



OPRF Museum in Your Living Room

Keeping our distance has its advantages this winter

Chicago never has been celebrated as a tourist destination in February and in that spirit Oak Park River Forest Museum is offering opportunities this winter for our members and the public to visit us by using their computers, tablets or other devices from the comfort of their couch or kitchen table. Two free Zoom-based programs will be offered each month but we do require advanced registration at oprfmuseum.org because the number of devices we can support is limited.

Inside OPRF Museum is a 30-minute look at fascinating objects, stories, and people found in our collection and exhibits. Staff members and volunteers will share their stories at 11 a.m. on the third Thursday of every month. Among the stories shared in our first three episodes were a look at junior high life in River Forest in the

1950s, how to identify historical photo types, and the relevance of the art of Geraldine McCullough in 2021 (for more on her story see page 4). Join us on Feb. 18, March 18, and April 15.

Ask the Historians is offered the last Friday of each month at 11 a.m. Staff and volunteers will share the answers they have puzzled out to your questions or to past questions that have come to the museum staff.

Send your questions to oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net in advance. This 30-minute session is intended to focus on general questions rather than specific questions about your home or your own family history. Please make an appointment and visit



Museum volunteer John Elliott (inset, right) presented his photographic project capturing Black Lives Matter signs in our villages and recording history as it happens during the 2nd Inside OPRF Museum program.

our Fields Research Center for such specific building or genealogy questions. The next sessions are Feb. 26, March 26 and April 30.

Even if you miss either of these recurring Zoom programs, don't sweat it! We are posting the recordings on our YouTube channel, linked through our website. This new way to tell stories has been essential as we have faced challenges in serving our community with live programs during the second state-mandated closure because of the pandemic. The museum was closed to the public between March and early July and again from late November until February.

By the time you read this article, our doors will again be open for visitors Wednesdays through Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m., requiring masks and other safety measures.

(Continued on page 2)

We also are offering programs via Zoom that require paid admission including lectures, performances, and even a Trivia Night. Leslie Goddard, an award-winning actress and scholar, will bring to life aviator Amelia Earhart on Saturday March 20 at 3 p.m. during Women's History Month, for instance. (see page 10).

We expect face-to-face programs to resume in some fashion later this year, including a range of walking tours which will be scheduled each month beginning in April, but we will continue to offer some ongoing virtual programming because of its ability to reach more and different people than our in-person activities.

For instance, a Zoom-based December 2020 program on the Christmas traditions of Marshall Field's reached 90 attendees. While attendance always varies at programs depending on the topic, weather, conflicting events, etc., a crowd half that size would be considered healthy. On top of that, those who tuned in were not just from Illinois: folks from Maryland, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Florida also tuned in without having to travel to the corner of Lake and Lombard. 🍁

Thanks to our members and donors, OPRF Museum enters 2021 with confidence

Multiple pandemic-related closures have financially hurt many museums in Illinois and surveys have indicated that up to 30 percent of the leadership of U.S. museums are concerned about the lasting impact of the pandemic because of the massive revenue loss during the past year. But thanks to the tremendous generosity of our members, donors and the community at large, we will be here serving you in 2021 and beyond!

While our outlook is upbeat, it sure has been a bumpy ride!

In calendar year 2020, we saw the cancellation of our annual spring house walk and our annual Museum Gala, along with severe drops in museum admission and retail revenue. We successfully received a Paycheck Protection Program loan through Forest

Park Bank to partially cover that shortfall and are currently applying to convert the loan to a grant that won't need to be repaid.

But the real success story of 2020 was the tremendous support of our generous hometowns to support their own museum. We saw an all-time high of more than \$86,000 raised via our Annual Appeal, from 231 donors, large and small. Although every dollar counts, of special note are the nearly 50 households who gave at least \$1,000 in support of our operations.

This generous group of donors, called the Philander Barclay Society, has stepped up at this crucial moment in our history to leave their mark. Created in 2019, months before the pandemic, this group was named after bicycling photographer "Poor Phil" and has allowed us to continue our work without drastic cutbacks. Thank you!

But others in the community have supported our good work, too. In late 2020, the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation awarded a \$5,000 general operations grant to support our role as part of the arts and culture scene and as a cultural anchor during this tough year. The funds were raised through the Rapid Response and Recovery program of the OPRF Community Foundation.

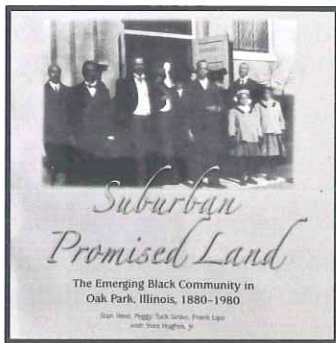
We are truly grateful and humbled by your generosity. Thank you to all who are supporting our good work. 🍁

History Matters		© 2021
The Quarterly Newsletter of Oak Park River Forest Museum 129 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302 / Phone (708) 848-6755 Published by The Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest P.O. Box 771, Oak Park, Illinois 60303-0771 www.oprfmuseum.org		
Executive Director:	Frank Lipo	
Operations Manager:	Rachel Berlinski	
Officers		
Peggy Tuck Sinko, President	Kurt Etchingham, Vice President	
Jack Norton, Treasurer	Mary Boyaris, Secretary	
Board Members		
Wendy Daniels	Fran Knechel	Ty Mayberry
Sarah Doherty	Carlotta Lucchesi	Dorothy Reid
Jim Grogan	Nancy Lynn	Jennie Stevens
		Clyde Watkins
Editor: Kurt Etchingham		
We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at: oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net		

Black History Month: Looking Back and Looking Forward

In recent weeks, we celebrated the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and saw the inauguration of a new U.S. president pledging to address the legacy of American racial inequality, with the nation's first woman of color at his side as Vice President, bringing her African American and Asian American heritage to our nation's leadership. And Black History Month is upon us.

It's the perfect time to learn more, reflect, and discuss with others how America's ongoing struggle with achieving racial equity has been part of our own



community's stories from the earliest days. *Suburban Promised Land* tells some of those stories and includes the footnotes and sources you need to understand more about the context of that struggle in Chicago and its near west suburbs and

how Oak Park has risen to some of the challenges it has faced but fallen short of its ideals on others.

Buy the book now during Black History Month for the sale price of \$10 plus tax (and shipping if applicable). Interested in joining a discussion group? Buy the book at the museum or on the website oprfmuseum.org or call 708-848-6755 or email us at oprffhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net to learn more or sign up.

Check out our website this month for links to great Black History Month resources from our fellow museums and libraries. Included are free programs, important stories of African Americans who have contributed to our nation, and recommended reading lists. Of course, our website features profiles of some of the Black residents who left their mark on our villages and other Black History stories. Now that OPRF Museum is open to the public again, come on by and check out our award winning exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing* which explores so many of these stories.

Moving beyond February, we are also looking for volunteers who would like to assist us as we plan to be part of the Juneteenth celebration this year. Contact us if you would like to get involved.



Legacy of Planned Giving Allows Us to Grow

Carol Kelm (1929-2016) was an anchor at The Historical Society of OPRF for nearly 15 years of its time at Pleasant Home, employed part-time but spending countless hours advancing the mission of our local history group as its curator and later executive director. She also cared deeply about our local architectural heritage and was a dogged researcher into the history of local homes and notable residents.



Carol Kelm, former Executive Director and generous patron

Years after she moved on to the last chapter of her life in Bellingham, Washington, she made one last contribution to our organization: in her will, she named the Historical Society a beneficiary of her estate, providing a generous bequest that has both supported our daily operations and enabled

us to create a long-term investment fund at the OPRF Community Foundation.

We are so grateful to the many who have stepped forward to write a check each year to our Annual Fund (see page 2), but some members and donors have joined Carol by remembering our charitable organization in their long-term planned giving. This may be inclusion in a will, naming the organization as a recipient of a depreciated property or stock, or other strategies that may be impactful to us and have financial benefits to a donor. For instance, Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) of IRAs are due to resume this year and diverting some or all distributions to charity (Qualified Charitable Contribution) can reduce taxable income and support our good work for years to come. If you are interested in exploring these or other options, please contact Frank Lipo at (708) 848-6755 or through our website.

Forging metal into art and history: Telling stories with creativity and activism

Noted OPRF sculptor Geraldine McCullough's work and legacy back in the news

The work and vision of world-renowned sculptor Geraldine McCullough, who spent the second half of her long career living and working in our villages, has been back in the news in recent months as part of the nation's ongoing and unfinished reckoning with racial injustice and inequality.

Perhaps best known locally as a long-time Dominican University art professor or as the creator of the 12-foot-high brass and copper sculpture called *The Pathfinder* outside Oak Park Village Hall, her roots are deep in our community and the Chicago area. But her impact extends to her statue of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., near the Illinois State Capitol and in museum and private collections around the world.

In 2020, *The Pathfinder* was a focal point of local student-led protests after the deaths of Minnesota's George Floyd and other African Americans at the hands of police; protesters used chalk to write on the sculpture to peaceably give voice to their anger and frustration. And in Springfield, plans are in the works to move her statue of King to a more prominent location, perhaps near the east steps to the Capitol. Until September 2020 that site was occupied by a statue of Sen. Stephen Douglas, which has been put into storage because of his support of slavery before the Civil War. The statue of King, the only non-



Geraldine McCullough at work in her studio
(Photo by Dave Adams, /Oak Leaves, December 31, 1969)

Illinois resident at the Capitol grounds, has been a focal point for civil rights activism since it was installed in 1988.

McCullough (1917-2008) was born in Arkansas and came to Chicago as a small child. She earned both bachelor's and master's degrees from the Art Institute of Chicago and went to work as an art teacher at Wendell Phillips High School on Chicago's South Side for about 15 years. At that point as a teacher and artist, she focused on painting and drawing. But her husband was a welder and she became fascinated with the process.

She asked him to teach her the basics of his trade and her vision of creating large-scale metal sculptures exploded as she entered her second act. Soon, her days as a high school art teacher would end and her career as an internationally known modern sculptor would begin.

In 1964, she was hired to be a professor at Rosary College (now Dominican University) and would serve on the faculty for 25 years, about half the time as Chair of the Art Department. That same year, her sculpture *Phoenix* won the Philadelphia Widener Award, the highest prize in American sculpture. She moved to Oak Park a few years later, having difficulty finding a home because of racial discrimination in housing before the Fair Housing ordinance of 1968.

(continued on page 5)

In the mid-1970s, she and her husband Lester purchased an abandoned CTA power station at 117 S. Lombard. They modernized the dilapidated 1903 structure, creating a home and utilizing its three-story-tall main section to create a studio so she could build her large-scale art where previously equipment ran around the clock to power the Lake Street El. It was there, just a block south of our OPRF Museum, where she would spend the last 30 years of her life.

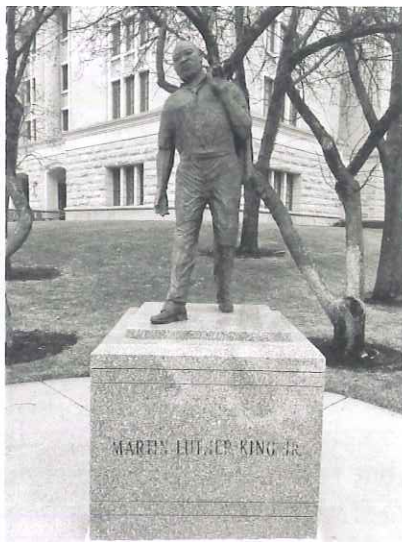
In 2011, her son Skip and daughter-in-law Mary gave the Historical Society drawings, biographical materials, small-scale models, and other materials. A highlight of the donation was an 18-inch-tall maquette, or draft model, of her MLK statue in Springfield. It is currently on display in our exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*.

The statue depicts a 20-something King striding in a protest march with his jacket slung over his shoulder. McCullough chose to use inlaid agate eyes, inspired by the sculpture *The Charioteer of Delphi*, which impressed her on a trip to Athens. In her art she freely incorporated influences from her own culture, as well as inspirations from a diversity of

cultures, artistic forms, and eras.

But the Springfield King statue was not her first. In 1973, McCullough created what is thought to be the first public artwork in Chicago dedicated to King's legacy. *Our King*, a nine-foot-high bronze sculpture was created for the Martin Luther King Plaza

Apartment in Garfield Park at Madison and Kedzie that replaced buildings burned out in the 1968 riots after King's assassination.



McCullough's statue of Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Illinois State Capitol

In 2015 *Our King* was moved to the front of the Austin Wellness Center at Cicero and Chicago avenues and refurbished. That section of Cicero bears the honorary name "Mandela Road" in honor of South Africa's legendary Nelson Mandela. That seems especially appropriate since when it was dedicated in 1973, *Ebony* magazine profiled the artist and her work, reporting it was a bit controversial to some because she had re-imagined MLK as a king of west Africa's Benin people, representing his non-violence with a broken sword, dove and Tibetan prayer wheel.



McCullough with her statue of MLK in the style of bronze work from the 16th century West African Kingdom of Benin

McCullough's work arose from her own life experiences but also searched for universal truths even early in her

artistic journey. Here is what she said when her sculpture *Phoenix*, which thrust her onto the national stage, was featured in *Ebony* magazine in 1964. "It seemed to me that the Negro, crushed so long under the weight of oppression, is now re-born and soaring toward complete freedom," said McCullough. "That was the inspiration for *Phoenix*, but actually, what I tried to express in the piece was something more universal ... that universal struggle of people and things, their wrestling with adversity, their eventual triumph and the perfection that results from their struggle."

In 1977, *Phoenix Rising* was created to adorn Maywood's Civic Plaza near 5th Avenue and Fred Hampton Way. It was similar to her original 1964 award-winning *Phoenix* sculpture, but three times larger, and remains a local landmark today.



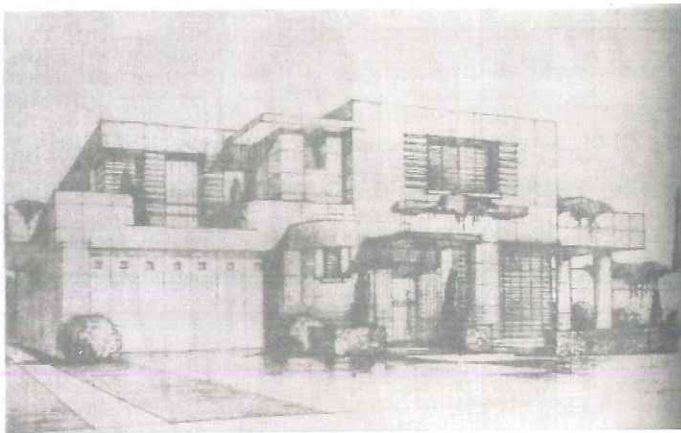
A Tale of Two Houses

by Rachel Berlinski, Operations Manager

Over the past year, many people have been spending time sightseeing around their neighborhood, admiring local architecture more than ever before. And there are some houses that you can look at from the street and say, "This one has a story." Recently I had the opportunity to research one of those houses when I was contacted by the owner of a unique house in River Forest. Once I began digging into our resources in the Fields Research Center, what I found was an unexpected case of mistaken identity.

When the owner of 1302 Jackson contacted me, he already had some stories to share. Indeed, this distinctive Art Moderne house has been in the public eye before. A *Wednesday Journal* article from 2012 included an extensive interview with one of the previous owners who explained it was not only a house that was on display at the 1933 World's Fair "Homes of Tomorrow" exhibit, but also it was the first house built with a Federal Housing Administration loan.

One of the things I've had to learn as a researcher is that stories usually have a basis in truth, but often details become changed, obscured over time, or mixed up with similar stories. The previous owner's tales seem to be true, just not for this house.

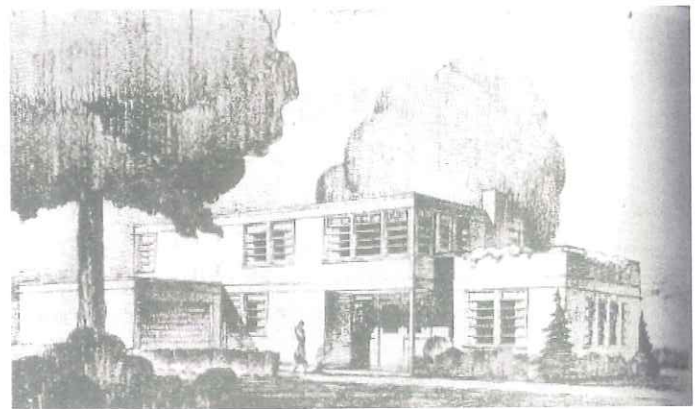


1302 Jackson as pictured in *Oak Leaves* on October 31, 1935

An *Oak Leaves* article from October 31, 1935 gave me some fantastic information as well as a rendering. Even at the time this house was obviously a big deal.

This article names the architect as William F. Kramer (1893-1951), who lived in Oak Park from 1919 until his death in 1951. Kramer trained under noted architect Zachary T. Davis and assisted Davis with the original design of Wrigley Field and with the renovation and expansion of both Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park in the 1920s.

Over the course of his career Kramer designed numerous homes, public buildings, and churches in the Chicago area, including the Suburban Trust and Savings Bank building at 840 S. Oak Park Avenue (now Fifth Third Bank) and the church at the corner of Scoville and Adams. The article also mentions the builders, the first owner, and the fact that the home was financed using an FHA loan. And thanks to the research of our volunteers Debbie Mercer and Kurt Etchingham, we now have great background on all of these details.



1500 Bonnie Brae as pictured in *Oak Leaves* on May 2, 1935

That information in itself would have been impressive to find, but back to the initial questions. For the stories about the house being in the World's Fair and being the first built with FHA funding, it seems these tales might have gotten mixed up with another similar house at 1500 Bonnie Brae.

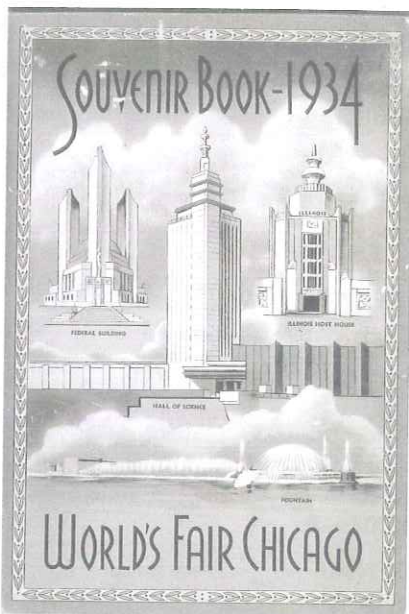
When looking further into this other noteworthy house-- also Art Moderne-- I found an *Oak Leaves* article from May 2, 1935 that clearly states it was the first to be built with an FHA loan, five months before plans were made for the house on Jackson.

(Continued on page 7)

Tale of Two Houses (continued from page 6)

The part of the story about the World's Fair seemed to be tied to the house on Bonnie Brae. Thankfully, and not surprisingly, the World's Fair has been well documented, and I found an article that included photos of the houses in the exhibit, none of which matched the details of the Jackson house.

However, it appears the house on Bonnie Brae was identical to the General Houses Inc. house that



was featured at the World's Fair. The 1935 *Oak Leaves* article about the Bonnie Brae house names Howard T. Fisher (1903-1979) as the architect. Fisher, only 29 years old at the time, was also the founder and CEO of General Houses Inc. He would go on to found the Harvard University Laboratory for

Computer Graphics and Spatial Analysis and serve on the faculty at Harvard until his retirement in 1975.

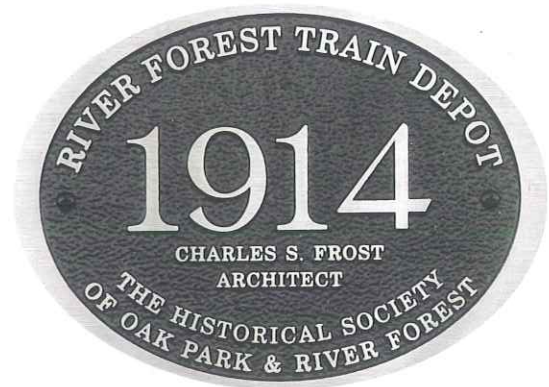
Four of the "Homes of Tomorrow" exhibited at the fair were moved by barge from Chicago's lakefront to Beverly Shores, Indiana, but the Bonnie Brae home was not moved to River Forest. At the Fair, visitors were able to tour the exhibit of model houses and then purchase their own set of plans to build their identical dream house anywhere in the world. One of those houses was built at 1500 Bonnie Brae, but not at 1302 Jackson.

So, despite having to debunk some rumors and half-truths, we were still able to track down an incredible amount of information about the house on Jackson. The owner even expressed interest in ordering a plaque for the front of his house as part of our Historic Plaque Program so that passersby can learn about the year the house was built, the architect, and the first owners.



The Historic Plaque Program

The Historical Society's plaque program is a great way to make visible and share a part of your home's story that hides behind the walls or lays buried in the archives. The plaque program was created to highlight the rich history and architectural heritage of our two villages as well as to promote community pride. The program is administered by The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest through the Oak Park River Forest Museum.



As the example above shows, the plaques are cast bronze, 11-inches x 8-inches, and oval-shaped. Each plaque is placed where it can be viewed from the sidewalk and includes the name of the original resident or owner, the date the building was built (or a "circa" date), the architect and/or builder's name, if known, and the Historical Society nameplate.

The Historic Plaque Program is for homes and buildings in Oak Park and River Forest that are at least 50 years old, in good repair, and that retain most of their historic character as determined by a visual inspection conducted by the Museum's plaque committee.

So contact us to start your research today so that by the arrival of warm weather your plaque will be ready to display. You'll be giving us neighborhood sightseers something to admire. And a portion of the cost of each plaque is tax deductible, too!

Please note that this program is not affiliated with the Village of Oak Park Landmark Program or the Village of River Forest Landmark Program.

A Sweet Story of Success

By Debbie Mercer

When pharmacist Earl Edmund Sweet hired his nephew to work at the soda fountain in his Oak Park drug store, the uncle had no idea how that experience would affect the boy's life. Young Raymond sold coffee, sodas, and sundaes at Sweet's Drug Store and Perfume Shoppe on the southeast corner of Lake and Marion Streets, during the summer of 1915, right before he started high school.

Later in life, Raymond wrote about how that experience behind the counter taught him an important lesson that helped him be a successful businessman. But more on that later. First a bit about the uncle.

Earl Edmund Sweet was born on October 19, 1886, in Glenwood, Illinois, to Henry and Maggie Sweet. Earl's father was a farmer and Earl grew up on the family homestead, leaving in 1904 for Northwestern University to study pharmacy. After graduation in 1907, Earl worked as a pharmacist at the Harry Hood drugstore in Chicago Heights. In 1908, Earl married Chicago Heights resident Ella Hrach (she is important to the story!) and they moved to Hyde Park.

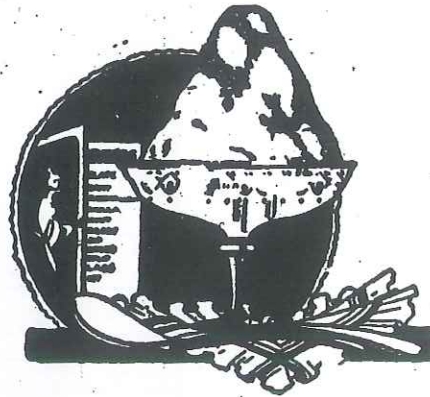
Earl and Ella arrived in Oak Park in 1911 and Earl started working for W. W. Oaks in his pharmacy in the Scoville block on Oak Park Avenue just south of Lake Street. In fact, according to Philander Barclay, village historian, the Oaks Pharmacy was the first tenant in the Scoville block in 1899. But I digress. Let's get back to Earl.

Things must have gone well for Earl during his time at Oaks Pharmacy because in 1915 he purchased the drug business that had been owned and operated by L. M. Lovett at the southeast corner of Lake and Marion Streets since at least 1887. Lovett's old building was moved around the corner while a new building was built so that business could be continued during construction. An article in *Oak Leaves* in April of 1916 describes Earl's new store as "palatially furnished with tile floors, plate glass and mahogany fixtures and an all-marble fountain." The store also had a room-sized

humidor that could accommodate 50,000 cigars!

This is where Raymond would have done his soda jerking and it's no wonder it made an

EARL EDMUND SWEET DRUG AND PERFUME SHOPPE MARION AT LAKE STREET TEL. EUCLID 118



Have you tried our Soda Fountain Service? You'll repeat.

A few of our Specials:

Fresh Peach Sundae.....	25¢
Fresh Red Raspberry Sundae.....	25¢
Devil's Dream Sundae.....	25¢
Radio Nut Sundae.....	25¢
Valentino Delight Sundae.....	25¢
King Tut Sundae.....	25¢
O. P. H. S. Special Sundae.....	25¢
Apricot (crushed fruit) Sundae.....	20¢
Loganberry (crushed fruit) Sundae.....	20¢
Tutti Frutti Sundae.....	20¢
SWEET'S SPECIAL MALTED MILK	20¢
Fresh Fruit Orangeade.....	15¢
Fresh Fruit Lemonade.....	15¢
Fresh Fruit Limeade.....	10¢

Excerpts from a 1924 *Oak Leaves* advertisement

Sweet Story... (continued from page 8)

impression on him. In 1924, the Oak Leaves described the soda fountain in Sweet's drugstore in glowing terms: "Three times a week, every part is removed and polished and it is cleaned thoroughly inside and out. Delectable sodas and drinks are concocted here to please every taste." Sweet's even offered a King Tut sundae and an "O.P.H.S. Special" sundae.



Earl Edmund Sweet
(Oak Leaves, July 1, 1937)

Earl Sweet had to be one of the kings of advertising in Oak Park. Starting in 1921, he ran dozens of ads in local publications, touting everything from writing paper and cigars to cameras and perfume. Rubber baby pants, hair brushes, Vicks Vapo-Rub, fountain pens, hairnets, chocolates,

cold creams, and Eskimo pies were all part of his inventory. Of course, Earl also filled prescriptions, and in 1937 he had on file more than 280,000, some written by Oak Park's first physician, Dr. Orin Peak.

In 1931, Earl Sweet opened a new store at 1031 Lake Street, a move necessitated by the growth of his business. (All that advertising paid off!) An announcement of the new store's formal opening on May 16 proclaimed it as "one of the most attractive and best equipped Drug Shoppes in Oak Park and vicinity." Earl Sweet stayed at this location until he retired in 1946. By his last day on the job, Earl had filled 399,803 prescriptions in

the 36 years since he purchased L. M. Lovett's store in 1915.

And what about Earl's nephew, Raymond? Well, Raymond's mother was the sister of Earl's wife, Ella. Raymond's mother, Rose Mary Hrach was married to Alois (Louis) Kroc. Raymond Kroc—sound familiar? Yes, Earl's nephew grew up to be a fast-food tycoon, responsible for the sale of billions and billions of hamburgers at McDonald's restaurants around the world. Ray Kroc wrote in his book *Grinding It Out: The Making of McDonald's*, "I had spent the previous summer [before high school] and lunch hours during the school year working in my uncle Earl Edmund Sweet's drug store soda fountain in Oak Park. That was where I learned that you could influence people with a smile and enthusiasm and sell them a sundae when what

they'd come for was a cup of coffee."

Earl Edmund Sweet died on October 10, 1967, at his home on Randolph Street in Oak Park. By that time, McDonald's had nearly 1,000 restaurants throughout the country, so it seems certain that



Raymond Kroc
(© Art Shay, National Portrait Gallery)

Earl Sweet must have known about his nephew's success. Whether he was aware of the role he had played in Ray's business accomplishments is unknown, but it's sweet to think that he did.

Join Us for These Great Coming Events

Wednesday, March 31, 7:30 p.m.

Century of Culture: Oak Park Art League at 100

The Oak Park Art League celebrates its 100th anniversary this year and OPRF Museum is collaborating with the group to tell their story and the broader story of our region's artistic roots.

On March 31 in a Zoom presentation, Operations Manager Rachel Berlinski and Executive Director Frank Lipo will focus the spotlight on the origins and first 25 years of the group founded as the Austin, Oak Park and River Forest Art League in April 1921. It was said that the three communities were "centers of culture" for Chicago's western suburbs and surely the



Ozark Color by Carl Krafft, noted artist and first president of the Art League, was donated to the Historical Society in 1971

accomplished artists and generous patrons of the area should form a new arts group.

In addition to its exhibitions, the Art League has conducted a wide range of activities including popular art classes that have introduced many, old and young, to their craft. The group's work has extended far outside its core membership, offering free classes to needy students, circulating art exhibits in local schools, and creating a scholarship for art students.

While the Art League has occupied the former coach house at 720 Chicago Avenue since 1937, its earlier homes included the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio and the Nineteenth Century Club, so the group's story has multiple chapters. This talk will lay the groundwork for the centennial celebration, which will continue throughout 2021.

The talk is titled "A Century of Culture: The Creation and Early Years of the Oak Park Art League." Cost is \$10, \$8 for members of either the Art League or OPRF Museum. Check out our website for details.



Saturday, March 20th, 3 p.m.

"Amelia Earhart" Returns to Oak Park 85 Years Later

In October of 1935, Amelia Earhart visited our villages and gave lectures at the 19th Century Club, OPRF High School, and the Austin Men's Club. When she returned to Chicago the following year, she invited some members of the new Oak Park girl's Aviation Club to meet with her at her Loop hotel.

The Aviation Club was a joint program created in 1936 by Oak Park's Playgrounds Commission (which later merged with the Park District of Oak Park) and the federal Works Progress Administration. It was the first aviation ground school for young women in the nation and it captured Earhart's attention.

"I am extremely interested in your aeronautics ground school for girls," she wrote. "I think every other recreation system in America should follow suit. There is no reason why, in most branches of aeronautics, girls cannot be as adept as boys."



Aviation Club members Priscilla Riser, Jane Durack, and Betty Timms met with Earhart at her hotel in 1936.

Please join us online on Saturday, March 20th, when historian, writer, and actress Leslie Goddard will appear as Amelia Earhart to tell the life story of this colorful, courageous and charismatic aviation pioneer. This program is part of our March Women's History Month celebration.

Leslie Goddard is an award-winning actress and scholar who has been presenting history programs for more than ten years. She holds a Ph.D. from Northwestern University specializing in American studies and U.S. history as well as a master's degree in theater. A former museum director, she is the author

(Continued on page 11)

Great Coming Events *(continued from page 10)*

of two books on Chicago area history and currently works full-time as an author and public speaker. She has presented programs for hundreds of museums, libraries, clubs, and other organizations around the country. Many of you will remember her from the marvelous *Remembering Christmas at Marshall Field's* program she presented online for us last December.



Goddard as Amelia Earhart

Tickets are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Order online at www.oprfmuseum.org/store and clicking the "Event" link or by phone at (708) 848-6755.



Saturday, April 24th, 2 p.m.

Neighborhood Walks Are Back for the 2021 Season

After months of sheltering in our homes because of Covid-19 and our cold climate, we're all looking forward to warm weather and the chance to get outside and finally *do something!* What better way for local history lovers to celebrate Spring than with a sidewalk tour through one of our great historic neighborhoods.

OPRF Museum will kick off the 2021 season on Saturday, April 24th, with *West Side Stories: People and Architecture That Shaped River Forest*. This walk begins at the corner of Edgewood Place and Lake Street, heads north to the intersection with Thatcher Avenue, and then back south on Thatcher to Lake Street. Although the tour covers barely half a mile in distance, there is perhaps no other area in our villages so densely packed with historically and architecturally significant homes and stories of the fascinating founding families of River Forest.

After this tour, we will offer sidewalk tours through different Oak Park or River Forest neighborhoods on the third Saturday of each month through October, weather and pandemic protocols

permitting. All tours are contingent upon and will abide by the prevailing pandemic protocols in force on the date of the tour.

Watch for our April newsletter for a complete schedule of these events or visit oprfmuseum.org/events for updates, tickets, and further information.

Sunday, May 2nd

Tales Our Houses Tell Signature House Walk Returns in New Format for Unusual Times

After 16 consecutive years, our annual Spring House Walk had to be cancelled last year because of the pandemic. We're pleased to announce that *Tales Our Houses Tell* will return this year on the traditional first Sunday in May, albeit in a new format that will abide by health and safety protocols recommended by the Illinois Department of Public Health.



Kenilworth Ave. looking south from Madison St., c. 1906

While the traditional interior tour of the homes will still not be possible, our staff and team of volunteers are hard at work on a new and exciting reimagining of the walk. This year's walk will take place in the same neighborhood where it had been planned for last year— the Hulbert Subdivision on Kenilworth and Clinton Avenues just south of Madison Street in Oak Park.

So mark your calendar, save the date, and watch for more information about the new *Tales Our Houses Tell Housewalk*. Announcements will be coming soon via email, on social media, and on our website, oprfmuseum.org.



OAK PARK
RIVER FOREST
MUSEUM

P.O. Box 771, OAK PARK, IL 60303-0771

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OAK PARK, IL.
PERMIT NO. 420



FPB



1943

FOREST PARK BANK EXTERIOR & LOBBY
1943



2021



FOREST PARK BANK EXTERIOR & LOBBY
2021

TIMES CHANGE. SERVICE ENDURES.

FOR OVER SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS,
FOREST PARK BANK HAS DELIVERED
BANKING FOR THE AGES.

Forest Park Bank has not forgotten the many expressions of confidence when it first opened over 75 years ago. The opening day was carefully staged to build confidence when just eleven years earlier all the banks in town had failed. The efforts to build this confidence proved to be very effective. On May 15, 1943, accounts were opened in great numbers—393 to be exact. The first deposits were made by three Red Cross nurses, a patriotic gesture in a community cheering the USA in the midst of World War II. The next deposits were made by known business

leaders in Forest Park and the surrounding communities.

Today, as Forest Park Bank celebrates its illustrious history, it looks to the future, understanding that the values of its past must adapt to the needs of today. Technology has brought about a host of new banking services that require different ways to build customer and community relationships and confidence. Forest Park Bank is dedicated to delivering confidence with all customers and continues to provide banking for the ages—today, and in the future.



FOREST PARK BANK

MAKING THE JOURNEY WITH YOU



Member
FDIC

This issue brought to you by our friends at Forest Park Bank. If you would like to sponsor an issue of History Matters, call us at 708-848-6755.