



Annual Tour of Homes see page 4

June 2007

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society



President's Letter

by Harry E. Came

Inside

Page 5

Current Exhibits

Pages 6-7

Historically Speaking

Page 8

Recent Acquisitions

Page 11

Museum Supervisor's

Report

Summer is upon us and we have the annual Tour of Homes coming up on Sunday, June 24. Make sure to mark your calendars and buy extra tickets for yourself and your friends. The Tour is the Society's most important revenue-producing event, and we depend heavily on the sale of tickets to fund our operations throughout the year. This year we are lucky to have several wonderful homes on the tour and expect a larger turnout than ever. The Tour provides revenue as well as bringing hundreds of out of town visitors into Waukegan for a very positive experience in our beautiful neighborhoods.

The last two programs presented by the Society have been well attended and enjoyed by our members and friends. In April we were pleased to present Rick Pickren in his "Songs from the Lonesome Prairie." He sang, played the banjo and harmonica, and provided interesting tales of the West. Larry Leafblad drew a large crowd with his program on WKRS in Waukegan and the "Golden Age of Radio." As always, our programs are free, and we welcome you to come and enjoy the program.

We are so pleased that our Historic Markers are beginning to appear on some of the wonderful homes in the City. As you drive around town you can now get a better look at our rich history and

learn when a particular neighborhood was built. The markers cost \$75.00 and make a great gift for a spouse who has everything. What a great way for a real estate agent to thank a new historic homeowner.

Two new exhibits have recently been installed in the Museum and will continue through this year. The American Legion and GAR exhibit is currently set up in the Tower Room and presents many of the objects, donated by both organizations, in the care of the Society. A new exhibit called "Waukegan Listens! From Phonograph and Radio to the MP3" has been installed in the newly-remodeled exhibit room on the second floor. This exhibit shows a variety of items from our collection relating to the sound experience.

Ty Rohrer, our Museum Supervisor, has been working with the Board and the Museum Committee to try and make the Museum more "visitor friendly." We have opened up the rooms so visitors can get further into each room—and it seems to be working. We have had large groups of students and scouts recently visited the Museum and they seem to be enjoying the experience of actually being inside the period rooms. We look forward to working closely with the schools to have even more students visit the Museum.

WHS Board

Officers

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Harry E. Came

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Ellen Frew

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Betsy Alleman

Sara Griffin

Margaret Martin

Steve Rosswurm

Denyse Waters

Tour of Homes

Sunday, June 24, 1:00pm-5:00pm

The Society's much anticipated annual Tour of Homes will take place on Sunday June 24 from 1:00 to 5:00pm. This year's tour will include four private homes ranging from high Victorian to 1950s retro, as well as the Haines House Museum. The private homes featured are:

1005 Oak Crest: a charming brick home located on one of Waukegan's loveliest curving streets. The owners have spent years assembling a truly remarkable collection of railroad memorabilia as well as model trains which will be running during the Tour.

710 N. Sheridan Road: one of Waukegan's most beautiful Victorians homes, built in 1872 and designated a Bicentennial Landmark by the City. In the past two years, this elegant Italianate-style home has been extensively and accurately restored to its high-Victorian splendor both inside and out.

936 N. Sheridan Road: this stately brick home with tile roof and gracious porch helps to define Sheridan Road as Waukegan's finest residential thoroughfare. The new owner has extensively landscaped the large front yard and has furnished the house with an interesting and eclectic blend of antiques and more contemporary pieces.

1937 N. Poplar Street: a modest brick ranch built in 1954 that holds a real surprise for Tour visitors. The current owner has furnished the house with a wonderful collection of authentic 1950s pieces—from the furniture and accessories to the wall art and kitchen appliances. Even the wall colors accurately transport you back to the 1950s.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and may be purchased at the Haines House Museum, Jack Benny Center, or Victorian House Antiques (650 Grand Avenue), as well as by mail to: Waukegan Historical Society, 1917 N. Sheridan Rd., Waukegan, IL 60087. If ordering by mail, please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Tickets will be \$12 the day of the tour and

may be purchased at any tour site.

This is the Society's main fundraiser for the year and is regularly attended by several hundred people. Encourage your friends, family and neighbors to participate in this enjoyable event that showcases Waukegan's finest homes and neighborhoods!

Pierce Florist Celebrates 75th Anniversary

In 1932 Ruth Pierce began the business at 218 North Genesee Street and this well known Waukegan storefront still welcomes customers in 2007. Wendy and Patrick Duby purchased the flower shop one year ago and are planning a celebration of their first anniversary and the 75th anniversary of the business. The Dubys are looking for any pictures of Pierce Florist from the early days so they can use them in their big celebration this summer.

Current Exhibits

The new exhibition space in the Haines Museum currently houses *Waukegan Listens! From the Phonograph and Radio, to the MP3*. The exhibit focuses on the history of listening devices such as the phonograph, radio, 8-track, cassette tape, compact disc, and MP3 players. The Jack Benny Radio Program and early radio stations from Waukegan such as WKRS, WPEP, and WXLG, are also covered. The exhibit will run from May 20 through January 1.

Visit the Haines Museum to see the many changes taking place and to see our continuing exhibit about the American Legion Post No. 281 and the Grand Army of the Republic No. 374.



Historically Speaking

Radio

by Ed Link

The first commercial radio stations with regularly scheduled broadcasts began in 1920. Waukegan's involvement with the medium doesn't go back that far, but it doesn't miss by much. WPEP received its governmental licenses on December 11, 1926. Maurice



Mayer first broadcast eighteen days later from the front of the Madrid Ballroom on south Genesee Street. The following year he relocated to his home on Hazel Court, but the station met with difficulties and went off the air on May 24, 1928.

WCBD broadcast from the Karcher Hotel in 1935, but it was not until 1948 that a station was able to continue in business. WKRS-FM began on July 25 of that year and lasted until 1952. Its sister station WKRS-AM began on September 25, 1949 and continues today.

Radio also meant business. The 1931 city directory lists eight companies in Waukegan and North Chicago that were manufacturing radio sets and parts. An additional fifteen companies were involved in ancillary services such as retail sales, parts, equipment, and service.

These were not small companies either, as one might expect from an industry still in its infancy. A 1930 photograph from Echophone Radio Manufacturing Co. shows nearly 150 employees. Fansteel had made the Balkite Rectifier, a power unit

for radios, until radios began using alternating current. Northwest Specialty Service offered the Walton Motor-Car Radio for only \$19.50. However, an additional \$18.32 was needed for the components to make it work.



A different type of allied business was the Lake County Radio Institute which opened on Washington Street in 1949. It offered instruction for radio, stage, and TV.

Radio also offered entertainment in an unusual way. In the early days of the Genesee Theatre stage shows were provided regularly. Often those performers were associated with radio programs that were popular with the audience. Major Bowes' Amateurs made several appearances. Chicago radio stations WBBM, WJJD, and WLS sent their stars here. The latter station, home at the time to the National Barn Dance, came frequently and featured performers such as Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette, Pat Buttram, Red Foley, George Gobel, and Patsy Montana. Jack Benny aired his national broadcast from the Genesee on June 25, 1939 in conjunction with the premiere of "Man About Town."



Recent Acquisitions

Stuart Stefany

3 Sand Casting. Industrial Pattern Molds salvaged from the Waukegan Foundry

Sandy Dickson

The Annual "W" 1929 Yearbook, photographs of Waukegan Symphony Orchestra (January 23, 1931), String Quartet, "Waukegan Court No. 76-Tribe Ben Hur"

Lars Ewers

Decorative Spoon with engraving of Swedish Methodist Church of Waukegan, IL

Art Peterson

Wooden Coat Hanger , Coop Half Pint Bottle

Publisher Gift

Ray Bradbury's "Farewell Summer"

Lake County Women's Coalition

3-10-07 Program "Women of Lake County"

Betsy Alleman

Newspaper Clippings, obituaries

Postcards

Swedish Glee Club Membership

Beth Mariotti

Genealogy information

Richard Ribondo

Newspaper Photographs

Lars Ewers

Swedish Methodist Church spoon

Mr. and Mrs. John Schwab

School Certificates

Janet Sarsha

Photographs of Oakwood Cemetery, Immaculate Conception

Shelby Goodrode

North Shore Line map

Marciana Shulz

Waukegan High School yearbooks 1938-1945

Larry Leafblad

Computer

Joe Zelenz

Bryan Dunn biographical material

Tom and Betty Dietz

1920 Bonnie Brook Golf Club lot map

Steve Rosswurm

Thesis on European Folk Songs Collected in Waukegan, IL

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

Volunteers Needed

The Waukegan Historical Society is seeking volunteers for both the Haines Museum and the John L. Raymond Research 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.

Research Help Needed

One of our members needs help in his genealogical research and has asked that we pass this along. In the 1976 Bicentennial book, "Historical Highlights of the Waukegan Area" by Louise and Julia Osling, there was a line which stated, "Records dated 1835 disclosed that the following persons had made their claims" in the Waukegan area. The names mentioned were Pelege Sunderlin, John Flood, Joseph DeHart, Thomas Tieman, and Samuel Pillifant.

Our member seeks information on the early settlers of Waukegan; specifically where the authors found the information which was the basis of the quote. If anyone knows where the original research for the booklet might be, please contact Philip Smith at the numbers listed below.

Philip Smith

847.360.9427 (home)

847.362.5959 (work)

Volunteer opportunities:

Collection inventory and management

Tour docents

Exhibit installation and care

Program development

Research

Special Events

Library assistant

In Memoriam

Hank I. Clark

1937-2007

The Waukegan Historical Society lost a valuable member when Hank Clark passed away in March. Hank was a life member who had also volunteered as an actor for the Oakwood Cemetery Walk every year since its inception 13 years ago.

Among the people that Hank portrayed were Robert Douglas, early nurseryman; William Besley, Waukegan Brewer; John Williams, lighthouse keeper; and Jeremiah Minsky, schooner captain. The first question that Hank would ask when he selected a character was “Do I need to grow a beard?” The answer was usually yes.

Hank touched the lives of many young people in Waukegan as a teacher and guidance counselor. He was also involved with the Waukegan Community Players and the Bowen Park Theater. He will truly be missed by all.



Hank Clark performing in the Oakwood Cemetery Walk in 2006.

Museum Supervisor's Report

June 2007

The summer months are generally the busiest time of the year for museums. Many families enjoy visiting local and national museums while traveling on their vacations. Festivals and programs associated with museums are also more prevalent during the warm summer months. The Haines Museum hopes to welcome many new and old faces into the museum during the summer.

More than just attendance figures rise during the summer months. The number of artifact donations also increases. Historical objects are often found during “spring cleanings” of attics, basements, and closets. If you come across something that you would like to donate, please call or stop by the museum. The Waukegan Historical Society is proud to be the repository for the history of Waukegan.

One of the major projects that will be taking place during the summer will be an inventory of the historical society's extensive collections. We need volunteers to help with this project in areas such as artifact cleaning and measuring.

Also in the following months the historical society may have an intern provided by the Waukegan Park District. A smaller institution such as the Haines Museum can provide the opportunity for interns to gain knowledge of all facets of the working museum. Our internship program will help this individual gain experience in preparation for a future career in history. Stop by and meet the new intern!

Collections Cameo

Dining Room Furniture

By Harry E. Came

After finding the sideboard and the dining table, the dining room was well on its way to being furnished. The next piece was found at an estate sale on Ash Street in Waukegan. I saw a small, plain server at a sale while I was busy trying to add to my never-ending collection of "stuff." I thought that it would be perfect for the Haines dining room, but it was little too much money; on the second day of the sale I bought it for half price.

The Society had it restored and it fits perfectly next to the fireplace. It is a simple piece, but it is



made of solid walnut and is of about the same period as the house. The server fits perfectly in its new home and displays items that have been donated to the Society.

Another new piece in the dining room is a mahogany card or game table with a folding top. I am avid Ebay watcher and I look for anything with a Waukegan connection. The

auction description stated that it was from the Besley estate in Waukegan. Ruth Besley was a founder of the Historical Society and her family had owned the Besley Brewery. We have other items from the Besley family, so I bid on the table and won. After restoration, we put it in the dining room with a silver-plated tea service. Donated two years ago by Betty (Mary) Kaiser, the beautiful tea service was a gift to her paternal grandparents, Ida Haswell Tanner and Harry Cuyler Tanner upon their wedding in 1890.

The game table is in the empire style which was originally popular from about 1815 until 1840. The mahogany veneered table has a lyre shaped base and serpentine cut top. The lovely piece looks wonderful in the room and adds one more layer of history to the room and the Museum.

We are always pleased to get special donations of family items from our valued members and those interested in the history of Waukegan. Sometimes things find their way to us in strange ways, but the beautiful results can easily be seen with a visit to the Museum.



Thank You!

New Member

Dave Myers

Area Events

Please call to confirm dates and times.

McHenry County Historical Society (815-923-2267)

June 20. Perkins Hall Players perform, Dirty Dancing—1925. Period clothing encouraged, 7pm.

June 25. Speaker: Steve Aavang of Antique Barn Association, If the Old Timbers Could Talk, 7pm.

July 8. Hot-Diggety Heritage Fair, 10am-4pm.

Historical Society of Fort Hill Country (847-566-7743)

June 30. Annual Open House & Patriotic Celebration, 9:45. Speakers, VFW Legion Post color guard, barbershop quartet, Antioch Quartet, antique cars, refreshments. Museum open 12:30pm-4pm.

Grayslake Historical Society (847-223-7663)

June 10. Open House, 1:30pm-3:30pm. Continuing exhibits: Purses With Personality, and History of the Grayslake Greenery Garden Club.

June 16. Special Lego exhibit by children, 10am-2pm.

July 8. Open House, 1:30pm-3:30pm. New exhibit: High Five the Fifties.

Raupp Memorial Museum in Buffalo Grove (847-459-2318)

June 19 through August 22. Try-It Tuesdays! Free activities and crafts, 1pm-2:30pm.

July 1. Family Dig Day



Spoon donated by Lars Evers.

Join Us!

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+) & 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

Haines House Museum

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

Hours

John L. Raymond Research Library

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

Haines House Museum

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



1917 N. Sheridan Rd, Waukegan, IL 60087

Tour of Homes

Sunday, June 24

1:00pm - 5:00pm

See page 4.

Free Ticket!

Be a Room Watcher and receive a complimentary ticket for the annual Tour of Homes.

We need people to help direct traffic and watch rooms during the Tour of Homes. Sign up to work a 2-hour shift and we'll give you a ticket to take the tour either before or after you work.

Shifts are 1pm-3pm or 3pm-5pm on June 24 and volunteers must be able to stand for the entire shift.

To sign up, please call the museum at 847-336-1859.