagoda-like roof. A picture of the house as it was in the late 1800s was found at the Lake County Discovery Museum in the early 1990s on a stereoscope card. Someday it is hoped that the tower may be rebuilt to again grace the front of the building.

Through wonderful donations of precious family heirlooms we have been able to furnish the rooms of the museum in an elegant Victorian manner. The Waukegan Park District has provided funds over many years to sympathetically carpet and wallpaper the period rooms and provide reproduction lighting and drapery.

The results of all this



This stereoscope image shows the addition's tower and the front door. The new front door remains today with a slightly different front porch, but the tower was removed at an unknown date.

work provide a glimpse of the past for school groups, scouts, and many other visitors. The Museum is open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10 AM until 4 PM. The museum is also open during the Annual Tour of Homes (June 22 this year) and our Holiday Open House. We welcome out of town visitors and those using the Society's Raymond Library in Lilac Cottage.

As we move into our fifth decade of service to the community, we have truly become the repository of Waukegan's history. A very special exhibit will be installed this Spring which will show many of the changes in the Museum building during its restoration and highlight the history of the city through extensive use of artifacts from our collections. We hope you will all take the time to come and share our past with the present.

Thank You!

New Members

Pat Peticlair

New Life Members

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Hansen

Steven Sabourin

Kelly Below

Eleanor Vick

Leslie Chapman

Mary Ellyn Urban

Mr. and Mrs. Philip J. Tobin

Donations

Harry Came

Robert and Michelle Crombie

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Houle

Philip and Sandra Tobin

Waukegan Women's Club

Volunteers Needed

The Waukegan Historical Society is seeking volunteers for the museum and library. We are fortunate to have a rich history of volunteer support that has been crucial to the success of the Historical Society. And now, as we are making exciting changes and offering new programs, we find the need for volunteer help is more important to our success than ever before.

Volunteering for the Historical Society will help us preserve our local history and make it available to the public. As a volunteer, you can participate as often as you choose. Some people may want to come in a couple of times a week while others may just want to be a part of special events.

To become a volunteer for the Waukegan Historical Society or for additional information, please contact Ty Rohrer, Museum Supervisor for the Haines Museum.

Volunteer opportunities:

Collection inventory and management

Tour docents

Exhibit installation and care

Program development

Research

Special Events

Library assistant



A recently donated poster.

Recent Donations

Charles Lange

Assorted Waukegan Memorabilia

Jim Maguire

Newspapers from 1966

Ann & Jim Darrow

NewsSun Hats

Keith Donovan

4 photographs from an 1898-1900 Waukegan farm

Kathy Klammer

1931 Waukegan High Annual

History Works

Brochure by Dr. B.E. Christensen

Jack Douglas

Portrait & Biography of Lake County

Presbyterian Women's Club Recipe Book

1933 Date Book

22 Postcards

Family Photographs

Carolyn Bergman

10 World War I Posters

1 Certificate from U.S. Food Administration to John S. Clark

Anita Lee

Blotter "Spic & Span Cleaners"

Newspaper Article from Feb. 2, 1946

North Shore Printers

6 Calendars

Nada Finn

Photographs

Yvonne Sylvester

Waukegan Fire Department Advertisement

Thank you for your recent donations to our Museum and Library collections.

Museum Supervisor's Report

Ty Rorher

The Waukegan Historical Society Board of Directors recently voted to change the name of the museum to the Waukegan History Museum and we will be gradually phasing out the old name "Haines Museum."

The name was changed to increase the community's recognition of the museum with the hopes of sparking new interest with visitors, tours, and programs.

The focus of the museum is also undergoing changes that will help reflect the name change. The rich history of Waukegan is going to be more prevalent throughout the museum in future exhibits and in museum interpretation.

Two new exhibits will be installed in the museum in the next couple of months. The first exhibit titled 40th Anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society, will give the history of the society and show the accomplishments that have been made over the last 40 years. The second exhibit will focus on Waukegan's sesquicentennial and how the Waukegan Historical Society has played an integral part in the preservation of the city's history. This exhibit will showcase the society's collections and treasures.

Please remember that when you are doing your spring cleaning to keep the historical society in mind when you come across items of historical significance and importance. If you have a question on whether or not the historical society would be interested in acquiring your donation please do not hesitate to call the museum.

Area Events

Please call to confirm dates and times.

Fox Lake/Grant Township Area Historical Society (847-587-7198)

April 5, Folk Concert featuring Dan Zahn & Kate Moretti, call for free tickets, time to be announced.

Lake County Discovery Museum, Wauconda (847-968-3381)

New exhibit, *Life-Sized Wildlife: The Watercolors of Peggy Macnamera*, through March 30.

March 8, New exhibit, *LP Art*, through August 3.

April 5, New exhibit, *The Mischievous Art of Jim Flora*, through June 8.

McHenry County Historical Society (815-263-9540)

March 3, Lecture: *The Rise of Radio From Marconi Through the Golden Age, 1926-1952*, fee, 2pm.

April 7, Lecture: *Water Powered Mills: Their Operation & Importance to Early Settlement*, fee, 2pm.

Warren Township Historical Society (847-263-9540)

March 4, Civil War re-enactor program, Sojourner Truth, by Pamela Welcome, 7pm.



A recently donated poster.

Join Us!

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+)	\$7.00
Student	\$7.00
Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$25.00
Patron, Organization	\$50.00
Life, Individual	\$100.00
Life, Couple	\$150.00
My additional gift	\$_____

Make checks payable to
Waukegan Historical Society.

VOLUNTEER

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Contact Us

Waukegan Historical Society

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Waukegan, IL 60087
847-336-1859
info@waukeganhistorical.org

John L. Raymond Research Library

1911 N. Sheridan Road
Librarian: Beverly Millard
847-360-4772
library@waukeganhistorical.org

Waukegan History Museum at the Haines Farmhouse

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Museum Supervisor: Ty Rohrer
847-336-1859
museum@waukeganhistorical.org

Hours

John L. Raymond Research Library

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
10am - 2:30pm

Waukegan History Museum at the Haines Farmhouse

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
10am - 4pm
Additional times by appointment.

Visit our website for more information
about events, exhibits, and our
extensive library.

www.waukeganhistorical.org



**Help Us
Celebrate Our
40th Year!**

Sunday, April 6

PROGRAM

Slide Show

Sunday, May 18
2pm

See page 4 for
details.