



Grayslake Historical Society

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

UPDATE

February 2016

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

Grayslake Historical Society
164 Hawley Street
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www.grayslakehistory.org
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PAST PROGRAMS

On **September 9, 2015**, a full house at the Heritage Center was treated to a presentation by attorney Robert Smythe on the history of Barron Boulevard (Illinois Route 83).

Rob Smythe's history lesson began with his personal and professional inquiry using the Society's archive, which he then expanded for the presentation.

From 1918, William Edens (Yes... Edens Expressway... that Edens) actively promoted the development of "hard roads" in Illinois as the modern thing to do. Specifically, a highway was proposed from the Northwestern train station, now the Ogilvie Transportation Center, through Libertyville to Antioch and passing through the Village of Grayslake. Financed with bonds to be retired from license fees, the route was completed in 1922 except for an eight mile piece through Grayslake/Avon Township.

While there were paved roads in Illinois, the "hard" roads advocated by Edens were six inches of steel wire reinforced concrete on a developed gravel bed. Named Route 21 (it was financed by the 21st Road Bond Issue), the local route included Milwaukee Avenue in Libertyville, the present State Route 137, and continuing on the present Route 83 to Antioch. The eight mile Grayslake/Avon gap and the lack of a decision on route selection was a source of frustration for then-Governor Len Small, since a complete route was required to claim some federal funding.

The right-of-way of the Grayslake/Avon portion was a matter of local dispute. Two locally proposed routes each had their adherents: the Slusser Route would follow the track of current Slusser Street and the "factory route" would run north and south, just east of the gelatin factory and between that factory and another factory east of it. In March of 1923, a delegation of eighteen Grayslake citizens traveled to Springfield to present their respective cases for route selection. One can imagine how differently Grayslake would look today if either had been adopted! Governor Small said he would not sign off on any route that required dangerous rail crossings and, instead, approved the current route, well east of that desired by any Grayslake citizen.

The Barron family farmed acreage along the eastern edge of Grayslake. Earl and Lillian Barron donated over one mile of right-of-way to support the Governor Route, which was approved. Not surprisingly, after the route was approved and built, the family sub-divided the property on each side of the "hard road" for residential use. (A person in attendance at the presentation told the story of her family buying a lot (\$10 down, \$5 a month) and then seeing their house built on the wrong lot. Attorney Smythe commiserated.)

The eight mile stretch was completed in just forty-six days in September of 1924. As Rob Smythe has personally discovered, the original pavement still exists under the current Barron Boulevard and it is hard stuff. Signage identifying Barron as Route 21 was finally removed in the 70s.

Mr. Smythe concluded his interesting presentation by showing videos of road construction equipment and technology and pipe laying techniques used to construct the route.

The eighteenth annual Grayslake Cemetery Walk was held on **Sunday, October 2, 2015**. The sky was overcast but that did not stop the audience from enjoying and learning Grayslake's history from costumed participants. Maria Forvor (1822-1895) welcomed the visitors to the site which she and her husband deeded to become the local burial grounds. Maria had been born in neighboring Warren Township while Lawrence came from Ohio. Five of their infant children are buried with them in the cemetery as are two adult children.

Maria introduced Carmi Reed (1859-1929) who then introduced other participants in turn. Carmi is not buried in the cemetery but owned the building in which the first mayor of the Village was elected. Carmi introduced Hannah Holmes (1869-1908). Hannah's husband owned a hardware store in Grayslake. Next Carmi introduced Emily Strang (1858-1920). Emily was born a Hook. Her husband George was a cabinet maker who made caskets and became an undertaker. Strang Funeral Chapel is a centennial business having started in 1898.

Mary Robinson was the next person who Carmi introduced. Her husband was Grayslake's first banker. He had the bank building built plus the Queen Anne style painted lady on Lake Street. Banker Robinson moved to California following his wife's death. Ellen Kuebker's husband had the building at the Northwest corner of Center and Whitney Streets built. Here he owned and operated a general merchandise store. Walter Godfrey's son was Reggie who also had a general merchandise store. Reggie was Grayslake's Village Clerk for many years.

Next Carmi introduced George Frazier. George was a boat builder. His shop was next door to Wilbur Lumber Company on Seymour Avenue. He recalled that a man died as a result of the lumberyard's first fire. The last person introduced by Carmi was Charles Thomson. Thomson was a druggist in early Grayslake and the brother of the Village's first mayor. Carmi ended the cemetery tour with a "Thank you for coming and hope to see you next year".

"Marriage, Murder and Mayhem" was the title of Linda Willhite's presentation on **Wednesday, October 14**.

The Standard Correspondence Club, a matrimonial agency owned by Joseph Schlosser, was part of Grayslake history for over thirty years. Its history was a mixture of many marriages, a few murders, and some mayhem. Joseph was born to Peter and

Magdalena Schlosser in Wadsworth, Illinois in 1866. Because Peter was a basket weaver, Joseph worked as one also until about 1896 when he opened his matrimonial service in Wadsworth.

The Standard Correspondence Club membership cost between \$1.00 and \$5.00. Each month a newspaper was published with 2000 women and one with 2000 men. Joseph also offered pamphlets on marriage and letter writing for extra fees. He advertised in many newspapers and magazines and in 1908 claimed to have joined 70,000 souls in twelve years of business without a single divorce.

By 1900, however, he had moved the service to his home at 108 Avers Avenue in Chicago where he lived with his wife Dora Strohauer. They had three children: Gilbert (1900) and Ella (1901) and a son, Clayton (1912). Due to many complaints against the matrimonial agencies in the city, a raid was made on Joseph's business by Chicago detectives in 1902 and an ordinance was passed in 1908 forbidding agencies in the city. This ordinance forced Joseph to move his business to Grayslake that year.

Joseph and Dora lived on Slusser Street and worked out of a basement office in the home. In 1910 two newspapers "outed" the business by publishing articles claiming everyone in town knew about the business but refused to cooperate with authorities because Joseph spent a lot of money in town. In the next thirty years three murders in other places, were connected to the agency which was used to meet potential victims. Joseph was investigated during World World I by the American Protective League for allegedly helping men avoid the draft by quickly marrying. Several robberies were also connected to the firm.

Joseph died in 1944. He had worked other jobs at the same time as he ran the agency, working for Sinclair Oil and as a mechanic. His obituary never mentioned the agency. His wife, Dora, who died in 1967, is buried beside him in the Grayslake Cemetery.

The Grayslake Historical Society hosted more than fifty people **November 11** in the Community Room of the Grayslake Heritage Center and Museum to hear a presentation by Society president Charlotte Renehan about the famous Sears family heritage in Grayslake and the elegant former Country Squire restaurant that operated for many successful years in the Sears family mansion at Routes 120 and 45.

Renehan began "From Catalogs To Cuisine: A Sears Story" with a brief history of the Sears family beginning in Minnesota, the formation of the R.W. Sears Watch Company with a viable mail order business, the company's move to Chicago, Richard Sears hiring a man named Roebuck and the formation of Sears, Roebuck Company with the mailing of the famous mail order catalog in 1893. In four years the catalog was 500 pages and mailed to 300,000 homes.

In 1899 Sears began buying land along and near Gages Lake. By 1902, Wesley Sears, son of the company founder, owned the land on three corners of Routes 120 and 45. Holstein cattle were raised on the farm, at which many Grayslake men worked.

The Sears family mansion, which later became the Country Squire restaurant, was built in 1938. In 1949 much of the Sears farmland was subdivided and Wildwood became a growing residential community. For more than 50 years a portion of the former Sears farm was the home of the Lake County Fair.

The Sears mansion was said to be 10 years ahead of its time. Built on 13 acres, it had 17 rooms, four fireplaces, eight bathrooms, wood floors, hand-carved ceilings, elegant furnishings, artwork hung on the walls and the famous curved stairway leading to the upstairs bedrooms that were used as private dining rooms during the restaurant years. Renehan showed many slides noting the historic buildings, the famous interior of the restaurant and the noted gardens on the estate.

In 1954 the Country Squire restaurant was opened by Martin and Edna Giesel who owned and operated Cafe de Paris in Chicago. In 1977 the Govas family purchased the Country Squire. In 1958, a dining porch was added to the mansion and in 1986 a banquet hall, costing \$1.1 million was added. The Country Squire closed in 2012 and was purchased by Northwest Lake Forest Hospital for, a spokesman said, "a long-term investment." The mansion was demolished in 2013. The land remains vacant.

During its limelight there were years of elegant dining and ambiance, delicious food and the site of many wedding receptions, political gathering, luncheons and parties.

Many famous people wined and dined at the Country Squire. Among them were Marlon Brando, Carl Sandburg, Esther Williams, Gary Coleman, Mike Ditka, puppeteer Burr Tillstrom and DJ Wolfman Jack. Many Illinois governors dined there and held political rallies and fundraisers. Other national and state politicians made campaign stops at the restaurant.

Noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright, is reported to have said: "For a place I didn't design, it's a nice joint you've got here."

FUTURE PROGRAMS

Please note that Grayslake Historical Society evening programs now start at 7:00 PM.

Saturday, February 27 - Grayslake Historical Society program. "Grayslake Gelatin Company". A history of the factory with the iconic smoke stack. A reminiscing session will follow. Community Room. 10:00 AM. Open to the Public. Free.

Wednesday, March 4, Search & Share genealogy discussion group. Archives. 2:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Wednesday, March 9 - Grayslake Historical Society program. "The Canning Factories of Grayslake". The story of Grayslake's three canning factories. 40th Birthday celebration of the Grayslake Historical Society. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Refreshments. Open to the Public. Free.

Thursday, March 10 - Lake County Civil War Round Table. "Oberlin, Ohio - The Town That Helped Start The Civil War" presented by Dr. Phil Price. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Saturday, March 19 - Grayslake Area Public Library is encouraging visitors to take in tours of the museum's exhibition, *Food, Family & Tradition: Dining in Grayslake* as a closing event for the *One Book, One Community* read. Noon to 4:00 PM.

Wednesday, April 6 - Search & Share genealogy discussion group. Archives. 2:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Wednesday, April 13 - Grayslake Historical Society program. "The Postmistress and the Preacher: A Grayslake Scandal". The audience will learn the town gossip in 1908

and what happened later. Annual meeting with election of Grayslake Historical Society directors. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Refreshments. Open to the Public. Free.

Thursday, April 14 - Lake County Civil War Round Table. "The Great Camel Experiment" by David Noe. The United States Camel Corps was a mid-19th century experiment to adapt these hardy creatures to military use in the southwestern United States, but was cut short by the Civil War. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Sunday, April 17 - Lions Club Pancake Breakfast at Grayslake Fire Station. 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Grayslake History Museum will be open.

Saturday, April 23 - A new exhibit with an architecture theme will open in the Upper Gallery. Noon to 4:00 PM. Donations appreciated.

Wednesday, May 4 - Search & Share genealogy discussion group. Archives. 2:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Wednesday, May 11 - Grayslake Historical Society program. "The Moving Story". Throughout Grayslake's history, houses and other buildings in the village and area were moved for various reasons. Learn where they used to stand and where they are now. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Refreshments. Open to the Public. Free.

Thursday, May 12 - Lake County Civil War Round Table. Community Room. 7:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

Wednesday, June 1 - Search & Share genealogy discussion group. Archives. 2:00 PM. Open to the Public. Free.

This calendar is subject to changes and additions. Consult www.grayslakehistory.org or visit Facebook page Grayslake Historical Society for updates. Information is also found at www.grayslakeheritagecenter.com and at Grayslake Heritage Center on facebook.

EXHIBITS

There is much to see at the Grayslake History Museum. "Embracing Change: the Growth of Grayslake" continues in the permanent gallery with some minor image changes. Presently the rotating or temporary exhibit gallery has "Food, Family and Tradition: Dining in Grayslake". This exhibit highlights such restaurants as Country Squire, Pat's Pizza, Pratser's Silver Saddle, and the Last Chance Saloon and mentions many others. The exhibit includes an original table top from Pat's and the cowboy and Indian from Last Chance. This summer the exhibit will change to the topic of transportation. The Upper Gallery has "Then and Now" pictures and will change to architecture on April 23. The farm and vehicle display in the Annex continues to interest visitors. Visitors can also view a map exhibit and a painting display in the lower level Archives area. The show cases in the Museum lobby are changed regularly. Lately they have been having a food theme, such as cookie cutters and egg beaters.

A PAGE FROM THE PAST

With the Village of Grayslake purchasing the former Grayslake Gelatin Factory with its land, it is timely to learn more about this part of Grayslake's history. The following article appeared in the *Grayslake Times* on March 10, 1922.

"The Times has at last been definitely advised that the milk plant formerly owned by the Nestle Food Company has been turned over to a man named Epstein. We received no details of the death or of the plans for the future. While this is written on

Wednesday afternoon, we are advised Mr. Epstein will be in Grayslake Thursday (today) therefore if he arrives here early enough, this article may be amended.

Mr. Epstein and an associate were here on Monday and it is said that as soon as the company starts operation here that forty men and a number of women will find employment there. So far we are still in the dark as to what will be manufactured, how many people will be employed, or whether it will be a seasonal factory or a year around proposition. No matter what it is, it is bound to be better than to have the factory lying idle as it has been the past two years.”

A MEMORY

My father, Earl Rinker, worked at the Grayslake Gelatin Factory from the late fifties until his retirement in the late seventies. He worked in the boiler room under Bernie Waters, also from Grayslake. During that time Grayslake had a volunteer fire/rescue department and all emergency calls came through the Gelatin Company . The engineer would answer the calls and then announce where the emergency call was to all the volunteer fire/rescue squad members through a radio system. During the evening hours the volunteers would keep a radio in their bedrooms. They always knew when my father was on duty since he had the loudest voice that would echo through the volunteer’s radio awaking them from a night’s sleep.

In addition to answering emergency calls, the engineers would blow the whistle that was also housed at the gelatin company. At 8:00 am, noon, 1:00 pm and at 5:00 pm the whistle would blow on schedule telling not only the gelatin factory workers but many other factory workers in town when they should be at work, go to lunch and when to go home. Neighboring children out playing knew when the 5:00 pm whistle blew it was time to go home for dinner. I graduated from Grayslake High School in 1970 and started working in the gelatin company office that year. The office manager was Alta Neville. Mrs. Thompson was the accounting manager during those days with Thelma Olsen the office supervisor. John Epstein was president until his death. As a young girl I knew that when the 8:00 am whistle blew I had best be at my desk working until the noon whistle blew for lunch, only to return by 1:00 pm. We all waited until we heard the 5:00 pm whistle to blow to go home for the day.” - Cheryl Rinker.

Editor’s note: The collections of the Grayslake Historical Society include a volunteer fireman’s radio.

VOLUNTEERS

The Grayslake Historical Society is grateful to its wonderful volunteers. Our 2015 list of workers includes Lori Baumgartner, Chris Brenner, Phil Bruno, Doris Craig, Jim Crofton, Darlene Dorfler, Connie Dunbar, Amy & Christian Edwards, Kathleen Flary, Harold Flood, Marie Frandsen, Will Frank, Richard Gaddis, Daniel Graham, Grayslake Fire Protection District Firemen, Grayslake Public Works Employees, Marion Grinnell, Ken & Jane Tiffany Hansen, Krista Holst, Marjie Jobes, Dick & Nancy Johannsen, Joanne Lawrence, Bill Leider, Karl Molek, Terry & Joyce Norton, Nancy Reed, Charlotte Renehan, Jim Rockwell, Ron Roselli, Molly Smith, Robert Smythe, Kathi Starzec, Warren Township High School Alumni Choir, John and Donna Van Steenhuyse, Linda Willhite, Mark & Megan Willhite, Glenn Winters, Pat Yopp. We give them all a hearty, “Thank You!”.

DONATIONS

The collections of the Grayslake Historical Society continue to grow. Between August 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016 the following individuals donated items. Marilyn Walz - lady's high top laced shoes; Charlotte Renehan - Grayslake Grade School yearbooks; Douglas Rockenbach - Jay Hook baseball card, baseball tickets and bobble heads; James Krause - numerous issues of the *Grayslake Times* circa 1940; Quinn O'Brien - youth baseball plaque and souvenir ball; Cheryl Hall Birong - wedding dress and veil of Jenny Duell; Frances Gladfelter - abstract of title for 118 S. Lake Street, Carol Bookover - book of poems by former resident Harold Grutzmacher; Harold Vassau - five Libertyville High School yearbooks from the early twenties; Virginia Vasey - two Warren Township High School yearbooks from early forties; Sharon Pratser Spielman - menu and picture from Pratser's Silver Saddle Restaurant; Ruth Haisma Young - pie plate from early Grayslake hardware store; Mary Ellen Moley - 1978 *Chicago* magazine with Grayslake restaurant article; Culver's - ice cream scoop; Dorcas Thompson - Grade School Class of 1940 picture and graduation program; Eileen Wollmuth - pictures of Frandsen's Tool and Die Factory, Grayslake newspaper clippings and brochures from family scrapbook; Charles Clow - miscellaneous Grayslake newspaper clippings and souvenirs; Howard and Edna Munsinger - souvenirs of Grayslake businesses; Richard Faust - Jay Hook baseball card. Thank you for remembering the Grayslake Museum.

The work of the Grayslake Historical Society is possible due to generous monetary contributions. These donations are used to maintain the Society's website and purchase archival supplies. This year the Society also purchased velcro panels and tables for the Grayslake Museum. Shelving was purchased to store the Society's collection of artifacts, images, books and documents. Those contributing include Lisa Plotz Androus, Bette Best, Barbara Bonde, DelRaye Bonfanti, Darlene Dorfler, Lori Guenther, James & Leslie Kaiser, Joanne Lawrence, Rick Lawrence, Cynthia Lee, Bill McNeill, Bob & Cheryl Mount, Nancy Plotz Reed, Charlotte Renehan, Roger & Pat Richardson, Darwin Schwaderer Family, Priscilla Trowbridge, Ed Weishaar, Linda Willhite, Ken & Pat Yopp, Nancy Yuki.

Many people choose to help the society by donating stamps, refreshments and other items. Between August 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016, donations have been received from Chris Brenner, Randy Cashmore, Darlene Dorfler, Connie Dunbar, Linda Fassbinder, Mary Frandsen, Will Frank, Mary Friis, Jane Tiffany-Hansen, Daniel Johnson Family, Joanne Lawrence, Tracy Nielsen, Dave Oberg, Nancy Reed, Charlotte Renehan, Ron Roselli, Adina Salmansohn, Kathi Starzec, Jim Rockwell, Strang Funeral Chapel & Crematorium .

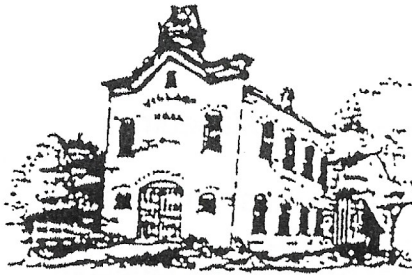
MEMBERSHIP

It is time to renew your membership, if your address label says Exp. 2016. Kindly consider an extra donation to help the Society preserve and promote the history of Grayslake. If you have not been receiving e-mails from the Society, send your e-mail address to ChaRenehan@aol.com.

The Grayslake Historical Society Board has an opening. The requirements are up-to-date membership and an interest in preserving and promoting Grayslake's history.

Two thousand fifteen was a challenging, eventful, award-winning year. The Grayslake Historical Society...

endured two floods.
purchased four velcro panels for the Museum.
hosted a volunteer dinner.
helped plan and install exhibits in Museum galleries.
rotated displays in the Museum lobby.
provided over 2000 volunteer hours in the Museum.
sold items in the gift shop.
compiled and published the book, "Letters To The Home Front World War 1".
had a fender on Wilbur, the fire truck, repaired.
participated in two parades.
cleaned the annex monthly.
furnished docents for Museum tours.
held a Christmas open house.
presented seven programs in the Community Room.
was represented at quarterly Lake County Historical Alliance meetings.
hosted two Reminisce sessions focusing on Grayslake history.
published two newsletters.
maintained the website, www.grayslakehistory.org.
maintained a facebook page.
aided high school students with research.
welcomed Grayslake High School alumni at a homecoming reception.
purchased seven shelving units for storage.
accessioned over 100 items.
answered Grayslake history questions posed by visitors to the Archives.
purchased two children's tables for the hands-on area.
furnished stories, images and artifacts for exhibits in the galleries.
presented its 18th cemetery walk.
raked leaves in the Grayslake Cemetery.
furnished flowers for the Grayslake Cemetery.
had a membership of 260, including life and complimentary memberships.
helped judge high school history projects.
presented programs and gave tours at other venues.
was represented at events of the Illinois State Historical Society.
hosted monthly Search & Share genealogy discussions.
participated in Downtown Grayslake Tree Lighting Festivities and the Oasis Car Show.
passed out candy during Grayslake's business trick or treat event.
did hands-on activities at three Grayslake Farmers Markets.
helped in booths at Grayslake's Balloon Fest and the Park District Pumpkin Fest.
earned an honorable mention in the Heritage Center Giving Tree Challenge.
received an Award of Excellence from the Illinois Association of Museums and the Illinois State Historical Society for the exhibit "Over There: Grayslake In The Great War" with the Grayslake Heritage Center.



To become a member of the Grayslake Historical Society, please print this form and mail the completed form to the address listed below.

Membership Form
GRAYSLAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

	Indicate quantity of memberships desired
Individual Annual Membership	\$ 10.00 _____
Individual Annual Senior (65 years and over) Membership	\$ 5.00 _____
Student Annual Membership	\$ 3.00 _____
Individual Life Membership	\$ 250.00 _____
Couple Life Membership	\$ 400.00 _____
Annual Business Membership	\$ 50.00 _____
Please accept my additional donation	_____

Total dollar amount enclosed _____

Make check payable to: **Grayslake Historical Society**
Mail to: Membership Chair
Grayslake Historical Society
P. O. Box 185
Grayslake, Illinois 60030

To receive a membership card, enclose a SAS envelope.
The membership year is March 1 to February 28.



GRAYSLAKE GELATINE CO. GRAYS LAKE ILL. ILL.

"Saving the Past for the Future"

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