



Grayslake Historical Society

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UPDATE

September 2013

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

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REVIEWING

The Grayslake Heritage Center has been an active place since January 1. During this time the exhibit, "Abraham Lincoln: Self-made in America", was complemented with many outstanding programs. People came from numerous communities to view the display and enjoy the activities. The Grayslake Historical Society was also busy.

The February 13 program of the Society featured Sandy Sweitzer from the McHenry County Historical Museum in Union talking about aprons. Sweitzer's interest in aprons was an offshoot of her interest in quilting which had its beginning in her youth. Sweitzer shared numerous aprons from her personal collection and told their story. She had aprons from different decades and from different walks of life.

A Reminisce session was held on February 16. Attendees enjoyed an hour of remembering the "Hang Outs" of their youth. Places mentioned included tree island behind Woodview School, Cec's Drug Store and special neighborhood haunts. This program was videotaped and is kept in the Society Archives for future reference.

The following month, the Society heard an intriguing story of Lincoln's watch presented by Douglas Stiles. A family story told that Stiles' ancestor, while repairing Lincoln's watch in 1861, left an inscription inside the watch. Stiles became a history detective and proved the story to be correct. The watch is in the Smithsonian Institute.

The March meeting recognized volunteers who were mentioned in the previous *UPDATE*. During the election of officers the following were nominated and voted in: President Charlotte Renehan, Vice-president Lori Baumgartner, Treasurer Connie Dunbar and Secretary Kathi Starzec. Serving on the Board of Directors are Sue Bethke, Chris Brenner, Terry Norton, Nancy Reed and Jane Tiffany-Hansen. There is one vacant seat on the board.

The Society hosted another Lincoln program on April 10. At that time Ty Rohrer, supervisor of the Waukegan History Museum, told about Lincoln's time in Waukegan. In March of 1860 Lincoln came to Waukegan while in Chicago on a legal matter. Rohrer told the myths about Lincoln's visit: Lincoln's last shave, Lincoln helped fight a warehouse fire and ruined his suit.

On April 27, the exhibit "Aprons: Ties to the Past" became history after being enjoyed by many. On May 11 "Picture This: Celebrating Grayslake" opened in the Upper Gallery.

In May Kevin Waldenstrom gave a genealogy and history lesson at the Society's program. The audience learned that the Waldenstrom family came from Finland and the development of West Trail subdivision was detailed.

The Society's fire truck, "Wilbur" made its annual appearances in Grayslake's Memorial Day and Summer Days parades.

A large crowd attended the courtyard concert by the Vintage Brass Quintet in August. The group played marches, early American songs and spirituals as the audience tapped their toes and patted their knees with the music.

The Society was represented in two meetings of the Lake County Historical Alliance. At these meetings Museum concerns and practices are discussed.

PLANNING

Post this on your refrigerator. Mark the dates on your calendar. Whatever you do to help yourself remember these events.

Wednesday, September 11 - Historical Society program, Jerry Helgren will tell about Picket Fence Farm formerly located on Washington Street, Community Room, 7:30 PM, refreshments, free.

Wednesday, September 18 - Historical Society concert, Larry Leafblad and the Scotch Lads will have a jam session at the Heritage Center, 7:00 PM, free.

Wednesday, September 25 through Saturday, September 28 - Historical Society, Penny Candy Days at the Heritage Center.

Saturday, September 28 - Historical Society Reminisce session, round table discussion about 4-H, public invited to tell about their experiences in 4-H or to listen and learn about this youth organization, Community Room, 10:00 AM, refreshments, free.

Sunday, October 6 - Historical Society Annual Living History Tour (AKA Cemetery Walk), Grayslake Cemetery on S. Lake Street, 1:30 PM & 2:30 PM. Donations appreciated. During the event in addition to hearing local history, the audience will learn the different ways people died. Featured will be Dr. Rickey who committed suicide by morphine, Frank Wilkinson who was killed by a blast of dynamite, Theo Harvey who died from a hunting accident, Agnes Sorenson who died in an automobile accident, Frank Contos who drowned, Seth Turner who was asphyxiated, and Orlando Young who died of disease during the Civil War. Their lives and times will be explored.

Wednesday, October 9 - Historical Society program, Author & Historian Nancy Schumm Burgess will talk about "Barns of Lake County", Community Room, 7:30 PM, refreshments, free.

Saturday, October 26 - Historical Society, Trick or Treat Day at the Heritage Center.

Saturday, October 26 & Sunday, October 27 - Museum exhibit, Omar Rasidagic's toy train show, Community Room.

Saturday, November 9 - Museum exhibit, "Picture This; Celebrating Grayslake" in Upper Gallery closes.

Wednesday, November 13 - Historical Society program, Grayslake High School students will explain their history fair projects. Community Room, 7:30 PM, refreshments, free.

Saturday, November 23 - Heritage Center program, Leslie Goddard will portray Jacqueline Kennedy, Community Room, 2:00 PM, donations appreciated.

Friday, November 29 - Museum Giving Tree exhibit opens in Upper Gallery, organizations will decorate artificial trees.

Sunday, December 8 - Historical Society Holiday Open House, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM, Santa, music, children's activity, refreshments, free.

Saturday, January 4 - Museum Giving Tree exhibit closes.

Saturday, January 25 - Museum exhibit "Farms: Seeds of Our Community" closes.

Saturday, February 22 - Museum exhibit "Made in Grayslake" opens.

EXHIBITS

The exhibit "Picture This: Celebrating Grayslake" opened in the Upper Gallery in June. It was a contest for amateur photographers of the Greater Grayslake area. The winners were announced at the Grayslake Chamber's Arts Festival. They were: Maryanne Natorajan in the Judges' Choice Event category; D. J. Johnson in the Judges' Choice Place category; Andrew Roberts in the Judges' Choice Best of Show; and Robin Hartman in the People's Choice category. All the photographers are congratulated on their outstanding entries.

When the picture exhibit closes, a Grayslake Giving Trees program will be initiated. Area charitable organizations will be invited to decorate a tree in accordance with their missions. The public will be encouraged to vote with their dollars. The winning organization will keep all of the money they raised while the other organizations will share with the Grayslake Historical Society.

The trees will be followed by a local author and musicians' display. Books by local authors are being collected with their bios. Posters and pictures of musical groups who have performed outside the Greater Grayslake area will be displayed. The public is encouraged to submit books and recordings for consideration. This is being done as a prelude to an exhibit planned for the temporary gallery and opening in February. It will be titled "Made in Grayslake".

The present exhibit "Farms: Seeds of Our Community" is getting rave reviews. The opening panel is eye catching. There is a rail fence to the right of the panel. Here the story of the community changing from farms to subdivisions is highlighted. The stories of several subdivisions are told using text, images and maps. Pictures of farming a century ago are mounted on the wall. The next display is of a farm kitchen featuring canning. This is followed by a display of farm tools. The farmer and his children participated in the Lake County Fair and in farm related organizations. Their stories are found in the next section. The final display brings farming to the present with organic farming and Farmer's Market. The hands-on area of the farm exhibit keeps the children occupied with farm toys and putting a face on a scarecrow while adults answer the trivia questions.

These displays and exhibits are accomplished through the joint efforts of the Grayslake Historical Society and the Grayslake Heritage Center. An effort is made to include members of the community in the planning and creating process.

DONATIONS

The Grayslake Historical Society wishes to thank the following people for adding to its collections between January 1, 2013 and July 31, 2013. Robert L. Poortenga - framed Nicholas painting; Jon Revelle - Piggly Wiggly sign; Wm. Leider - CD of Lincoln era songs; Carol Lally Bookover - nine grade school class photos; Douglas Rockenbach - grade school newsletter, newspaper clippings; Cynthia Lee - Rockenbach Day and High School graduation invitations, Avon Township political brochures, DVD of Grayslake events; Joanne Lawrence - 1906 Grayslake Methodist Church baptismal ribbon, 1981 Grayslake Chamber slides, WW II ration books, TV guide; Robert McClasky - newspaper clippings, 1898 Avon Township property tax receipt; eighteen images of early Grayslake; Tracy Nielsen - restaurant menus, high school pamphlets, Grayslake Park District guide, Lake County yellow pages; Wendy Petra - three Grayslake High School yearbooks; Hank Smit - Wild West poster, Lake Villa Historical Society - Grayslake picture postcard; Lakes Region Historical Society - R. Godfrey advertising dominoes; Kathy Pierce - Grayslake Outdoor Theater jacket; Marion Grinnell - Grayslake picture postcard; Dietz outdoor thermometer; Mary Lester - fourteen irons, packaged soap, book about irons; Leslie Brandstetter - Longabaugh framed drawing in honor of Darr Brandstetter; Mary Knigge - hand crocheted sheet and pillow cases; Joan Koenig - book by Charles Micucci.

Many people send in a monetary donation with their annual dues. Thanks are extended to Bob Anderson & Cheena Wade, Bob Barton, Bette Best, Dick & Maureen Blasius, Barbara Brand, John Brandstetter & Susan Nied, Jack & Sharon Clooney, Clarence Collins, Sue Decker, Darlene & Frank Dorfler, Marilyn Fraser, Bill & Katy Hall, Evelyn Hesper, Leslie Brandstetter Kaiser, Roy & Sue Kellogg, Ed Krumrey, Vivian Kuzelka, Tom & Vanessa Lewin, Lori Lyman, John & Elizabeth McDonald, Karl Molek, Tracey Nielsen, Nancy Pease, Nancy Reed, Nancy Rinker, Doug & Bonnie Rockenbach, Doug Rosene, Ed Scarlett, Fred Schaefer, Helen Thielen, Janet Trieschmann, Betty Vares, Jack Wightman, Linda Willhite.

In-kind donations between January 1 and July 31, 2013 were received from Sue Bethke, Lori Baumgartner, Linda Fassbinder, Harold Flood, Judy Haga, Joanne Lawrence, Jane Tiffany-Hansen, Terry & Joyce Norton, Charlotte Renehan, Linda Willhite, Pat Yopp, Dan Zachary.

AN EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

Thanks to Ethan DeKeyser and his Eagle Scout project there have been some welcomed changes to the landscape at the Grayslake Heritage Center. Over fifteen years ago, as a fundraising project, member Ray Rockenbach hand etched names in bricks. The bricks came from the demolished silo in Grayslake's Central Park and people paid \$25.00 for a brick. The bricks were installed in the ground next to the Annex where they stayed until the parking area was expanded for the Heritage Center. They had been in storage since then. Also in storage since the renovation was a large cauldron donated by Dorcas Brausch Thompson numerous years ago.

When Ethan came to the Society looking for a project, he accepted the challenge to reinstall the bricks. We are fortunate that Ethan took on this project as it looks wonderful beside the Annex. The cauldron needed a new leg, and it was restored and the entire cauldron refurbished. Additional bricks were needed to set off the historic

bricks. New plantings were needed to give the entire project a landscaped look. All of this cost the Society nothing because Ethan did it with the help of local contributors.

Lester's Material Services donated all the landscape material, which included patio bricks, seating wall, gravel and sand. They also donated expertise, time, tools and labor. They hauled away waste brush, earth and debris.

Kim Denny of Highland Green Nursery donated flowers and plants as well as spent time helping Ethan select the items for the finished space.

Home Depot donated \$100.00 in supplies and materials, which was used for paint and painting supplies. Additional items needed for the project were purchased from funds raised during a candy bar sale. Members of Boy Scout Troop 96 helped with the sale.

It is hoped that visitors to the Heritage Center will enjoy Ethan's project. There is one sad note. A majority of the names inscribed on the bricks are of deceased members: members who helped the Society and Museum to become what it is today.

In addition to the above, Ethan is responsible for having the courtyard bell repainted. The story of the bell from St. Andrew Church is told on the plaque next to the bell. It would be great if people would contribute to have a plaque placed near the historic bricks to tell their story.

A MEMORY

Every farm, especially in the days of wooden corn cribs for ear corn, needed lots of cats. Besides entertaining the children of the family and adding to the picturesque appeal of the acreage, the cats played a real role in the "varmit" control that was essential to the operation. There were so many draws for rats and mice in the cribs, barns and other outbuildings that a farmer valued whatever extra help he could get from the cats that paroled the grounds. The cats were also a bargain as they caught most of their own meals, slept anywhere they could find a little shelter, and only expected a treat of a squirt or two of milk during milking each night.

When we purchased our farm, there were still an old wooden corn crib and two large barns. The crib still had lots of loose corn in it, and the barns had an assortment of grains that drew the "varmits" and so, even though we had plans to tear down at least 2 of the structures, we immediately begged a neighbor for any cats he might have, and he gave us two kittens. From this small beginning we had many batches of babies.

Because they were farm cats, the mothers delivered the litters everywhere. It was nothing to have kittens in the hayloft, in a fencing cart in the implement building, and under the front porch all at the same time. So part of the game for my children was discovering where the new kittens were hidden. Usually the mewling of a kitten would alert them to a search. The hay loft kittens would often fall out of the loft before discovered. The kittens in the cart usually did not know how to walk right since they were too confined to be able to move. The kids loved laughing at the wobbly steps they took when they were first removed from the cart. About the only place the mothers never had a litter was in the lovely wooden box with old towels for bedding that we provided them.

The most unusual place that kittens were born on our farm, however, was in the chicken house in a nest. It was the perfect place - lined with straw and just the right size. The kittens were discovered when my sons gathered the eggs one evening. A

hen was on the nest, and my son stuck his hand under her to get the egg and felt something move. Shooing the hen from the nest, he discovered five new kittens. From then on, he kept an eye on the chicken house. Whenever the mother cat entered, the hen would get up and let her feed her babies. The rest of the time, the hen sat on the nest and warmed the kittens. When the kittens got bigger, we moved them to a bigger box in a shed, but I'm sure the kittens missed their unique "kitten sitter".

This story was written by new Grayslake resident, Historical Society member and volunteer, Linda Willhite. The story and other farm stories are in a notebook in the hands-on area of the farm exhibit. Adults can read the stories while youth enjoy changing the scarecrow's face or playing farmer.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

A barn is a farmer's castle. A barn fire is a farmer's curse. The exhibit "Farms: Seeds of Our Community" does not include this part of the farm experience. It is included here. The first story is from the Lake County *Independent* published at Libertyville on June 17, 1910. The farm is currently Grayslake's Central Park.

"Last Thursday morning the fire laddies were awakened at 2 o'clock by the fire alarm given in by a night watchman at the well crew north of town. The fire was at the home of Chas. Kuebker. The barn and several out buildings were burned besides two fine horses and much feed. The firemen did excellent work and saved the house from being burned."

Additional information said that the fire was on June 9 and that the well crew were the night shift of the Milk Condensory drilling a well. The Condensory was adjacent to the farm and is now the abandoned gelatin factory at the end of Railroad Avenue.

The second story is from the February 1, 1940 issue of the *Grayslake Times*.

"A fire of unknown origin, which had evidently been burning for some time before it was discovered, completely destroyed the large barn on the Jason Renehan farm, north of Hainesville, early Wednesday evening.

The fire was first seen about 7:30 o'clock, by Mrs. Nolan, who resides with her brother. Mr. Renehan immediately went to the barn, but the inside was a mass of flames, and it was impossible to rescue the two horses and 10 sheep which were in the structure. The blaze had apparently started in the north end of the haymow.

Ray Rippberger, who was at Hainesville getting gas, saw the flames coming out of the cupola and called the Round Lake and Grayslake fire departments, both of which responded. Rippberger and Floyd Renehan, who was with him, went to the farm as soon as the calls had been put through, but there was nothing that could be done. Fortunately there was very little wind, which made the protection of the house much easier.

The barn was erected in 1916. The contents, besides the stock, included 300 bu. oats, about 50 tons of hay, some wheat, barley and farm machinery. The loss is estimated at about \$20,000, and is partially covered by insurance. Mr. Renehan has occupied the farm since 1888.

The blaze was visible for many miles, and what aviators speak of as the "ceiling" was so low that it almost seemed that the clouds, which reflected the

flames, were just above the treetops. In just a few minutes after the fire alarms were sounded the roads in all directions were lined with cars. In almost a shorter time than would seem possible, the entire framework was destroyed, but the hay and grain held the fire for many hours.”

The Jason Renehan Farmstead was located near the southeast corner of Renehan Road (now Washington Street) and Hainesville Road.

MEMORIALS

The Society has lost two long-time members. Sharon Wightman McClain died in Las Vegas. The Wightmans are a pioneering family of the area. In more recent time Sharon's father Mancel was the local postmaster for many years. Grayslake resident Dorothy Thompsen Hansen also has deep roots in our community and will be remembered by many. *Update* extends condolences to both families. Donations may be made to the Historical Society in their memory.

PUBLICITY

The Grayslake Historical Society has a very active facebook page. We have almost four hundred “likes” and would like to see this number increase. Even if you don't do facebook, your children or grandchildren probably do. The page tells of coming events, has images and does trivia questions. It is a quick way of knowing what is happening at the Museum and with the Society.

Our webmaster for www.grayslakehistory.org has moved out of state. We want to thank Rob McClasky for his many years of service to the Society. He stepped “up to the plate” when there was a need. The website will continue as we look for a new webmaster. There will be other changes also.

Rob is responsible for the Society Archives being on YouTube. If you have not seen the video, go to YouTube, find Grayslake Archives, and enjoy.

People like the Patch articles which contain much historic information. Chris Brenner uses various sources to do the writing.

ANNEX

The last issue of the *Update* reported that Heritage Center Director David Oberg had garnered a \$154,000 grant to upgrade the Annex to Museum standards. This upgrade requires structural changes. While the changes are being made, the collections of the Grayslake Historical Society housed in the Annex will be stored. It was a task to find storage space for the vehicles, farm equipment, tools, large signs and other items.

The Annex has been used for open storage. The plans are to have a dedicated storage area built in the Annex. Then interesting displays will be created, and the Society's unique vehicles will be highlighted. The Annex project is a challenge, but the Society has gone through moving collections into storage and changing displays before.

COLLECTIONS

The Collections of the Society include paintings of local artists. The Society would also like to include sculptures and other works of art by local artists who are

known outside the Greater Grayslake area. As with all its artifacts, the items are not purchased.

The Archives of the Society is located in the lower level of the Heritage Center. It is where images, scrapbooks, oral histories, family histories and related items are kept. The Archivist is presently working on enlarging the Society's collection of books by local authors. The collection will also include books which reference Grayslake. The collection contains books by past or present Grayslake residents Charles Micucci, Deborah Nelson, Sara Gruen, Gregg Hangebrauck, Sherri Duskey Rinker, John Wasik, Harold Grutzmacher, and Penny Dawn.

There are plans to expand the collections to include recordings, with posters and bios of local musicians who have taken their talents to a higher level.

Part of the "Made in Grayslake" exhibit planned for next year will include these works of local authors and musicians. People make the history of Grayslake.

GIFT SHOP

The Grayslake Historical Society gift shop is located on the main floor of the Heritage Center. It sells books for children and adults. It has jewelry, toys, puzzles, wind chimes, Grayslake throws, tree ornaments and more. As they say, "Shop local".

"Sowing the past for the future"

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