



Grayslake Historical Society

164 HAWLEY STREET ♦ P.O. BOX 185 ♦ GRAYSLAKE, ILLINOIS 60030-0185 ♦ 847-223-7663

UPDATE

September 2010

Village Municipal History Museum
164 Hawley Street
Grayslake, Illinois
Hours: Wednesday - Saturday 12:00 to 4:00
Tours by appointment

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STEPPING BACK

With the Museum closed it has been an unusual passing of time for the Grayslake Historical Society. We missed people touring the Museum or stopping by at the office to talk with the volunteers. However, our programs have been interesting and well attended. We have done outreach activities.

On February 10 Somethings Brewing, located at the northwest corner of Center and Slusser Street, hosted our program. Member Connie Dunbar gave a history of building, starting with Joe Pester having his blacksmith shop in the structure and then recalling such businesses as Rockenbach's Hardware Store. Owner Linda Schulz briefly told about her business, which started in the former telephone building on Whitney Street.

Five speakers captivated the audience on March 10. Nancy Johannsen shared a family picture. Darlene Dorfler brought her child's chair. Joanne Lawrence had items from her great-grandmother. Shirley Christian had pictures and artifacts which highlighted the life of her father-in-law, former Lake County Sheriff Stanley Christian. Chris Brenner regaled us with letters and a diary from his treasure trove of documents found in the Brenner family trunk.

There were a variety of events in April. On the twelfth a scout group took a walk of the downtown business area learning history along the way. Boys' Toys was the topic of Harold Flood's presentation at the Society's April 14th program. He brought a small part of his immense collection of toy trucks for all to see. The United Protestant Church Confirmation Class had its annual history walk on the eighteenth. The following day all seventh graders at the Grayslake Middle School learned that their school property was once a farm plus other unique information in the history of the village.

The final program for the Society's spring session was "Pages from

the Past" held on March 12th. Connie Dunbar started with telling the March 1899 story of the Wilbur Lumber Company fire in which Fred Potter lost his life. Lori Baumgartner took us to 1916 when a Sears house fell into Gages Lake when an attempt was made to move it using the lake as a path. We learned from Karl Molek the 1923 story of why present day Route 83 is known as Barron Boulevard. People were interested to learn that the Klu Klux Klan met in Grayslake in 1924. This event was researched by Chris Brenner. Larry Leafblad concluded the program with a stroll down Center Street recalling stores and businesses from the era when Grayslake's downtown area served all the shopping needs of the village's residents.

Members Lori Baumgartner and Marjie Jobes took the Society's traveling basket to Miss Mary's Peppermint Preschool on May 13th while Kristin Pearson and Joanne Lawrence took it to St. Gilbert's first graders on May 20th. Kristin also shared the basket's contents with members of her scout group. Members of the Society were present at the May 20th dedication of the Grayslake Heritage Center and Museum flag pole on May 15. Grayslake's American Legion and VFW posts donated the flag and the Grayslake Garden Greenery Club donated a Blue Star Hiway Marker. The landscaping was an Eagle Scout project of Frank Busch. Pat and Ken Yopp represented the Society in Grayslake's annual Memorial Day parade.

In June members of the Society board traveled to Deerfield and enjoyed seeing its Historic Village composed of the oldest building in Lake County, a one room school house, a carriage barn and more. The Society was represented at Lake-McHenry County Historical Alliance at three workshops, each hosted by a different Lake County local museum.

FORGING AHEAD

Program chair Joanne Lawrence has some interesting programs planned for our fall session. All programs will be held in the Community Room of the Heritage Center and Museum starting at 7:30 PM. Entrance is through the courtyard. There are nine parking spaces behind the building and three beside the building with additional parking in the municipal lot across the street. All programs are open to the public with no admission charge.

On **Wednesday, September 8**, Ty Rohrer, Director of the Waukegan Historical Society's Haines House Museum will talk about comedian Jack Benny, who gave Waukegan national recognition. As Director of Waukegan's Museum, Rohrer has access to much information about Waukegan's former resident.

The thirteenth annual Living History Tour of the Grayslake Cemetery will be **Sunday, October 3** at 1:30 and again at 2:30. An actor portraying former Mayor Sid Carfield will lead the audience to the grave sites of Ed Kapple, Anna Struthers, Alma Johnson, Earl Thomson, Jennie

Heard and Joe Peterkort Jr.

Member Tim Holst will use a power point program on **Wednesday, October 13** to tell the history of Abbott Laboratories. Holst and his wife are two of the many Grayslake residents who are employed by the company.

Michael Kroack, a diver from Wildwood will tell "The Rest of the Story" on **Wednesday, November 10**. Kroack has been in the depths of Gages Lake to see the remains of the House that Fell into the Lake. That story was told during a previous program of the Society. He will be able to tell us first hand what is below the surface and more of the 1916 story.

Check the Society's web site www.grayslakehistory.org and local newspapers for details and possible additional activities.

A WEEKEND OF CELEBRATION

More than 150 invited guests got an early look August 13 at the Grayslake Heritage Center and Village Municipal History Museum during a Sneak Preview event hosted by the Grayslake Historical Society. Guests were invited by the Society to the special evening program in recognition for their donations and contributions to the development and construction of the museum. They were welcomed in the Community Room by Society board member Connie Dunbar. She introduced elected officials and Society Board members in attendance. Grayslake Mayor Rhett Taylor spoke stressing the importance of community. Society president Charlotte Renehan, flanked by committee members Connie Dunbar and Kathi Starzec explained the process that created the permanent gallery. Two representatives from Taylor Studios of Rantoul, Illinois, which was the commercial company which worked with the Society to design and fabricate the gallery, expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the project.

Following the formal presentations, the large group divided into three smaller groups for the self-guided tours of the permanent gallery and other exhibits on the first and second floors. Construction continues on the artifact and archival storage areas plus reading room in the basement.

Society docents were available throughout the museum to answer questions and guide the visitors. Background music was provided by Marilyn Walters of the Grayslake Lions Club. Refreshments, including punch, coffee, and cookies, were served in the Community Room.

The weekend celebration of the opening of the museum continued Sunday afternoon outdoors in the courtyard with the dedication ceremony hosted by village officials. Formal ribbon-cutting was done by Society President Charlotte Renehan and Mayor Rhett Taylor flanked by village officials and Society board members.

Taylor welcomed the estimated 175 guests. He introduced former and present village and county officials. Guest speakers were Charlotte Renehan and former state representative Robert Churchill of Grayslake.

Renehan related how the Grayslake Historical Society's museum grew from a few public exhibits in 1976, when the Society was founded, to the newly enlarged Village Municipal History Museum.

Churchill traced the history of his family in the Grayslake area and noted that the new museum is not about the past, but about the future. He termed the museum a gift to the future. The mayor said the village's goal is to have the best history museum in the Chicago area. "This will become a premier jewel in our downtown," he said.

Following the ribbon-cutting, guests were invited to tour the museum. Society docents were available in the museum to answer questions and provide tour guidance. Refreshments were served by village staff throughout the afternoon in the community room.

DEDICATION SPEECH

The Speech for the Dedication of the Grayslake Heritage Center and Village Municipal History Museum was given by Robert Churchill, former Majority Leader of the Illinois House of Representatives. The text follows.

"One hundred seventy years ago, back in the early 1840s, a little over sixty years after the birth of the United States of America, a family settled on a farm a few miles north of here. From that family was descended my grandmother. So the roots of my generation of our family go back one hundred seventy years here.

One hundred forty years ago, after fighting for the North in the Civil War, in the defense of Washington, following General Robert E. Lee down the Shenandoah, fighting at Cold Harbor and finishing the war at Appomattox Court House, where Lee surrendered, a man named Oliver Churchill headed west, eventually settling in Libertyville, Illinois. Oliver taught school in the winter and was a "mechanic," that is - a carpenter, during the summers. He worked on houses in the booming metropolis of Hainesville and the fledgling new town of Grayslake. His son, Rolla W. Churchill or "R. W." as he liked to be called, married my grandmother in 1903 and started his brand new law firm on the corner of Center Street and Whitney Street in downtown Grayslake. At that time, and for several decades after that, I believe Grandpa was the only lawyer in northwestern Lake County.

Four of R.W.'s descendants would practice law on the same corner. My father, George Oliver Churchill, my cousin John Churchill Baumgartner, my brother William Churchill and I have kept the family business going now for 107 years. My father passed away after practicing law for forty-five years, give or take a few when he was in the service of Uncle Sam during World War II. John Baumgartner has retired after forty-five plus years. With my brother, Bill, and me, and six other partners, the law firm of Churchill, Quinn, Richtman & Hamilton, LTD. still thrives in downtown Grayslake, 107 years at the intersection of Center and Whitney. That seems so long - 107 years. When you think about it, that is just shy of

half of our country's age. My family has been practicing law in downtown Grayslake for almost half of the time that the United States America has existed.

America is such a young country, and Grayslake is such a young village. There are countries that have existed for thousands of years, sometimes under a multitude of names, but they are still there. And there are cities, towns and villages all over the world that go back thousands of years. Think of all that history.

Don't you wish that you could get into a time machine and go back and see what life was like a thousand years or two thousand years ago? That would be really fascinating, but, unfortunately, it's impossible.

So the next best thing would be to have something from those times to observe, to study to maybe touch, smell or hear. Don't you wish that the people of those towns and times would have said "you know, we should gather up some of our things and put them some place so that they will be protected, and so that people in the future will be able to see how we lived, what we owned, to get a glimpse of our family, social and economic lives." I wish they would have done that. But, alas, they did not. We have to rely on excavations to dig up parts of things that were so ill-preserved.

We can't go back in time. We can't gather up items of the past from those times. We can't preserve things from a thousand years ago. But what we can do is to gather up some of our things and put them some place so that they will be protected and so that people in the future will be able to see how we lived, what we owned, to get a glimpse of our daily, social and economic lives. And that is just what we are doing here today.

This is just a building. It is a beautiful building. And in and of itself, it will become a part of history, as future generations see how we build things today. But a building by itself doesn't explain us.

It is what we put into the building, the articles, the artifacts, that which seems so common to us today which may really look unusual to someone a few centuries from now. That is what helps to define us.

This new building is not about the past. It is about the future. It is really not about us. It is a gift from us that we make to future generations. We come here today to celebrate the completion of this new building, this new house of our accumulated treasures. We come here today to bind together community, over time. We come here today to thank and congratulate everybody who had a hand in this noble effort - the members of the historical society - thank you, the village government - thank you, the contributors - thank you, the volunteers - thank you, the benefactors - thank you, and to all of those of you who have donated articles, keepsakes, memorabilia and, most of all, your time and talents - thank you.

And I conclude by telling you this: The gratitude that we express here today for the completion of this project, though not insignificant, will pale by comparison to the gratitude that will be felt by thousands of future visitors to this site. We place our faith and trust that the "past" exhibited in

this building will provide the guideposts for the future of this great village. Congratulations. Well done, Grayslake."

AGREEMENT WITH THE VILLAGE OF GRAYSLAKE

On May 19, 2010 the Grayslake Historical Society entered into a Building Use and Services Agreement with the Village of Grayslake for the use of the building at 164 Hawley named the Grayslake Heritage Center and Village Municipal History Museum. It is a lengthy legal document but a few points will be covered for all Society members to know. The maintenance and utilities are the responsibility of the Village as well as building insurance. The Society maintains ownership of its archival and artifact collection and insures its property as appropriate.

A committee composed of two village trustees and two historical society members plus the executive director will oversee the operation of the building. The executive director, who will be hired by and be responsible to the village, will coordinate the day to day operations of the building. The Society will manage its collections and is required to have the Museum open sixteen hours a week with the archives reading room available to the public five hours. Proceeds from the gift shop and the Museum donation jar will be shared by the Society and the Village.

SPECIAL THANKS

As this newsletter is being composed, almost all of the artifacts and archives of the Grayslake Historical Society are still in storage. The remodeling and addition to the Museum could not have taken place without a place to store the thousands of items in the collections of the Grayslake Historical Society. Storage facilities were made available free of charge by the law firm of Churchill, Quinn, Richtman & Hamilton. LTD. The Society's fire truck and other items have been housed at a facility owned by Doug Rockenbach of Rockenbach Chevrolet, also free of charge, so that the Museum Annex could also be used for storage. In addition, Society members have stored various things. A well earned THANK YOU is due to these individuals and businesses who are helping to preserve the history of Grayslake. As Bob Churchill said in his dedication speech, "It is a gift to the future."

PAGE FROM THE PAST

The archives of the Grayslake Historical Society has microfilm of the *Grayslake Times* from 1905 to 2002, although some years are missing. The following newspaper article is from the September 21, 1919 edition of the *Grayslake Times*.

Hainesville P. O. Has Been Closed

Bulk Of Mail For That Section Will Be Handled By Route Two From Here
During the past few days. H. J. Wheelock and George Battershall have been busy winding up the affairs of the Hainesville post office. This

was at the time of discontinuation perhaps the oldest office in the county. So far we have been unable to find a definite date of the establishment of it.

As far back as 1864 we are able to find the names of the postmasters to the present time. It was in 1864 when Mrs. Ephelinda Wheelock mother of H. J. Wheelock received her appointment from Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, the certificate of appointment was displayed in the Times office. It bears the best of styles of type of that day. The quality of paper used was very good and is in a good state of preservation. Across the bottom of the certificate Mrs. Wheelock wrote the date on which she resigned from the office, it being April 1st, 1874. Her successor was T. C. Slusser, who was in charge of the office until 1885. That year it passes to the hands of Merub Forvor now residing in Grayslake, although very aged, in fair health and sees the day when the office which was once prosperous, closed for one that was at her time of postmistress not thought of. Mrs. Forvor held the office for three years when it passed to George Battershall who was the postmaster until the time of its discontinuation.

Prior to the time of Mrs. Wheelock's postmistresship a man named King was the master, but for how long a period we do not know.

During the time that Mrs. Wheelock was the postmistress the village of Hainesville was incorporated. This incorporation brings to light the fact that there was strife at that time as well as there is today --in fact it is nearly identical with some matters we have before us.

A number of the farmers of that community took it into their heads that the course of the once famous plank road should be changed. To place it where they desired it would have to change the main thoroughfare of the village several hundred feet to the south from where it was at the time and E. M. Highness was perhaps one of the most brilliant men in the country. He owned a log hotel fronting on the road. The hotel business then was much better than it is now, although at the price of a meal was much less and there was much less talk about the high cost of living.

In any event Mr. Highness desired that the road run past the front of his business rather than the rear. He went to Springfield and filed articles of incorporation of the village of Hainesville. In due course of time the hamlet was incorporated, which of course, rendered the route through Hainesville. The route was never changed and remains today where the first Indian trail was blazed.

We have listened to many stories about Hainesville and Hainesville people, some of them are very funny. For a good night's entertainment collect together Fred Battershall, Charles Wightman, Allen McMillen, Bert Paddock, Ed Kapple and a dozen more that we can mention, all of the Washburn boys. They helped together with the young women to make up the young life.

Pranks such as hitching the preacher's horse wrong-end-to into the buggy, backing a kicking horse to the side of the church and urge it to perform, hitching a man's horse to another man's buggy and a thousand others were the amusements that the young fellows indulged while they were waiting for the girls to come from the church. Today, how different.

Hainesville has decayed, but few of the old houses remain standing and when George Battershall closes his store the last of the land marks will have passed, and before you know it there will be no Hainesville at all.

Editor's notes: Mr. Highness refers to Elijah Haines, for whom Hainesville is named. The Hainesville post office opened January 20, 1846 with Haines as the first postmaster and the village was incorporated in 1847. Before Grays Lake's post office opened in 1886, the village received its mail from the Hainesville post office.

COMING IN 2011

The 150 year anniversary of the Civil War will be remembered in 2011. The Grayslake Historical Society plans to have an exhibit in its honor and will be looking for documents and artifacts to put on display in the Museum.

"Saving the Past for the Future"

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