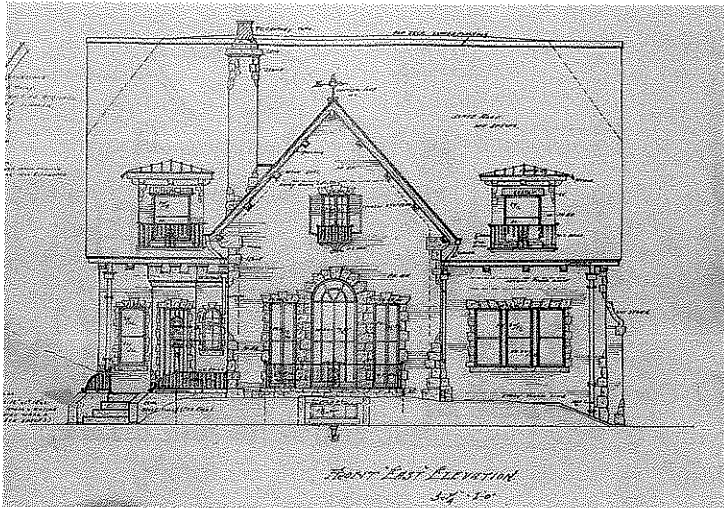


From Farmland to Fantastic House Walk Tells Stories of Northwest River Forest



One of architect Samuel E. Bird's original drawings of a Lathrop Avenue home featured on this year's walk. Bird lived in Oak Park for over 60 years.

One hundred years ago, the northwest corner of River Forest—from Division to North and from Thatcher to Lathrop—was pretty much “wild rose prairie land,” according to an article in the *Oak Leaves*. Today, it's filled with beautiful homes. And on Sunday, May 5, six of those homes will be open for viewing from 1 to 5 p.m. as part of the Historical Society's annual spring house walk, “Tales Our Houses Tell.”

“This year, it's not only the houses that tell stories; it's the land itself,” said Mary Boyaris, who has chaired (or co-chaired) the annual event for the past five years. “We decided to hold the walk in this area when we found out it was pretty much all part of the Longfield Farm. The Longfield family had been farming in River Forest

since the 1880s and decided to sell the land to a developer in the 1920s, when a population boom in River Forest increased the need for (and the value of) suburban properties.”

Each of the featured homes reflects a different architectural style, from Tudor to midcentury modern. One of the homes looks like a transplant from the French countryside. With its traditional blue shutters and rounded entry turret, the house exudes French country charm.

Built in 1939 by a wealthy, politically-connected River Forest family to be the home of three unmarried sisters, it was designed by Jerome Cerny who traveled through Europe for over a year



Acclaimed architect Jerome Cerny designed this 1939 storybook home on Forest Avenue with an exterior radiating old world charm and an interior made with the mid-20th century American lifestyle in mind.

(Continued on page 2)

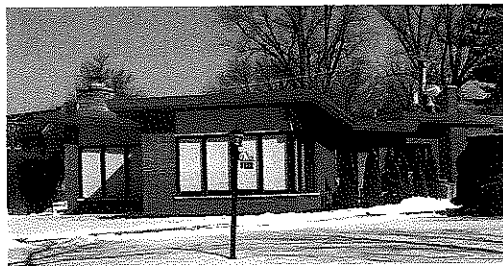
in the late 1920s, doing at least one sketch every day to improve his drawing fluency. He was especially taken with the homes of Normandy. They would become the inspiration for his most famous designs.

Cerny's houses were in great demand and were frequently featured in design magazines like *Town and Country*, *Architectural Digest*, and *House and Garden* from the 1940s through the '60s. Though Jerome Cerny passed away in 1970, his architectural firm in Lake Forest still survives today.



A massive winged gargoyle sits near the entrance to a large Spanish Mediterranean gem on Park Avenue that was once the home of Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak's daughter and her family. Neighborhood parents often warned their children to behave as they walked past the home, or the fierce-faced, winged monster might come to life.

"Aggressively modern" is a phrase that has been used to describe the single-level home on Franklin Avenue designed by Chicago architect Harold H. Cross. Built in 1954, along with a mirror-image home next door, it is a quintessential example of MidCentury Modern design. These unusual twin homes have been the inspiration for a few local legends you may have heard. On our house walk you'll learn the true story.



Don't miss this rare opportunity to visit six unique, remarkable River Forest homes and to learn some great stories about the people who built them and the people who lived in them. Join us on Sunday, May 5th to hear the "Tales Our Houses Tell."

House Walk tickets are available in advance online at www.oprfmuseum.org, or by calling 708-848-6755. Tickets are \$25 for members or \$30 for nonmembers. Order now! You can buy tickets the day of the event at Willard School, but the price goes up to \$35! If you have any questions, email oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net or call 708-848-6755.

How We Find the Houses

It's no secret that the Historical Society's house walk alternates between Oak Park and River Forest. But surely there's a secret to finding homes with such interesting stories!

"Actually, we just drive around a neighborhood, and when we see an interesting house, we go up and knock at the front door," says Kathy Mahoney, who has twice had her own homes on the walk.

"Most people who answer the door are really happy to see us," adds Mary Boyaris, who first developed the theme "Tales Our Houses Tell."

The two have worked together for the past five years, identifying houses and then seeing if a theme runs through their selections. "We are persistent," says Mary. "If we like a house, we'll come back to it on different days and times, to see if we can get a response. If not, we'll leave a letter explaining about the house walk and asking them to contact us.

"The owners are really wonderful people and are excited to be asked," she continues. "Many walks focus on a specific architectural style but we are more interested in the history and the stories. So a house may have had an interesting owner over the years, or the architect may be significant, but overshadowed by the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright."

Once an owner agrees, Mary sends a confirmation letter, outlining the benefits of being on an historic walk. "Our volunteer researchers check the history of the house, and each homeowner will get a copy of that research," she says. "Our houses are more than just pretty. They have character— and great stories!"

Field Trips, School Outreach are Goals of OPRF Museum

There were 100 reasons why Feb. 19 was not an ordinary day at Oak Park River Forest Museum.

Typical Tuesdays don't include a visit from 100 eighth graders from Brooks Middle School. But OPRF Museum is committed to reaching students of all ages in our villages as we ramp up our school outreach, taking advantage of the opportunity to show off how the new museum and its resources can enhance classroom instruction.



Brooks Middle School students at work in our Fields Research Center

The large, all-day field trip didn't happen on the spur of the moment. Brooks social studies teacher Doug Eichstaedt visited the museum in fall 2018 and expressed interest in incorporating the museum's current exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing* in his unit about the American Civil Rights era. The logistics were the largest

issue, since Eichstaedt wanted his students to see the exhibit and also do some hands-on research with primary sources. So we worked out a plan!

Twenty-five students visited at a time. It was an action-packed day with students touring the exhibit upstairs while others researched various topics, assisted by Operations Manager Rachel Berlinski. Volunteers Fran Knechel, Mary Ann Porucznik, and Jan Dressel helped engage the students in their research as well as the museum's exhibits.

Meanwhile, back at Brooks, volunteer Doug Deuchler and Executive Director Frank Lipo, showed four different groups of 25 students a video about the civil rights era in Oak Park and presented a Powerpoint of notable hometown residents.

Over the course of the school year, in our "pilot project" phase, the museum has been working with nearby Beye School, hosting 2nd, 3rd, and soon-to-be 4th graders. All of Beye School's teachers toured the museum on their Institute Day, the day before the school year began. Willard School in River Forest has reached out on ways to collaborate in its 90th birthday celebration.

Even the big kids joined in the fun. Since opening in September 2017, the museum has hosted groups from OPRF High School's Community-Integrated Transition Education program, an advanced summer school history class, and the History Club. Groups from Dominican University and North Park University in Chicago have also visited.

None of this is entirely new, of course. "For decades, volunteers and staff have brought artifacts and slide shows and Powerpoint presentations into classrooms," said Lipo. "We hosted field trips at Pleasant Home, assisted students in their research projects, and even showed students how history tells stories at Forest Home Cemetery. But our new space gives us a chance to reintroduce ourselves to schools with new capacity and willingness to be a strategic partner and resource center for teachers."

In essence, the museum is developing a strategic school outreach program to offer opportunities and resources to teachers instead of merely responding to inquiries and requests. Since the museum opened, curriculum directors of the local school districts were given tours, open house sessions for teachers were held, and handouts describing our resources were created.

Helping in this process is intern Lauren Johnson, a Dominican University sophomore and resident of nearby Lyons, who is studying to be a teacher. Since January, she has been hard at work creating teacher-and-student friendly activities for the museum that correlate to state standards for each grade. She even set up a page on our website called "Teacher Tools," that includes resources teachers can use both in the classroom for lesson plans on local history and in planning their next field trip to the museum.



Intern Lauren Johnson

While the museum's school outreach program is still a work in progress, student groups are becoming a common sight at the corner of Lake and Lombard.

Recently at Oak Park River Forest Museum...

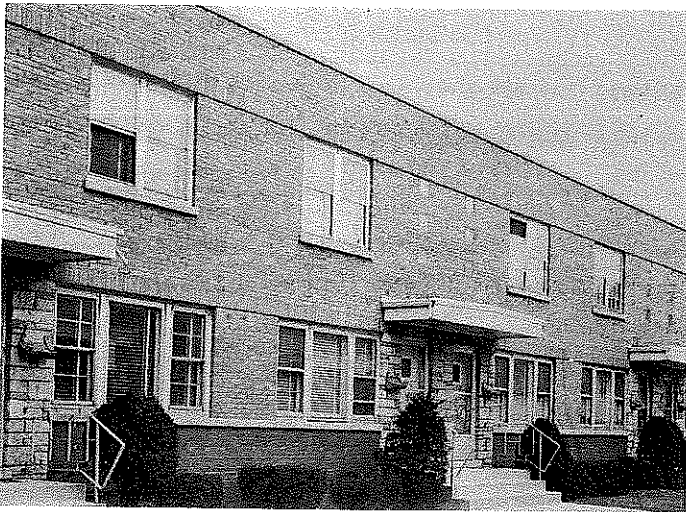


1) Actor, writer, comedian and Oak Park native Thomas Lennon returned home for an OPRF Museum benefit at Lake Theatre. Pictured here flanked by Museum President Peggy Sinko and Doug Deuchler, who interviewed him onstage; 2) A fashion show of items donated to the Economy Shop marked the opening of our exhibit in honor of that organization's 100th Anniversary; 3) Brooks Middle School students researched civil rights activism in our villages; 4) Frank Lipo accepted the Oak Park Area Arts Council's 2019 Best in Class Award on behalf of the museum from Council treasurer William Wallace. The award was in recognition of our exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*; 5) Well-known collector Steve Sommers spoke on famous toys associated with our villages and Illinois; 6) The Museum hosted the Arbor West Neighbors Fair Housing panel discussion with Joan Pope, Mac and Harriette Robinet, Sherlynn Reid, Sandra Sokol, Trudy Doyle, Nancy Leavy, and Galen Gockel, moderated by Doug Deuchler; 7) Museum archivist Elizabeth Nichols has been reorganizing and creating finding aids to make our collection more accessible. Here she is working with materials donated by the Village of Oak Park.

Field Trip: Tales from the Fields Research Center Finding Small Gems During Spring Cleaning

by Rachel Berlinski, Museum Operations Manager

OPRF Museum is not immune to the effects of the current Marie Kondo craze, and many of the museum's visitors and volunteers have been telling me tales about their recent adventures in Swedish Death Cleaning. As for the Historical Society, with as large of a collection as we have, Spring Cleaning is year-round. So, a few weeks ago when I innocently picked up a box in our basement storage to try to organize its contents more neatly, it turned into a recurring project that involved me, Frank, Elizabeth, and at least four volunteers. So it goes!



The townhomes at 1007-1013 N. Harlem

The box contained a number of items that needed to be better cataloged and stored. Among the items was a document created in the early 1990s of the history of a set of townhouses at 1007-1013 N. Harlem Avenue. This was not a stuffy legal document or architect's rendering. This three-page letter was a captivating and charming history written by a resident at the time who might have been "the typical nosey neighbor," as one of our volunteers remarked. The author, who notes that he had lived in the complex for 27 years at the time, includes short biographies (and a bit of gossip) about all the building's tenants that he could recall, with details such as their occupations, family history, and when they moved in, moved out, or passed away. He talks of his relationship with his neighbors, or lack thereof. He

notes small and large changes that have been made to the building and by whom, even divulging how much he paid for his unit in 1965 (\$19,500). And if you wonder if his work was for naught, his documentation of his neighbor Norma's unit is rather thin, to which he says, "As far as Norma Schultz's home is concerned, mother and I have no recollection who owned the place before her. Perhaps she can enlighten us." Indeed, this document came with an updated version that Norma herself compiled a few years later.

What a treat this piece will be for future residents of that building to read! This simple yet captivating history is also an effective exercise for anyone interested in capturing the history of his or her building or block (perhaps even more so if accompanied by current photos). Indeed I have been inspired to write such a history for my neighborhood, and I would encourage you to do the same— and share a copy with the Historical Society. And if you too are working on de-cluttering your living space, I hope you are able to take time to appreciate the small gems that you come across. And if they tell an Oak Park or River Forest story, give us a call.



History Matters

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A Field of Memories and a Field of Dreams

by John Elliott

Reminiscing about his first pheasant kill for *Esquire Magazine* in 1935, Ernest Hemingway recalled the thrill of the kill and that "... you had to wait till after dark to bring him into town because they were protected ... walking into town in the dark along the dirt road that is now North Avenue where the gypsy wagons used to camp when there was prairie out to the Des Plaines River where Wallace Evans had a game farm and the big woods ran along the river where the Indian mounds were." When young Hemingway poached that pheasant from the area that is now Evans Field Forest Preserve, he put a twist in the story of the Wallace Evans Game Farm.

Wallace's father Samuel, an immigrant from Wales, had a very successful glass company in Chicago. Samuel realized young Wallace was missing the absorbing interest in nature and wildlife he had known in his home country, and built for the boy a "pheasantry" in the back yard of their home at 167 N. Harvey in Oak Park. (The glass sign pictured at the top of this page, along with a photo of the backyard aviary and other Evans memorabilia are on display at the Museum.)

The author of a 1907 article on breeding pheasants recalled that some years earlier he "... found a boy of high school age devoting all his spare time to the

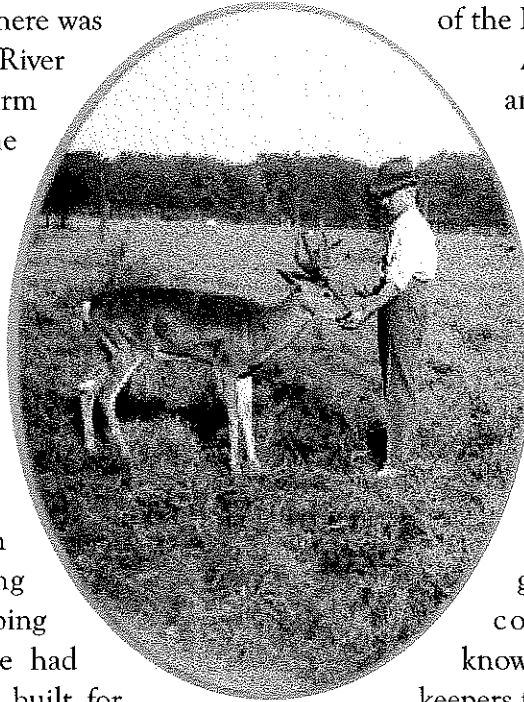
rearing of pheasants in the back yard of his father's home in the thickly populated suburb of Oak Park. His pens and runways were only a few hundred square feet in extent, but he raised scores of these beautiful birds." In 1904 the writer returned to find a farm of 100 acres with about 3,500 birds on the banks of the Des Plaines River.

A 1926 article about the elder Evans and his company reported that "... as a boy on the banks of the River Severn, 'Sammy' Evans was an inveterate little poacher, like all his boy companions... The code held by all boys in Wales and England was that it was unfair for lords to own all the pheasants, grouse, rabbits and hares on the land; that some of those belonged by natural rights to boys ... and a boy who wouldn't attempt to outwit a gamekeeper was lacking in spirit and courage." It took remarkable knowledge of game as well as gamekeepers for success in this exciting pastime.

But things were different in America, Samuel went on to say. There was plenty of free hunting and fishing here, and poachers were taking not only wild game but valuable property from the game farm.

By then the Evans Game Farm had long outgrown the Oak Park back yard. The family established one of the largest and most successful operations anywhere

(Continued on page 7)



Photos: (top) A painted glass promotional sign, c. 1910; (bottom) Wallace Evans at his game farm, 1914

Evans Game Farm... (continued from page 6)

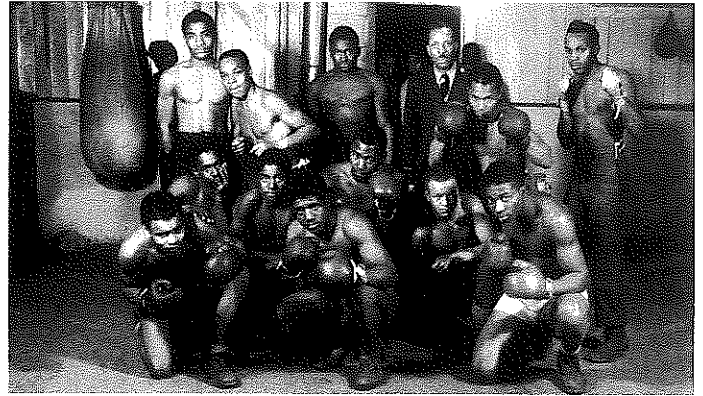
in the world along the Des Plaines River. Along with ring-necked pheasants and native waterfowl for hunting they raised several varieties of pheasants and swans for show, deer and rabbits, sold eggs for breeding and all manner of feed for the different animals. In 1915 the game farm moved to an even larger property, eventually totaling over 1000 acres, in St. Charles. Among the "distinguished visitors" to the farm was Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway did not tell us how old he was when he shot his illegal pheasant, but given his age it might have been around the time the game farm was being moved. He did say that around 1930 he visited the area to find a hot dog place and a filling station and the north prairie a "subdivision of mean houses." By then the Evans property had been a Cook County forest preserve for several years, and the Indian mounds were obliterated by homes east of Evans Field in Elmwood Park.

In 1934 the area of Evans old farm hosted one of many Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the region, designated CCC Company 2603. *Oak Leaves* reported on Sept. 6, 1934, "A company of 238 negroes recruited from Cook County ... is working on a subway under the Indiana Harbor Belt Line at North Avenue." The camp was in tents until barracks were to be completed in a few weeks.

The article devoted two paragraphs to the names and credentials of the four white officers at the camp, which was standard for all the segregated camps in the early days of the CCC. After noting the commanders, the workers were acknowledged in tones of the day (and cringe-worthy in 2019): "The dusky road builders were three months at Fort Sheridan. There they were basketball champions of the division. Already tap dancers, boxers, football players, singers, and entertainers of all sorts have been discovered for the weekly entertainments." Hilliard Ellis, an OPRF HS student, was the "only River Forest boy." (Ellis would later become the first black man to be elected president of a United Auto Workers local and a tireless crusader for equal rights and workers' rights.)

It is hard to find any other details about the camp or its projects. A section of a Master's paper about the



The CCC Company 2603 boxing team in the 1930s. Hilliard Ellis was a Golden Gloves boxer, but we do not know if he is in this undated photo. The boxers names pictured were not recorded. (Credit: Univ. of North Texas Libraries, "Life in the Civilian Conservation Corps")

depression years in Maywood includes only this about the CCC: "Jesse Coleman, Pastor of Second Baptist from 1930-37, an active leader in the black community, preached often at a local CCC camp." A 1934 article in *The Herald* (Melrose Park) noted that a camp on Route 64 was one of five new camps to be established in Cook County. In 1936 the paper reported that Des Plaines Valley camps were being closed after working mostly on projects in the forest preserves, with no mention of road and bridge building. CCC camps were built to be temporary and physical evidence is hard to find as well.

In the early days of the forest preserves a series of low dams were built on the Des Plaines River for recreation and aesthetics. The Armitage Dam at Evans Field, probably built in the 1920s, was removed in 2011 to enhance water quality and fish habitat in the river. All of the dams on the upper Des Plaines in both Lake and Cook County are gone now.

Indian villages and mounds and early agriculture; the Evans Game Farm and young poacher Hemingway; forest preserve development and the CCC: Evans Field has seen its share of our history. 🍁

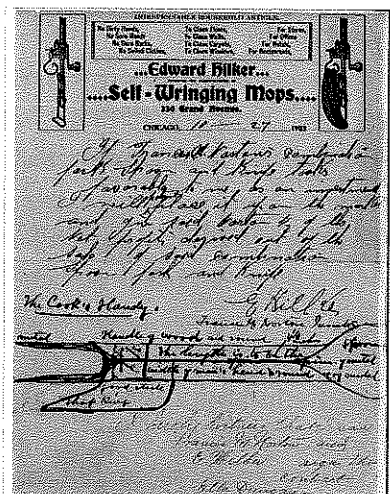
Join us on Saturday, August 3, 10 a.m. when John Elliott, retired Forest Preserve naturalist, OPRF Museum volunteer, and author of this article, will lead an interpretive walk through Evans Field to the banks of the Des Plaines. Tickets are \$8 for OPRF Museum members, \$10 for non-members. Visit www.oprfmuseum.org for more information and to order tickets or call (708) 848-6755.

A Woman Who Scandal and Tragedy Couldn't Break

By Elizabeth Nichols, OPRF Museum Archivist

Document 2: 1903 Contract for "The Cook's Handy" or Combination Spoon, Fork, and Knife

I came across this contract while re-organizing the Scoville Family Papers and Photographs Collection donated by John Sheehan in 1984 and Donna Christy in 1992. Oak Parkers and River Foresters may know the name Scoville from Scoville Park or Scoville Avenue. James W. Scoville (1825-1893) was one of Oak Park's most prominent and influential 19th century residents. But this contract did not belong to said early town titan, rather to his cousin's wife: Frances Maria Scoville Norton.



"If Frances M. Norton's combination fork spoon and knife tool's favorable to me as an investment I will patent place it up on the market and give said Norton 1/2 of the net profits derived of the sale of said combination spoon fork and knife.

E. Hilker"

Frances Maria Scoville Norton was born Frances Maria Guiteau circa 1836 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her father, Luther Wilson Guiteau (1810-1880), was a traveling minister and member of the Oneida Community religious cult in upstate New York. Her mother, Jane August (Nee Howe) Guiteau (1810-1848), died when Frances was 11. In 1853, Luther married his second wife, Maria H. To appease his new wife, Luther coerced 16-year-old Frances to marry future Chicago lawyer George Scoville (1824-1906), who was twice her age. In 1857, George settled on Lake Street in "Oak Ridge" across the street from James W. Scoville. A copy of the 1861 map showing the location of Scoville's home is on display in OPRF Museum. Before the age of 24, Frances gave

birth to five children, only three of whom survived infancy to be recorded in the 1860 census.

Frances was determined to be more than a housewife and mother. Despite George's annoyance, she was a suffragette and founding member of the Woman's Personal Liberty League. When George declared bankruptcy, Frances became a businesswoman and turned the Scoville family's Wisconsin summer home into a resort and boarding house. When her brother Charles Julius Guiteau (1841-1882) was sentenced to death for the assassination of President James A. Garfield, Frances defied her husband's dispatch to "Remain quietly at home. Imperative." Instead, she fought for her brother's life, arguing that Charles was not guilty by reason of insanity. Ultimately, her appeals did not save Charles and he was hanged on July 30, 1882.



Frances Maria Guiteau, c. 1903

The Guiteau trial and execution exposed rifts in the Scovilles' marriage. George Scoville tried to have Frances declared legally insane, claiming that insanity plagued the Guiteau family as early as 1790. Following a slew of legal battles, Frances submitted to an inquiry examining her sanity in October 1882.

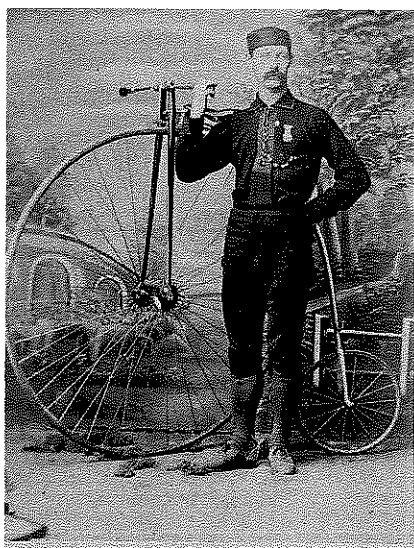
She then filed her own suit against George for divorce and alimony. Despite the all-male jury's verdict of her insanity, Frances—forced to seek asylum in Canada—petitioned for a retrial, which took place in December 1882. In court, Frances detailed the abuse she suffered from George, and was granted a divorce on January 9, 1883.

In April 1883, Frances won the right to change her name to Frances Maria Howe, taking her mother's family surname. News of her surname change

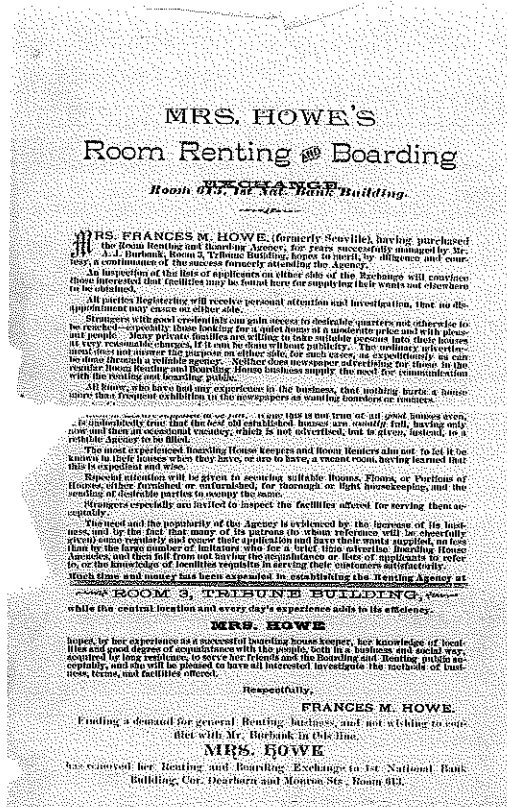
(Continued on page 9)

proliferated throughout national newspapers like *The New York Times*, *St. Louis Dispatch*, and *Los Angeles Herald*. The newsworthiness of Frances' surname change not only speaks to the obsession with the Guiteau family in the wake of Garfield's assassination, but also to the at-the-time unusual assumption of her matrilineal surname. Contrary to the newspapers' claim that she was merely "tired of the name [Scoville]," I submit the suffragette-businesswoman knew exactly what she was doing: challenging the entrenched 19th century patriarchy and declaring that a woman could define her identity on her own terms. Moreover, the reclamation of her surname signaled that Frances, at the age of 46, was at last going to live her own life.

The "rechristened" Frances M. Howe started her own business in Chicago: Mrs. Howe's Room Renting and Boarding Exchange, located in the 1st National Bank Building on the corner of Dearborn and Monroe Streets. Thereafter, Frances married avid bicyclist Willard A. Norton of 351 Warren Avenue in



Chicago. Frances and her new husband started a printing and publishing business in Ravenswood Park in Chicago. As demonstrated by the letterheads for Norton & Norton Printers and Publishers in our archives, Frances was an equal



owner and partner in the business. In addition to inventing "The Cook's Handy" in 1903, Frances was also an author, editor of the *Ravenswood Weekly*, suffragette, advocate for pensions for mothers, and member of the Illinois Woman's Press association. At the time of her death in 1912, Frances was remembered as an eccentric and "woman of exceptional character and attainments."

I highlight "The Cook's Handy" in particular because it represents Frances' fiery resilience. She thwarted convention to repeatedly reinvent herself. First when she became Mrs. Scoville and tried to be a wife to a man twice her age and a mother to her

children; she did not let the weight of the Scoville name become a yoke on her shoulders, but instead used its social capital to elevate herself. Then, when her brother assassinated President Garfield, she fought to reinvent herself as something other than the assassin's sister, other than Scoville's insane wife. The contract is a marker that guides us to the life of a woman ahead of her time: a woman who, today, would be at home in the *Me Too* movement. It is an injustice to Frances that even after she reclaimed her surname and her life, contemporary papers—and surprisingly a *Wednesday Journal* article from 1981—consistently referred to her as "George Scoville's wife" or "the assassin's sister." Frances M. Scoville Norton's life was one of reinvention and reclamation, and with the resources in the OPRF Museum archives it is possible to see her as more than a Guiteau or Scoville. Frances can be seen as herself, as she wished to be seen.

Photos: (top center) A 1903 handbill for Frances' business venture. (lower left) Willard Norton, Frances' second husband.

Mark Your Calendar for These Great

Walking Tours Offer a New Way to See Your Community

Now that the weather has turned (mostly!) to spring, we all want to get outside, walk around the neighborhood, and get some fresh air. This year, OPRF Museum offers you a fun way to get out on the streets of our villages and to learn a thing or two about our rich history at the same time.

OPRF Museum docents will lead a series of neighborhood walks in our villages. Each walk will be about a mile long and will take about 90 minutes. Even if you consider yourself a local history buff, we bet you'll learn a few things you never knew and never suspected about your hometown.

The first walk, on **Saturday, April 27**, will be a reprise of our popular *Ridgeland Ramble* that debuted last year. Starting and ending at OPRF Museum, you'll learn some surprising things about the east side of Oak Park.

Next, on **Saturday, June 1**, our *Women's History Walk* will start from the 19th Century Club, 178 Forest in Oak Park, and head east on Lake Street, sharing the stories of women like suffragist Grace Wilbur Trout, Mary Wessels who founded Hephzibah, and Anna Johnson Julian, a life-long activist and crusader for equal rights.

On **Saturday, June 27**, we'll debut *Growing with the Gundersons*. Starting and ending at the Longfellow Park Pavilion, our stroll through the Gunderson Historic District will, of course, tell the story of how the Gunderson Brothers developed and

promoted this neighborhood, but it will also include lesser-known stories, like the house once named the Oak Park Academy of Fine Arts, the controversial temporary homes built to ease the post-



One of the oldest houses south of Madison St. in Oak Park was built by F. A. Meyenschein, painter, sculptor, and furniture designer


World War II housing crisis, why this neighborhood was once called "Fertile Acres," and more.

West Side Stories: People and Architecture that Shaped River Forest will debut on **Saturday, July 13**. Starting and ending at Trailside Museum, this walk down Edgewood and Thatcher Avenues will demonstrate why these two streets are an outdoor museum of architecture. You'll also hear fascinating and surprising stories about some of the people who lived here and the drastic changes that some of these houses have seen.



The cow and the wooden sidewalks are long gone, but the house is still here! Learn more on our "West Side Stories" walk in River Forest.

This is our first neighborhood history walk in River Forest, but it won't be our last! Plans are in the works for two other new walks later this year. Our *Roots of River Forest* walk will include the Keystone/Forest/Lake area of River Forest and *Downtown Deco* will focus on Art Deco design along Lake Street in Oak Park. Watch for updates on our website or in the next edition of the newsletter.

All of our walks will start promptly at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for Museum members (\$10 for non-members) and may be ordered from our online store at www.oprfmuseum.org or by phone at (708) 848-6755. Visit our website or call for further information. 

Dinner and Dialogue set for May 9 at OPRF Museum

OPRF Museum will be the site of a popular Dinner and Dialogue event on the evening of May 9, organized by the citizen volunteers of the Village of Oak Park's Community Relations Commission.

An offshoot of the Jane Addams Hull House Association Center for Civil Society's Chicago Dinners Project, Oak Park's Dinner & Dialogue Project is based on the power of meaningful

(continued on page 11)

Events Coming in May, June and July

conversations and interactions to create true understanding of diversity and build a stronger sense of community.

Participating is free and easy, with village staff providing technical assistance and the Community Relations Commission covering all costs associated with the dinner. The dinner host briefly highlights the topic of discussion and helps move the dialogue toward exploring the issue. Dinner guests then share their experiences and ideas as well as thoughts for future action. The program has no real rules, other than everyone must participate in the dialogue.

Questions or to sign up? Email community@oak-park.us or call 708.358.5407. There is also a handy sign-up form at www.oak-park.us



Sustainability and Preservation: A Road Map for Future Development on May 23

Oak Park and River Forest are filled with remarkable buildings but too often we focus on the architectural merit of single family homes and miss the breadth of our shared architectural heritage.

On Thursday, May 23 at 7 p.m. at Nineteenth Century Club, 178 Forest, a lecture titled "Sustainability and Preservation: A Road Map for Development," followed by a panel discussion, will focus on how we can preserve our commercial buildings, find new uses for them, and make changes that enhance their energy efficiency and sustainability. Tearing down our historic resources without first attempting to reuse them is not sustainable and disrespects our shared heritage. May is National Preservation Month and the program will include creative ways to re-purpose and modify historic buildings to ensure that preservation, economic development, and environmental sustainability blend together to move our community forward.

The keynote address will be by former Illinois Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Mike Jackson, followed by a panel discussion including architects Gunny Harboe and Steve Kelley. The event

is sponsored by multiple groups including the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association, OPRF Museum, and Unity Temple Restoration Foundation.



Cheney Mansion—Stories Behind the Walls of a Remarkable Mansion on June 13

OPRF Museum has teamed up with the staff of Cheney Mansion, owned by the Park District of Oak Park, for a fun night of wine, hors d'oeuvres, and exploring the halls and grounds of this Oak Park Landmark.



The elegant grand staircase of Charles E. White's 1913 Cheney Mansion

Maybe you have been there for a wedding or a meeting but never really looked around? Or maybe you mistakenly think the building has something to do with Dole pineapples or Frank Lloyd Wright's girlfriend? Costumed actors, displays of historical artifacts and photos, and knowledgeable docents will set the record straight.

Don't miss your opportunity to hear the inside story of this 12,000-square-foot 1913 masterpiece by noted architect and Oak Park resident Charles E. White, Jr.

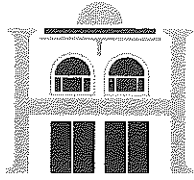


Save the Date: Annual Meeting Set for Thursday June 27

Mark your calendar for Thursday June 27 at 7 p.m., when The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest will host its 2019 Annual Meeting.

Details are still being worked out at press time, but the meeting will include a brief business session to accept nominations of new board members and to report on some of the highlights of the 2018-19 fiscal year. In addition, we will honor all of our volunteers and bestow our annual volunteer awards.





OAK PARK
RIVER FOREST
MUSEUM

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Opening day at Dressel's, 1923: Founder C. A. Dressel (right) in his store with two of his first customers (Photo courtesy of Jan Novak Dressel)

Dressel's Hardware: A Fixture in Oak Park for 96 Years

Businesses, like families, have life cycles. A popular restaurant is supplanted by a new flavor of the moment or a product or service once sold from a storefront moves on-line.

But on the south side of Chicago Avenue, just west of Harlem Avenue, Dressel's Hardware has been a fixture in the same storefront since 1923, serving our sister villages. Our historic homes need fixing and TLC. Our lawns and gardens need to be trimmed and watered. Snow needs to be removed from our sidewalks. Our homes and garages need a coat of paint.

Dressel's Hardware has been there to answer our questions and supply the right tools and materials for that next job for weekend warriors or local electricians, plumbers, and contractors.

Founded by Charles A. Dressel in 1923, his grandsons run the business today. Open seven days a week, the family-owned shop can be reached at 708-386-6843. By the way, the phone number hasn't changed much for nearly a century, either!

VISIT THE NEW
Hardware and Paint Store
ELECTRICAL SUPPLIES
1127 CHICAGO AVENUE
C. A. DRESSEL, Prop.
Phone Oak Park 6843

This Dressel's Hardware advertisement ran in Oak Leaves, May 5, 1923

This issue of History Matters is brought to you by Dressel's Hardware and Jan Novak Dressel.

Beginning with this issue, we are soliciting sponsorship of History Matters. By paying for the printing and mailing costs for each issue, a sponsor will receive a half-page ad in the issue, telling the story of an Oak Park or River Forest business or family. Is it a milestone anniversary for your business? Do you want a special way to celebrate your golden wedding anniversary or a 75th birthday? Contact Rachel Berlinski at 708-848-6755 or at oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net if you would like to sponsor the next issue, due to be mailed in July.