



## *Rising to the Challenge*

*Generous Members, Community Exceed \$100,000 Goal by June 30 to Meet Match*

Thanks to your generosity, we did it!

We ended the formal match period on June 30 with \$132,650 in new donations since the Hunt Family Challenge began in November 2015. The T. Kendall Hunt Family Foundation made a \$100,000 donation in late 2015 and pledged to give at least another \$100,000 in 2016 if the Historical Society raised additional gifts at or above that level by June 30.

After a flurry of gifts in the last two weeks of June, which included many larger gifts in the \$1,000 to \$2,500 range, the Historical Society received a gift of \$10,000 on June 30 from one of our members. It was a strong finish to an historic campaign.

The Hunt family's generosity— and yours— has lifted us up to new heights, far beyond our initial goal. This philanthropy truly was contagious. The Hunts and our generous donors set a new record this summer, making our fall move-in a reality. Thank you!



*(Left) The first floor of our new home. The floors are finished, the bathrooms are done, the geothermal HVAC is working, and we've begun to move in. Join us at the museum at 129 Lake St. in Oak Park on Wednesday, October 5th at 7:30 p.m for our Annual Members Meeting and a preview of our new facility.*

See more photos of our new building on pages 2 & 3.

**Watch for more announcements about our planned Grand Opening events this fall**







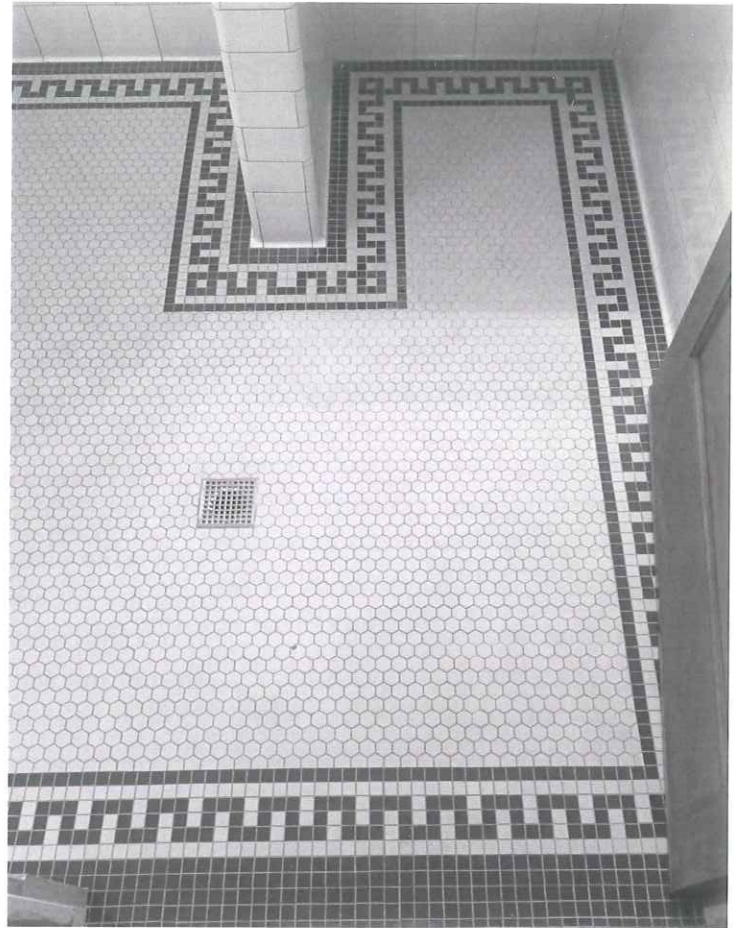
*(left) The second floor walls are painted in colors and style popular at the turn of the 20th century.*

*(Below left) Removal of the rubber treads on the stairway to the 2nd floor revealed the beautiful original maple stairs.*

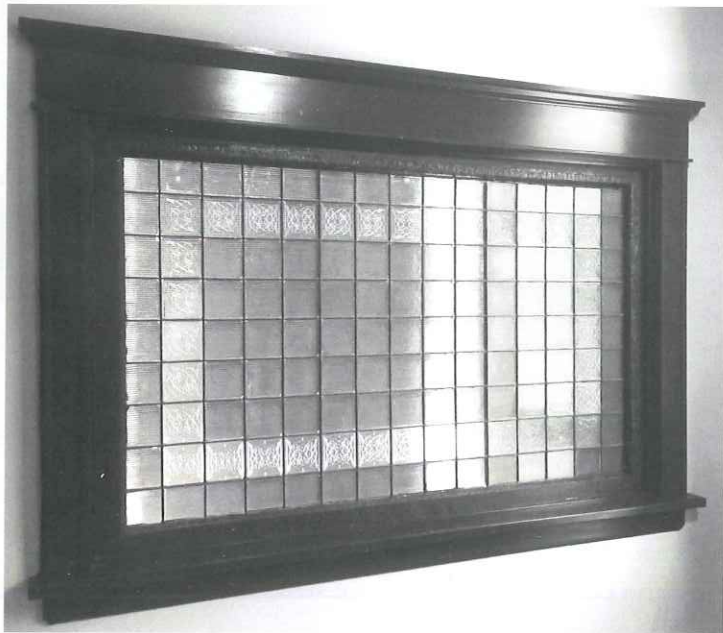
*(below right) The sink and mirror in the second floor bathroom. Tile was donated by Heritage Tile and installed by Tony Buttitta of Elite Tile.*







The sink and mirror (left) and the tile floor (above) in the 1st floor bathroom. Tile and installation by Heritage Tile of Oak Park and Elite Tile of Oak Park.



This vintage Luxfer Prism Company window was donated to the Historical Society by Peter Morava of Morava Art Glass, Oak Park. The Luxfer Prismatic Window was developed to increase the amount of daylight in the interiors of office buildings in the late 19th century. The parallel ribs on the 4"x4" pressed-glass tiles refract light rays more efficiently.



Frank Lloyd Wright designed and patented more than 40 different decorative tiles for the Luxfer Prism Co. in 1895, although only one design (above) was produced. According to the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, royalties from his designs for Luxfer enabled Wright to add the studio to his Oak Park home in 1898.



# Rediscovering an Almost Forgotten Architect

By Kurt Etchingam

Oak Park and River Forest are blessed with a remarkable architectural heritage. Our two villages are a living museum of late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic architecture, famous for works by world-renowned names like Wright, Van Bergen, Maher, Roberts, and Drummond. But most of our villages' homes are not historic landmarks or noted as architecturally significant in guidebooks. Rather, most of our homes were designed by hard working but largely forgotten architects who simply designed good, comfortable homes.

Occasionally, though, we are able to rediscover one of these forgotten architects. Such was the case while researching the Edward and Emma Stege House on South Elmwood Avenue for the Historical Society's 2016 Spring Housewalk. Built in 1916, the red brick Stege House appears at first glance to be stolid, unremarkable, and almost fortress-like. But the somewhat plain exterior hides a beautifully planned interior with magnificent wood and plaster work and a surprising level of natural light. It is a sturdy house with a heavily reinforced foundation and transverse steel beams supporting the floors; a home built to last and built to impress from the inside rather than from the street.



*The Edward and Emma Stege House*

The building permit on file at Oak Park Village Hall named the owner and the contractor who built the home, but not the architect. But, by cross-referencing the information on the building permit with entries in the trade journal *American Contractor* from 1916, we were able to attribute the Stege House to an architect named Theodore Duesing.

Born Theodor G. Düsing in the Brandenburg region of Prussia in 1856, he immigrated to the United States in 1888, changing the spelling of his name along the way. He came here to take a job as a draughtsman with well-known Indianapolis architect R. P. Daggett. By 1897, Duesing had become a licensed architect, moved to Chicago, and established an office on the southwest side of Chicago near 22<sup>nd</sup> St. and Western Ave.

The earliest Duesing building that we've found is at the southeast corner of Halsted St. and Maxwell St. in Chicago. Built in 1899 as a department store for F. W. Zuttermeister, it is listed as a contributing structure to the Maxwell Street Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1905, he designed Zion German Lutheran Church and the adjoining parsonage at the corner of Ashland and Hastings St. in Chicago. While the building is still there, it is, unfortunately, in rather poor shape. The steeple, finials, and much of the cornice have been removed, the original doors are long gone, many of the windows have been bricked up or replaced, and much of the tracery is missing.



*The F. W. Zuttermeister Department Store Building*

(Continued on page 5)



## Rediscovering Duesing *(continued from page 4)*



*Zion German Lutheran Church and Parsonage, Ashland Ave. & Hastings St., Chicago, as seen on a postcard, c. 1910.*

publications name the town and sometimes a nearby intersection for buildings but usually do not give an exact address, making positive identification difficult. Two other buildings in the area that we can attribute to Duesing, though, are the 1910 Emil and Martha Freitag Flats in Oak Park, and a building in Concordia Cemetery, Forest Park, built in 1914. The Freitag Flats is a two-story two-flat building on South Clarence Avenue that is reminiscent of both the Stege House and the parsonage at Zion German Lutheran Church. The building at Concordia Cemetery originally housed a saw mill and water pumping facility on the first floor with warehousing on the second. This building still serves as the pump house for the cemetery's well water supply.



*The 1914 pump house and former sawmill in Concordia Cemetery. The windows were bricked over in the 1960s because of vandalism.*



*The Emil and Martha Freitag Flats on South Clarence Avenue in Oak Park. Most of Duesing's residential buildings were multi-family structures. Single family homes by Theodore Duesing like the Stege House are comparatively rare.*

Every home has a story to tell. Are you curious about the history of your house? Come visit us late this fall when the Jeanette and Ellis Fields Research Center opens in our new museum at Lake St. and Lombard Ave. We'll help you get started discovering the history of your home and the fascinating stories of the people who lived there. Watch your mail and email for more announcements about Grand Opening dates and events.





# A Victorian Dress That Got an Unusual Makeover

By Lee Conte

Everyone loves a good puzzle! Part of the joy of volunteering at the Historical Society is unraveling the story behind some of the donations. These little treasures of history are often discovered in the bottom of an old trunk, or an attic, and any information, written or verbal, has long been lost.

When asked recently which item intrigued me the most, I had to say it was the “sugar sack dress”: a beautiful, late Victorian era, sheer cotton skirt and matching blouse, with pale pink roses woven into the fabric. It has been in our collection for 37 years. It was donated by long-time Oak Park librarian Marian Rawls Herzog and may have been worn at one time by a member of the Rawls or Skillen families, but the details of its history were unknown.



*This classic late Victorian blouse and skirt presented an unusual puzzle. (All photos by Lee Conte)*

While setting it up to photograph one day, I noticed something odd. At the bottom of the front of the blouse, additional fabric had been added to lengthen it. As everything else on the blouse had been sewn with meticulous perfection, the ragged, unfinished edges and haphazard machine stitching just looked out of place.

On closer inspection, I realized there was faded printing on the back of the additional fabric. I could just make out the words “California and Hawaiian Sugar Refining Corporation, San Francisco, California”. Not one to ignore a clue, I did a little research, and discovered this company had been founded in 1906. Still in business, it is well known today as C&H Sugar.



*The delicate, precise detailing of the blouse (above) is at odds with the rather crude addition to its bottom (below)*

With this information, I reasoned the dress would date to 1906 or later, but looking at it on the mannequin, it was more typical of the late 1890's. Now even more confused, I reexamined the printing with a magnifying glass and, remarkably, found a copyright mark dated 1934. With that detail, the dress made sense!



*Detail of the added fabric showing the faded sugar company printing*



During the tough economic times of the Great Depression, many Americans struggled to pay for the basic necessities. Many families could not afford new clothes. They had to be inventive with their wardrobe. Women mended and patched worn clothes, altering older children's dresses to fit the younger ones, and using cloth flour and sugar sacks to repair old garments and make new ones.

We will likely never know the name of the woman who wore the dress first. That she saved this outfit to begin with is incredible. It becomes even more amazing that 40 years later, another woman, when faced with economic upheaval, saw the potential in an elegant, old Victorian blouse and a sugar sack.



# SAVE THE DATE FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!

Sunday, October 16th  
1:00 p.m.

## Cemetery Walk at Forest Home

"The Big Show" is the theme for our 25th annual Cemetery Walk at Forest Home Cemetery. As you take a guided



tour of the cemetery, costumed interpreters will tell stories—inspiring, funny, and tragic—of people who helped put on the Big Show in theatre, sport, politics, and religion. 🍁

Saturday and Sunday  
October 15th & 16th

**OPENHOUSE**  
OCT 15-16 · 2016 **CHICAGO**

200 COOL PLACES. 48 HOURS. GO. IT'S FREE.

Our new home at 129 Lake St. and 8 other venues in Oak Park are among the 200

buildings across Chicagoland that are part of the Chicago Architecture Foundation's Open House Chicago. This free weekend festival offers rare behind-the-scenes access to hidden gems throughout the metropolitan area.

For more information, visit [www.openhousechicago.org](http://www.openhousechicago.org). 🍁

Saturday, November 5th  
8:00 p.m.

## An Evening of Music and History with Pamela Rose

Pamela Rose's "Wild Women of Song" is a captivating showpiece celebrating the lives, times and music of the women songwriters of the Tin Pan



Alley era. With dramatic projected images, and superb storytelling, Rose artfully delivers a cultural retrospective while treating the audience to a wonderful live jazz and blues concert in two sets.

Join us for a special performance by Ms. Rose in our new

museum, 129 Lake St. in Oak Park on Saturday, November 5th. Doors open at 07:30. First set starts at 08:00.

Contact the Historical Society for ticket information.

For more information about any of these upcoming events or to order tickets visit our website at [www.oprfhistory.org](http://www.oprfhistory.org), phone us at 708-848-6755, or email [oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net](mailto:oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net)

## History Matters

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We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please write to us at the address shown above or email us at:

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Please use the keyword "newsletter" in the subject line.



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## *Our New Museum Moves from Dream to Reality*



It took Kolovitz Movers 2 trucks, 2 days, and 6 men to move our file cabinets, display cases, and a fraction of our artifacts to our new home at 129 Lake Street. Much more packing and many more moving days lie ahead this fall, but we're off to a great start.

## *You are invited to our 2016 Annual Meeting Get a Sneak Preview of Our New Museum!*

Where: The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest  
129 Lake Street in Oak Park

When: Wednesday, October 5th at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Come early at 7:00 p.m. and tour our new museum and research library before it officially opens to the general public with regular hours late in October.

The Annual Meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a brief review of the year, volunteer awards, election of board members, and a special presentation on planning for exhibits in the new space by Rich Faron, director of Museum Explorer, Inc..

*A special announcement is planned about the Historical Society's new facility.*