



Newsletter of the

WAUKEGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME V NUMBER 2

JUNE 2005

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Check us out online!

President's Letter

www.waukeganhistorical.org

As I begin my second term as President, I look back over the past year and realize how much we have accomplished. For all of those people who have volunteered their time and talents, I extend my deepest gratitude. This includes our Board of Directors who meet each month to chart the direction of the Society, and carry out many of its functions. I would like to extend special appreciation to Betsy Alleman, who is "retiring" after serving as our Treasurer for the past fifteen years. Betsy has carried out her duties with true dedication, and I'm grateful that she is remaining on the board as a director. In her place, Harry Came is our new Treasurer, and Gretta Dieck has taken the position of Vice President and membership chairperson. Thank you both for your willingness to serve. In addition to our Board, many of you volunteer in various ways throughout the year at the museum and the library. This support is critical to our success, and we are always more than happy to welcome new volunteers.

At our annual meeting in May, our membership chair reported that we currently have 91 life members and 122 "regular" members. Given that Waukegan has nearly 90,000 residents, I think we can do much better. If you believe in the mission of the Society (which you must if you are a member), tell your neighbors about us, and encourage them to visit the museum or come to a program. If a new resident moves on to your block, let them know that Waukegan has a Historical Society that needs and welcomes their support. Word of mouth is our best publicity.

I'm excited about our annual Tour of Homes scheduled for Sunday June 26th. I have visited each of the tour sites, and we really have some fantastic private homes featured this year including a recently rehabbed late-Victorian house on Sheridan Road, and two 1920s brick homes just north of Greenwood. In addition, the wonderful Genesee Theatre will be open for tours, as will the State Financial Bank, the oldest bank in Lake County. Our own Haines Museum will be open that day as well. See page 2 for further details.

In conjunction with the Tour, we will be unveiling our newest exhibit entitled The Simmons-Cooke House: A Heritage Lost. As most of you are aware, this wonderful relic of Waukegan's history, dating back to 1854, was demolished on April 20th. The Historic Preservation Commission for the city waged a valiant albeit unsuccessful campaign to rescue the house from demolition. This new exhibit will focus on the history of these two important families, and the wonderful home that was a part of our landscape for 150 years. Many of you will remember the building as the Quietdale Funeral Home, which operated there for nearly fifty years. It is hoped that the loss of this important building will be a wake-up call to the importance of historic preservation in our community. See pages 4 and 5 for an historic look back.

I hope to see many of you at our Tour of Homes on June 26th.

Bill Tyre, President

News from the past!

The following article appeared in The Waukegan Gazette on February 18, 1860:

GAS

We are gratified in being able to inform our citizens that the Waukegan Gas Light and Coke Company is in a fair way of being put into working order this summer. A gentleman from New York State, Mr. E.A. Coon, has given the best of assurance that if certain conditions on the part of our city authorities are complied with, - and we are pleased to say they have been, - he would be ready to supply the town with gas before the cold weather this fall sets in. This piece of news will no doubt be hailed with delight by our people. No light extant is equal to that afforded by coal gas, and none is so reliable and cheap, after once being introduced. It is always free from the petty annoyances which everybody knows attends the burning of the different kinds of oil and fluid, and above all is not in the least dangerous.

Exhibits!

Genesee Street: Through the Years

Whether you come to downtown Waukegan to shop, eat, work, or play Genesee Street has always been the place to be! Genesee grew up as the 'pulse' of Waukegan, from the vaudeville stage to the trolley system that started the North Shore Line. A special feature of the exhibit will be several fragments from the recently demolished Academy Theatre.



The Simmons-Cooke House: A Heritage Lost (Opening June 26, 2005)

The recent demolition of the historic Simmons-Cooke house at 104 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue was a devastating blow to Waukegan. The beautiful Greek Revival structure was among the very oldest buildings in the city, and predated the founding of the City of Waukegan by five years. This exhibit will trace the history of three generations of the Simmons and Cooke families, and their impact on Waukegan and Lake County. In addition, the fifty year occupancy of the building by the Quietdale Funeral Home will be explored, along with an in depth look at the efforts of the Historic Preservation Commission over the past year to save this important part of our local heritage. Fragments salvaged during demolition will be on display. An article on the house can be found on pages 4 and 5.

TOUR OF HOMES Sunday, June 26, 2005 - 1:00 - 5:00pm

Featuring interior tours of three private residences, the Genesee Theatre, State Financial Bank and the Haines Museum. Tickets are \$10.00 in advance and can be purchased at any of the following sites:

Waukegan Historical Society, 1917 N. Sheridan Road, Waukegan, IL 60087 (847.336.1859)
Jack Benny Center, 39 Jack Benny Drive, Bowen Park (847.360.4740)
Victorian House Antiques, 650 Grand Avenue (847.599.0325)

For mail orders, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
On the day of the tour only, tickets are \$12.00 and can be purchased at any tour site:

335 Glendenning Place * 1821 North Avenue * 836 N. Sheridan Road
Genesee Theatre, 203 N. Genesee Street * State Financial Bank, 1 S. Genesee Street
Haines House Museum, 1917 N. Sheridan Road

Recent Donations:

<u>Donor</u>	<u>Object</u>
Betsy Alleman.....	Bessie Schlung 1959 Centennial Photo Scrapbook
Betty Burgess.....	Newspapers, Books, Pamphlets, Clippings, Personal Notes
Harry Came & Bill Tyre.....	Victorian Scrap Book
Harry Came.....	2 Tea Cups with Saucers, 6 Cloth Napkins
Ida Corey.....	2 Mass Transit Tokens
Gretta Dieck.....	Negatives, Articles about 503 N. Genesee St., Baking Mold
Mary Dubois.....	Key Ring - Lewis and Ed's Sinclair Service
Sara Griffin.....	2 Parlor Chairs
Jeanne Huskie.....	7 Spoons
David Motley.....	Waukegan 'Now' Poster
Wayne Munn.....	4 CD's Benny Statue Ceremony 1 CD Carnegie Preservation
Ronald Neuman.....	John Umek Beer Bottle
Alan Parshall.....	Phyllis Parshall Family Info
Purchase.....	Book 'Hull House'
Purchase.....	Waukegan Safe Deposit Co. Stock Certificate
Purchase.....	Book 'Fort Sheridan'
Purchase.....	Renaissance Revival Library Table
Chandra Sefton.....	Photocopies for Landmark Book
Lela Ungard.....	2 Letters 1917 and 1921 form Bevier Estate
Jane Drew Waller.....	5 Day Book Ledgers from Bernard Drew, Blacksmith

We thank each and everyone of you who thought enough of us to donate these wonderful objects!

MUSEUM WISH LIST

The Society is grateful for all of the donations that members and residents have made recently, including several who provided items as they were in the process of "downsizing." The Museum is always most appreciative to have any materials relating to Waukegan, especially architectural photos for our archives. In our continuing effort to furnish the dining room, we are also looking for silver or silverplated flatware from the 1800s as well as napkin rings and possibly china. Please keep the Society in mind if you have items such as these and are looking for a good home for them.

CONGRATULATIONS SOCIETY VOLUNTEERS

Several members of the Waukegan Historical Society were honored at the annual Waukegan Park District Volunteer Dinner held Thursday, February 23rd. Bev Millard, our research librarian was honored as Volunteer of the Year. Bev donates hundreds of hours of her time each year in the library, helping students, homeowners and many others researching a broad range of topics. Bev goes above and beyond the call of duty and we all extend our heartiest congratulations to her on this well-deserved honor. In addition, the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association-Community Service Award was presented to the Society in recognition of our work in creating notebooks and related study materials to be used in our schools to teach local history. Those who worked on the committee were Betsy Alleman, Ann Darrow, Ellen Frew, Paul and Elaine Eagon and Beverly Millard. Thank you all for your commitment to this important project.

HISTORIC MYSTERY TRUNK GETS RAVE REVIEWS

Our Historic Mystery Trunk program for school-age children has been very popular this past school year. Following one such program for the after school program at Christ Episcopal Church, the Society received a lovely thank you note praising Brian Hora's presentation and his "trip to the past." The Church was especially grateful that the Society is able to offer these programs at no cost.

ABBOTT DONATION

The Society is delighted to be the recipient of a generous donation of much needed computer equipment. Earlier this spring, Abbott Laboratories donated a computer, heavy-duty printer and three laptops to the Society. This is part of their program to offer slightly used equipment to qualified not-for-profits. Our thanks also to Society board member Denyse Waters for facilitating this donation.

CASH DONATIONS RECOGNIZE SOCIETY WORK

Two cash donations have recently come to the Society, both as a direct result of efforts of our volunteers and staff. In February, Altria Group, Inc. awarded the Society a grant of \$1,000 in recognition of the volunteer efforts of our member (and their employee) Wayne A. Munn. This gift will be directed towards our research library. In May, we received a \$100 donation from the North Chicago Lions Club, following a presentation on Waukegan history delivered by Museum Supervisor Brian Hora. The Society is deeply grateful for these generous gifts



THE SIMMONS-COOKE HOUSE: A HERITAGE LOST

The demolition of the historic Simmons-Cooke house on April 20, 2005, erased from the landscape yet another significant piece of Waukegan history. The elegant Greek Revival house, built five years before Waukegan was incorporated as a city in 1859, stood as a silent witness to historic events ranging from Lincoln's visit to Waukegan during his campaign for President, to the recent reopening of the Genesee Theatre.

The builder of the house, Ichabod Simmons, was one of several siblings to "head west" to Lake County from New York in the 1840s, settling in and around Benton Township. The Simmons brothers were all highly successful in their new home, and took leadership positions in the community. A nephew, Zalmon G. Simmons, relocated to Kenosha and went on to found the Simmons Mattress Company. Ichabod, who served as Deputy United States Assessor of Internal Revenue for all of Lake County, was elected Sheriff of the County in 1860, representing the newly formed Republican Party. He no doubt was present when the party's candidate for President, Abraham Lincoln, visited Waukegan to make a campaign speech. Also present at that speech was Simmons's future son-in-law, Homer Cooke, who was employed in the law office of Elisha Ferry, Mayor of Waukegan and Lincoln's official host during the visit.

Homer Cooke married Sally Ann Simmons in 1863 and purchased the Simmons home at that time. It would remain their residence throughout their fifty year marriage. Cooke was a distinguished lawyer who practiced for a number of years in Chicago, being burned out in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Eventually he opened a law practice in Waukegan, handling many high profile cases.

One of the Cooke children, Andrew, also had a distinguished career both in Waukegan and Chicago. In the early 1900s, he was elected President of Harris Bank and Trust. After leaving that position, he served as the head of the Waukegan School Board. When he died unexpectedly in 1916, a school then under construction was renamed the Andrew Cooke School in his honor. His family occupied the home for many years, and the last of the Cookes did not move from the residence until the early 1940s, nearly ninety years after it had been built by their ancestor.

The house then started its second life as the Quietdale Funeral Home. Opened in 1943, the funeral home operated for fifty years, and witnessed the last rites for many of Waukegan's most distinguished citizens. The business was operated by the Lehtimaki family, who occupied the rooms on the second floor of the house. The building, which now sported huge two-story classical columns across the east façade, became a community "landmark." After the funeral home closed in 1993, the building sat vacant, awaiting its next life.

Early in 2004, the building was purchased by two lawyers who started renovation work on the structure, including stripping paint off the brick and repointing the masonry. Their hope was to convert the building to offices, as a number of law firms in and around downtown had done successfully with other vintage residences. By mid-summer however, the house and surrounding property were acquired by the County, for use as a parking lot.

The Historic Preservation Commission worked tirelessly to save the building over the next several months. It soon became apparent that the only way to save the structure was to move it to another site. Nation wide publicity by such organizations as the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois and the National Trust for Historic Preservation encouraged interested parties to consider moving and renovating the structure. A proposal to move the structure to the grounds of the Andrew Cooke Magnet School was also being pursued. An article publicizing the plight of the house was prepared for *This Old House* magazine.

In spite of all these efforts, the County made the decision to demolish the building on April 20th. Residents were shocked and dismayed to see 150 years of history reduced to a pile of rubble in a matter of hours. If anything positive can come from this tragic event, it is that the sudden surge of interest in historic preservation in the community can help to ensure that such losses can be prevented in the future.

(Note: The article in *This Old House* magazine will be run in the July/August issue, with the sobering footnote that the building has been lost.)

Bill Tyre

Historically Speaking



-The Simmons-Cooke house shown in 1913 at the time of the Golden Wedding anniversary of Homer and Sally Cooke, standing at the base of the stairs (Courtesy of the Wauconda Historical Society)



-Demolition of the Simmons-Cooke house, April 20, 2005 (Photo by Margaret Martin)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

See page 2 for details

Sunday, September 18 at 2:00pm
 Dr. Lynn Schornick Theatre
 39 Jack Benny Drive, Bowen Park

The Diaries of Hobart P. Yard

Ed Link will share excerpts from the fascinating diary-journals of Waukegan newspaper correspondent Hobart P. Yard, covering the period 1875 to 1934.



TOUR OF HOMES

Sunday, June 26, 2005
1:00 - 5:00pm

See page 2 for further information

MUSEUM WORK DAYS

Saturdays at 9:00am

June 4th & 18th
July 2nd & 16th
August 6th & 20th



DANDELION WINE FESTIVAL

Waukegan's 5th Annual Fine Arts Festival
 Bowen Park Saturday,
 June 4, 2005 12-5pm
 Artists, Music, Poetry, Drum Circle and Lake
 County Art League Art Sale,

Call 847-360-4740 for further information and schedule of events

BOARD MEETINGS

Tuesdays at 7:00pm

June 7
July 5
August 2

BMX RACING COMES TO

WAUKEGAN

Grand Opening Sunday June 12, 2005

The latest facility to service a growing need in the community is the BMX Bike Track at Henry Pfau Callahan Park.

For more information please call Cheryl at 847-363-5284.

WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

EVENTS

June 4, 2005 12-5	Dandelion Wine Festival
June 12, 2005	BMX Racing Track Grand Opening
June 20-24, 2005	Bowen Park Theatre Company -Jack and the Beanstalk
July 3, 2005	American Independence Parade & Festival
July 7-10,11, 2005	Bowen Park Theatre Company -Why do Heroes Have Big Feet?
July 25-29, 2005	Bowen Park Theatre Company -Rumpelstiltskin

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE PARADE AND FESTIVAL

Sunday, July 3, 2005

American Independence Parade starts at 2pm and follows Sheridan Road north to Bowen Park.
The Festival includes petting zoo, climbing wall, dunk tank, children's stage, main stage, food vendors, arts and crafts and children's games from 12-6pm.
 The Haines Museum open 12-3pm

CEMETERY WALK

Saturday, September 24, 2005

The City of Waukegan, Waukegan Park District-Cultural Arts Division and Waukegan Historical Society invite you to join us for the 9th Annual Cemetery Walk. Join us as we step back into the past of Waukegan. Costumed performers portraying selected individuals from our community's past will greet you in the historic Oakwood Cemetery after boarding buses at Bowen Park.

For more information contact Tracy Wooldridge at 847-360-4740

**WAUKEGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

In addition to learning more about the long and fascinating history of Waukegan, membership in the historical society comes with many additional benefits. Use the membership application below. Consider becoming a member, or giving a gift membership to a friend. It also makes a great welcome gift to a new neighbor.

Benefits of membership:

- * \$2.00 discount on any ticket to the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra, Waukegan Concert Chorus, Bowen Park Theatre, or Bowen Park Opera;
- * 10% off any entree at Kong's Restaurant, 40 N. Genesee Street;
- * 10% off any entree at Madison Avenue, 34 N. Sheridan Road;
- * 10% off any sandwich at the Uptown Cafe, 300 N. County Street;
- * 10% off Society gift items including the Jack Benny CD and the book *Images of America: Waukegan, Illinois* when purchased at the museum.

(Restaurant discounts at the discretion of management, call to confirm.)

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE SOCIETY
AND HAINES MUSEUM**

The Society is a volunteer organization, and we are always seeking new volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks. We have many different opportunities available to match your interest. No previous experience is necessary; we will gladly train you. Listed below is a summary of the positions available.

- * **Museum Docent** - serves as a guide for visitors to the museum, including 'room-watching' during special events;
- * **Program Aide** - assists with the educational programs;
- * **Exhibition Assistant** - aids in the planning and implementation of displays and exhibits;
- * **Collections Assistant** - helps with the historical collections, including cataloging and conserving objects;
- * **Administrative Aide** - assists with clerical activities;
- * **Researcher** - investigates subjects for upcoming exhibits and responds to requests from scholars and residents;
- * **Maintenance Assistant** - assists in the upkeep of the museum facility.

(Use the form below or call Brian Hora at 847-336-1859 to volunteer or to get further information)



Membership Application

Name(s) _____
 Address _____

 City _____
 State _____ Zip + 4 _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

- 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
- Corporate.....\$500.00
- Please Accept My Additional Gift.....\$ _____

Please make checks payable to the **Waukegan Historical Society**

Volunteer Application

Name(s) _____
 Address _____

 City _____
 State _____ Zip + 4 _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

(Check as many as you are interested in!)

- Museum Docent
- Program Aide
- Exhibition Assistant
- Collections Assistant
- Administrative Aide
- Researcher
- Maintenance Assistant

Mail To: Waukegan Historical Society
 1917 N. Sheridan Road
 Waukegan, IL. 60087

TOUR OF HOMES
Sunday, June 26th
1:00 - 5:00pm
See page 2 for details



<p>WAUKEGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY</p> <p>William Tyre.....President Gretta Dieck.....Vice President Harry Came.....Treasurer Ellen Frew.....Recording/Corresponding Secretary Sara Griffin.....Immediate Past President Betsy Alleman.....Director Margaret Martin.....Director Denyse Waters.....Director Sean Wiedel.....Director</p> <p>Website.....www.waukeganhistorical.org</p> <p>Contact: William Tyre Telephone (evenings/weekends).....847-625-7896 Email.....w.tyre@comcast.net</p> <p><i>Newsletter published quarterly in March, June, September, December</i></p>	<p><u>Haines House Museum</u> 1917 N. Sheridan Road Waukegan, IL. 60087 Telephone.....847-336-1859 Email.....haines@waukeganparks.org Museum Supervisor.....Brian Hora</p> <p><i>Open for public tours:</i> Monday through Friday.....1:00pm - 3:00pm 1st & 2nd Saturday of each month.....1:00pm - 3:00pm Group Tours by Appointment</p> <p><u>J. L. Raymond Memorial Library</u> Lilac Cottage 1911 N. Sheridan Road Waukegan, IL. 60087 Telephone.....847-360-4772 Email.....lilac@waukeganparks.org Librarian.....Beverly Millard</p> <p><i>Library Hours:</i> Wednesday through Friday.....10:00am - 2:30pm</p> <p><i>Photocopying services available for 25 cents per page. On site assistance with genealogical and general research.</i></p>
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