



Exhibits Aim to Tell the Many Stories of Our Community Goal is to explore a wide range of topics in our new OPRF Museum

On a Friday night in June, Oak Park River Forest Museum was filled with 70 fans of Tarzan, Princess Thuvia of Mars, and all things Edgar Rice Burroughs. They came from all over the United States to explore our new museum and see our featured new exhibit as part of an annual conference organized by The Muckers, a Chicago fan group which is part of the international fan club called the Burroughs Bibliophiles.

The crowd included the CEO and other staff of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. of Tarzana, California, which controls the trademarks and intellectual property of the author who lived in Oak Park and whose fertile imagination has taken readers to fantastic worlds for the last century. Working with these collectors, in recent years we have built a fascinating collection of books and memorabilia to help tell this story.

The museum's newest exhibit, *Tarzan, Mars, and the Literary Worlds of Oak Park and River Forest*, places ERB, as his fans call him, in context with today's world where fans of the Marvel comics universe and the followers of media-friendly franchises like *A Game of Thrones* dominate the pop culture landscape. It also puts the spotlight on other local authors who have created fictional worlds.

(continued on page 2)



Burroughs Bibliophiles from across the country visited our newest exhibit during a national convention held in Oak Brook

OPRF Museum Welcomes New Board Members



Five new members and one member returning for a second term on the Board of Directors of Oak Park River Forest Museum were elected at the museum's Annual Members Meeting on June 27th. Left to right are: Wendy Daniels, Dorothy Reid, returning member Carlotta Lucchesi, Nancy Lynn, Jennie Stevens, and Fran Knechel.

Read more about our new board members on page 3.

In the nearly two years since the grand opening of the museum, exhibits on World War I, the Economy Shop, Christmas decorations through the decades, Oak Park's community effort to become racially integrated, and the new ERB story have exposed visitors to a wide variety of stories about our villages and more universal themes. That doesn't even count smaller case exhibits on the Dedouch Co., Dr. Thomas E. Roberts, the Evans Game Farm, our 1898 firehouse building, and historic postcards, maps, and costume which enliven our space and put parts of our collection on display in a rotating and ever-changing fashion.

The goal is simple: Use our beautiful facility to tell a wider range of stories than ever before that appeal to the diverse interests of members, residents, students, families, and tourists who walk through our doors each week. We hope that visitors will see something of themselves in these exhibits, learn about others whose life experiences are far different from their own, and return again to learn even more.

An Exhibit Committee composed of board member and North Park University professor Sarah Doherty, Operations Manager Rachel Berlinski, Museum Explorer principal Rich Faron, and Executive Director Frank Lipo have been working to plan a longer term rotation of original exhibits. Faron's firm provided professional expertise and graphic vision for our *Open House* exhibit and overall exhibit planning for our new facility.

"Our visitors and the community at large have the expectation that when they come to our museum, they will learn a wide range of stories about our hometowns," said Lipo. "They also want to see that our exhibits and programming embrace an eclectic variety of subjects and stories that both entertain and educate. It is a challenge that we embrace."

Do you have an idea for a new exhibit for OPRF Museum? Do you have a collection you might loan to put on display? What stories might we tell in coming years? Share your ideas by sending an email to oprffhistorian@sbcglobal.net or calling Lipo at 708-848-6755.



Annual Meeting 2019: New Board Members, Notable Volunteers & Success in 2018-19

At its 2019 Annual Meeting on June 27, The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest's leadership welcomed five new board members, honored three outstanding volunteers, and thanked four board members who have led the organization through its recent growth but are rotating off the board because of term limits specified in our bylaws.

In addition, member Mary Vostal delighted the crowd with a presentation about her Oak Park



Mary Vostal

Photorama Project, a photo documentation of every block of the Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. Vostal donated a set of her completed photo montages to OPRF Museum at the Annual Meeting and they are available for viewing, research, and purchase.

Volunteers Honored

Mary Ann Porucznik was honored with the 2019 Philander Barclay Award, given annually in the name of the Oak Park bicycling photographer who documented our villages and was a one-man historical society. President Peggy Tuck Sinko lavished praise on Porucznik for her 14 years of board service and as board secretary. Porucznik has taken a leadership role in developing the new gift shop and has played leading roles in programs like the cemetery walk and house walk. She has been a key volunteer in almost every facet of the museum operation and plans to continue to volunteer each week.



Mary Ann Porucznik (right) with Peggy Tuck Sinko



Debbie Mercer (right) with
Museum Operations Manager
Rachel Berlinski

Debbie Mercer was recognized with the 2019 Carol Kelm Award, given each year in the name of the late Executive Director of the Historical Society for skill and professionalism in working with the collection of artifacts and materials that are at the heart of our

museum. Joining as a volunteer two years ago, Mercer has quickly become a fixture at the museum.

Eloise LaPalio was given the 2019 Faye Devine Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service, named for the President of the Historical Society from 1990-94. In the past two years LaPalio advanced quickly from a “rookie” volunteer to a jack-of-all trades who works with the collection, volunteered arranging flower donations for the house walk, and assisted with the planting and maintenance of the garden in front of the museum.



Eloise LaPalio (right) with Judy
Thompson in front of Museum

Five new board members for 2019-20

Carlotta Lucchesi, chair of the Board’s Governance Committee, presented a slate of new board members which was approved. The new board members elected are:

Wendy Daniels, an Oak Park resident since 1993, has been active in the Beye, Julian and OPRF High School PTOs and parent groups as her three children were raised in the village. She has a bookkeeping consulting business specializing in non-profit bookkeeping. She looks forward to learning more about her 1911 home with the help of OPRF Museum.


Fran Knechel moved to Oak Park in 2015 with her family. She has years of experience teaching high

school social studies and developing curriculum. She enjoys volunteering with school field trips that visit the museum and continues to learn about the community through block party planning, working with students at Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation, co-leading the First United Church Nursery School Board, and serving on the Beye School PTO.

Nancy Lynn has been an Oak Park resident since 1987, where she and husband Andy Teitelman raised their two children who are now grown with families of their own. Nancy was a fund raising professional in Chicago for 35+ years at the Newberry Library, Metropolitan Family Services and the Chicago Public Library Foundation, and was a consultant with Charles Feldstein on capital campaigns for many not-for-profit organizations. She retired in 2017.

Dorothy Reid moved to Oak Park at age 5 when her parents relocated to the village. She attended Beye School, Emerson (now Brooks) Junior High, and graduated from OPRF High School. She was elected to the District 97 school board and the Oak Park Township Board. She has served on several boards and committees, including Oak Park River Forest Alumni Association, and The Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park. Since she is a product of this community and part of its history, she is honored to serve on the OPRF Museum board.

Jennie Stevens was born in Oak Park and lived here for the first 18 years of her life. After graduating from OPRF High School, she left Oak Park to attend the University of Illinois, graduate school in Colorado, and then to pursue a career as a librarian. She says her childhood memories are populated by staples of the community including the Maze Library, Hole in the Wall Custard Shop, and Scoville Park. Working with the OPRF Museum combines her passion for volunteering, connecting people with information, and her enthusiasm for Oak Park.

In addition, **Carlotta Lucchesi**, a board member since 2007, a community leader in multiple organizations, and a past school board member for Districts 90 and 200, was elected to another term under the new bylaws. She is a native of Oak Park and has lived in River Forest for nearly 35 years. 

Museum Store Expands Offerings

Stop in for best selection or order online!

Looking for something special to welcome a new homeowner to your neighborhood? Know someone who is leaving the area but would appreciate a unique reminder of their time in Oak Park or River Forest? Have a graduate who is heading off to college—or will be attending OPRF High School in the fall?

For these and so many more reasons, stop in at the Oak Park River Forest Museum Store. New items—as well as old favorites—make the store a great place to shop for the unusual and unique.

“We’ve recently added several new merchandise lines,” says Mary Ann Porucznik, who volunteers in the store on Wednesdays and Fridays. “In addition to a new OPRF Museum t-shirt, we have an OPRF Museum tote bag, a series of watercolor prints featuring local landmarks, and embroidered tea towels. Plus, we’ve just become an outlet for OPRF High School items sponsored by the OPRF Boosters.”



The colorful OPRF Museum t-shirt is heathered cardinal red, with the museum name and logo on the left chest. A cotton/poly blend, it comes in sizes from small to double-X.



The tote bag, in black and white 100% cotton canvas, features the OPRF Museum logo on an open front pocket. It’s a classic boat tote shape, great for outdoor events. Wide enough to carry your picnic fixings or a load of groceries, the tote also has heavy-duty handles so it can be used as a shoulder bag.

In addition to the three unique Chris Ware-designed posters (Heurtley House in Oak Park, Purcell House in River Forest, and the Fire House home of the OPRF Museum), affordable art by local watercolorist Hannah Jennings is

available. Hannah’s prints include a nostalgic look at Kiddyland, the Lake Theater, Trailside Museum, the Beachy House, and the Oak Park Village Hall. Each is matted and ready for framing.

The embroidered tea towels (I ♥ Oak Park and I ♥ River Forest) make a great welcome-to-the-neighborhood gift, especially when paired with the OPRF Museum’s milk or dark chocolate bars, crafted by River Forest Chocolates. This pairing also works well for college students!



The newest line at the OPRF Museum store is OPRF High School Booster items. A portion of the sales from these items—including t-shirts, hoodies, sweatshirts, and baby layettes—goes to the OPRF High School Boosters.

“We are also planning to update our ‘One Tree Many Nuts’ and ‘Tarzan’ t-shirts,” said Porucznik. New designs should be available this fall, along with some special items designed just for the holidays. 🍁

History Matters

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We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at:
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Field Trip: Tales from the Fields Research Center

The Mystery of the Wild Woola

by Rachel Berlinski, Museum Operations Manager

I like to tell the stories of the artifacts in our collection, and sometimes those stories have a funny way of finding me.

June 14 was the grand opening of our newest exhibit at the museum, *Tarzan, Mars, and the Literary Worlds of Oak Park and River Forest*. Its unveiling included a visit by members of Edgar Rice Burroughs fan clubs from around the country, part of the Burroughs Bibliophiles, an international fan group. The Edgar Rice Burroughs Chain of Friendship (ECOF) Convention held in Oak Brook that weekend included a visit to OPRF Museum, since many of the members helped build the Museum's collection of materials about this author who lived in Oak Park.

A few weeks prior to the exhibit opening, I got a call from Steve Shroer, founder of the Hardcover Theatre in Minnesota who knew of the upcoming convention but not of our exhibit. A pleasant coincidence! A decade ago he had put on a production of Burroughs' story "A Princess of Mars" and wanted to send us a recording of the production.

On the day of the opening we added a finishing touch to the display. It's startling if you're not prepared: a mysterious creature with bulging golf-ball eyes and menacing sponge teeth, which I'd seen in storage but never really knew its story. Its green skin shimmers in glitter paint. Woola is its name. It's the three-foot head of a dog-like space creature, made out of foam board. If you saw the Tarzan/Burroughs exhibit in Pleasant Home, you might remember

seeing it—how could you forget? In this exhibit, it really is an outstanding artifact. But I didn't know anything about it because Woola had been on loan for a decade from Joan Bledig, leader of the Chicago-area Burroughs fan club, The Muckers.

The opening reception for the exhibit was a bustling success, and I was delighted to catch up with Joan, a loyal member of our museum. To our delight, that evening she decided to formally donate her artifact. When I asked her to tell me more about how she obtained Woola, she told me it was made for a production of "A Princess of Mars" and mentioned purchasing it from someone named Steve. So to my delight, I showed her the DVD I had just received in the mail. Now, not only do we know more about where Woola came from, but we can see her in action. In the play, Woola steals the show, coming to life aided by a

two-person team with the front person donning a pink velvet glove, acting as the tongue. If you saw Disney's 2012 film *John Carter*—don't worry, I didn't either, but I've seen clips on YouTube—you'll probably fall in love with Woola who looks and acts more like an unkempt bulldog. Despite the teeth made out of sponge, our Woola looks much more intimidating.

You can see Woola and learn more about Edgar Rice Burroughs' career, his life in Oak Park, and stories from other local authors in the new exhibit *Tarzan, Mars, and the Literary Worlds of Oak Park and River Forest*, open now during regular museum hours.



Joan Bledig (and Woola) viewing our newest exhibit



Finding Mary Wessels: The Search for a Lost Legend Using Genealogy, Local History, and the Internet

by Kurt Etchingham

Hephzibah Children's Association has been one of our community's treasured charitable organizations for well over a century. While the history of Hephzibah is well-documented, the same cannot be said for its founder, Mary E. Wessels. Almost nothing was known about this enigmatic figure who suddenly appeared in Oak Park, founded Hephzibah Children's Home, and then vanished-- all within 6 or 7 years.

Over the years, some attempts had been made to document Mary Wessels' life before and after her Oak Park years, but time and resources didn't allow for a full pursuit of her story and little was found. Times have changed, though.

Technology and the internet have revolutionized the process of genealogy and history research. What once took months or even years of archive searches, travel, and postal correspondence can now often be done in a matter of a few days. The proliferation of online databases, the surge in digitization of original source materials, advances in Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, and the rapid communication afforded by email and messaging apps are just a few of the ways technology has changed the process. The internet does not replace good, solid, in-depth research, but it certainly speeds it up.

Recently, we were able to revisit the Wessels mystery with fresh eyes and fresh resources, using both historical and genealogical research methods. Here is a very brief synopsis of what we found and how we found it.

It was long known that Mary Wessels was Canadian, that she arrived here late in the 1890s, and that she left Oak Park in the Fall of 1903, purportedly to care for her seriously ill father.

A search of online newspaper archives found an article in *The Oak Park Times*, a short-lived newspaper from the turn of the century, dated July 6, 1900. It had a front page article

...to boys alone, between the ages of three and eight years. Miss Wessels, its matron and founder, is manifestly competent to face whatever burdens or tests of exact judgment it may impose, as she had a long experience in Buffalo, N. Y., as matron of a similar home.

No doubt many will be surprised to find this reference in *The Oak Park Times* led to Buffalo and a major breakthrough

about Hephzibah Children's Home that said Mary Wessels "had a long experience in Buffalo, N.Y., as matron of a similar home."

A search for digitized Buffalo City Directories found this entry in the 1895 edition:

in business department
Wessels Mary E. matron Newsboys' and
Bootblacks' Home, 29 Franklin
Wassenheimer George. commercial trav-

Entry from the 1895 "Buffalo City Directory"

A website about the history of Buffalo revealed that the Newsboys' and Bootblacks' Home was a charitable home for orphaned and abandoned boys who worked as street vendors.

A search of digitized Buffalo newspapers turned up a story about the "News and Boots Home," as it was colloquially known. The article told of a camping trip that some of the boys took to the farm of Nicholas Wessels at Gull Lake, Ontario, on the shore of Miner's Bay. It also said that Nicholas' daughter was the matron of the home.

There are at least nine lakes named Gull in Ontario, but a search of digitized Canadian newspapers from the same year found a story in *The Watchman* newspaper of Lindsay, Ontario, about some orphans from Buffalo on a camping excursion at the farm of Nicholas Wessels. A Google Maps search revealed that Lindsay, Ontario, was in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario and there was one Gull Lake in the area. A few more map searches found that this lake had a Miner's Bay that lay in Lutterworth Township.

Turning next to what traditionally have been thought of as genealogical records, the Canadian Census and other vital records showed only one man named Nicholas Wessels who lived in Lutterworth Township in the last half of the 19th century. He and his wife had several children, including a daughter named Mary Eliza, born in 1863.

When Mary E. Wessels left Oak Park in October 1903, it was said she was leaving to care for her terminally ill father. Genealogical records provide

(continued on page 7)

Finding Mary Wessels (continued from page 6)

circumstantial evidence that supports this claim. Nicholas Wessels died in March 1904 of heart failure.

We don't yet know how long Mary stayed in Ontario after Nicholas died, but the next record we found for Mary Wessels was in the 1911 census of Canada. She was living with Benjamin and Nannie Spencer on a farm in Saskatchewan and is listed as Benjamin Spencer's sister-in-law. How do we know this is "our" Mary Wessels? Once again, we turned to traditional genealogical sources which showed that the Mary Eliza Wessels we found in Ontario had a sister named Susannah who was sometimes called Nannie and that Susannah Wessels had married Benjamin Spencer in Lutterworth Township, Ontario.

Later in 1911, Mary came to the United States to visit a friend in New York, and her entry into the country was recorded on another document that is often thought of as a genealogical record—the Manifest of Aliens Entering the United States that was filled out when her train crossed the border. This is unquestionably our Mary Wessels because her emergency contact is her brother-in-law Benjamin Spencer of the same location as shown in the 1911 Census.

The form also asks if she had ever stayed in the United States before, and if so, for how long and when. Her answer is telling: she lived in the United States from 1891 to 1903 in New York and Illinois, returning to Canada in October 1903. That matches precisely with the documented date of her departure from Oak Park. The form also has a column that records "Condition of Health." Ominously, Mary Wessels health is recorded as "poor."

The final document in this story found to date is a Canadian death registration. It shows that Mary Wessels died on January 4, 1917, on her brother's ranch at Botanie, Lytton, British Columbia. The cause of death was heart failure due to vascular disease and kidney disease.

The death registration contains a wealth of information that corresponds with what has been found about Mary Wessels. Her father's name, her birthplace, and her year of birth all match the other records. And, perhaps most telling, the registration

asks for "Last Occupation" and "Former Occupation." The entries are "Dressmaking etc." from 1902 to 1912 and "Matron in Children's Home" from "about 1892 to about 1902."

The informant on the death registration is Arthur Wessels. The census data discovered in Ontario show that Mary had two brothers, Arthur and Thomas. An email exchange with the Lytton History Museum in Lytton, B.C. found that,

although they had no record of Mary Wessels, Thomas Wessels and his wife, Bella, owned a ranch on Botanie Creek, about 10 miles from Lytton. (Again, this corresponds with genealogical records from Ontario that show Mary's brother Thomas marrying Bella Fournier.) Unmarried brother Arthur lived with them, and it appears this is where Mary E. Wessels spent the last four years of her life as an invalid.

There is still much to be learned about Mary Wessels. When did she begin working in children's homes? When did she leave Buffalo? Why did she choose Oak Park to found her orphanage? Why did she not pursue her career in child welfare after leaving Oak Park? These are just a few of the obvious questions waiting for answers, but now we know where to begin looking.

Local history and genealogy are inseparable and interdependent. Genealogy without the context of history is little more than a dull recitation of names and dates. History without the context of genealogy misses important clues and connections that shed light on historical events. And the internet has made the process faster, easier, and more accessible than ever before.

This article is a *précis* of ongoing research into the life of Mary Wessels. When completed, a final report will be added to the Museum's archives for reference and for the use of future researchers. We also will add the complete report to our website for those who are interested.

VITAL STATISTICS ACT
SCHEDULE B - Death

Name: Mary Eliza Wessels
Sex: Female
Age: 46
Date of Birth: 1871
Date of Death: 1917
Place of Birth: Buffalo, N.Y.
Place of Death: Botanie, Lytton, B.C.
Cause of Death: Heart failure due to vascular disease and kidney disease
Informant: Arthur Wessels
Signature: Arthur Wessels
Date: 7 January 1917

Mary Wessels' death registration from Lytton, British Columbia

An Oak Park Murder Mystery

By Elizabeth Nichols, OPRF Museum Archivist

The rewarding danger of research at Oak Park River Forest Museum is stumbling into an engrossing subject unrelated to your original question. This is exactly what happened to me when I discovered the sensational headline *MANN IDENTIFIED AS ONE WHO PURCHASED STRANGLERS ROPE:*

Clerk Says Oak Park Youth Bought Cord From Him Before Mrs. Thompson Was Found Murdered. An avid true crime fan, I followed the story down its dark rabbit hole.

"As [his] father entered the cell [Luman C. Mann] staggered to his feet, he looked up into his father's face, and his eyes filled with tears and then he faltered as if about to fall.

[Orville C. Mann] "reached out his arms and caught the boy in them.

"My son, my son," he cried, and tears ran down his face and dropped to the boy's head. The younger man was convulsed with grief and sobbed in his father's arms."

This dramatic scene was published in Chicago's *Inter Ocean* on October 12, 1908. Orville C. Mann and Luman C. Mann were both Oak Parkers. Orville C. Mann was an engineer-inventor whose 1901 entry into the railroad business made him wealthy. The next year, per OPRF Museum directories, the Mann family moved to Oak Park. Six years later, Luman C. Mann was arrested for the murder of Frances "Fanny" Gilmore Thompson: the "diamond girl."

On October 10, 1908, Luman C. Mann was in Pennsylvania working as a traveling salesman. There Chicago police arrested Luman, and brought him

back to the Windy City. The fact that Luman was the son of a wealthy Oak Parker dominated the headlines. The story was conspicuously absent from October 1908 editions of the *Oak Leaves*: the October 17th edition only printed a correction by Oak Parkers, C.S.

Burton of 326 Home Avenue and A.C.

Haven of 244 Clinton Avenue, stating

that "no statements...were made by either of us...as to Luman's character." Yet newspapers described Luman as a "nice genteel looking young man."

But, he got kicked out of military school and bounced from job to job. Luman's irresponsible spending habits, drug addiction, gambling, and underworld connections all came out in court. Defiant, the

23-year-old Luman declared that

he was "innocent of this crime.... I never saw the woman who was murdered."

"The woman who was murdered" was employed as a servant in the Mann's home at 138 Clinton Avenue in Oak Park for several months in the spring of 1907. Fanny came to Chicago to start a new life in 1904, leaving her home and husband of six months in Fargo, North Dakota. Her husband, Edward Thompson, followed Fanny to Oak Park to convince her to return West with him. She refused, and left Oak Park until after his departure for home. "She did not come back for three weeks," said Luman's mother, Edna Mann, in the *Chicago Tribune*, "and then she said she did not dare work for us any longer."



On July 1st, 1908, Fanny was found dead at a rooming house on 1242 Michigan Avenue, Chicago. Her body remained undiscovered for two to four days. She had been bound with rope, strangled with a cord, and stepped on with force. It was clear from the bruises and cuts on her body and the "disordered condition of the room" that her death followed a prolonged struggle. Some newspapers claimed that she was tortured to death. She was just 28-years-old.

Though a victim of a gruesome crime, Fanny was painted as a woman whose checkered past led to her own downfall. *The Joliet News* claimed she was employed by several Oak Park families as a servant, but discharged because "she kept late hours and wore too many diamonds." She was labeled a thief, getting the "wages of sin" by stealing from guests at the Michigan Avenue rooming house. It was insinuated that she and her murderer registered at the rooming house that Sunday, June 28th for less than puritanical activities. The fact that they registered under the false names "J.H. Raymond" and "Anna Raymond" gave further credence to the suggestion that Fanny had something to hide.

The case against Luman was circumstantial. After months of searching for the mysterious "Raymond" that registered with Fanny, Chicago police obtained a damning affidavit from Luman's ex-wife, Irene Slack. In it, Irene stated that she was living with Luman at his family's Clinton Avenue home in 1905, but later Luman "left her to shift for herself." After their separation, Irene met Luman at Chicago's Riverview Park, and claimed Luman told her "he was living with a woman that had diamonds and jewelry worth over \$2,000" and that "he was going to get it if he had to choke her." Further, Chicago police obtained four

more incriminating statements that alleged Luman was "Raymond."

Luman's sister, Edna Mann, provided an alibi for her brother, declaring, "I was with him in our home [in] Oak Park at the time he is charged with being on Michigan Avenue.... I will go to the stand, prove [it] and save him from death on the gallows." Luman's aunt, Louise Mann, also swore that he was in Oak Park at the time of the murder. In addition, several

Oak Parkers testified on his behalf, including Ina Bullen of 147 N. Humphrey Avenue, and Elsie Hotchkiss of 517 Woodbine Avenue.

Ultimately, on March 18, 1909, Luman was acquitted of Fanny's murder. "God knows I have been wayward," Luman said, "but I thank Him for [showing] my innocence. Keep track of me and you'll find I shall become a useful citizen." The acquitted young man kept his word, becoming a well-known world traveler and lecturer for what became the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

Justice for Fanny Thompson never came. In November 1909, Chicago police were notified of a St.

Louis man—H.J. May—who fit the description of the elusive "Raymond." But Chicago police said that "it was not likely that any further effort would be made to clear the mystery of 'Raymond's' identity." Fanny became a forgotten cold case. Now, the least we can do for Frances Gilmore Thompson is to categorically state that despite her alleged thievery, she should not be blamed for her own murder. In the era of Me-Too, society is just beginning to awaken to its history of victim-blaming and victim-shaming: Fanny's story is a part of that history, and we owe it to her and other women like her to set the record straight.



(Photos of Luman C Mann (page 8) and Fanny Gilmore Thompson (page 9) from Chicago Examiner, October 12, 1908, page 1.)

"Walk This Way..." Come on Our Popular Walking Tours

Saturday August 3, 10 a.m.


Evans Field: From Game Farm to CCC Camp

Once the home of the Wallace Evans Game Farm, history on this picturesque spot is shared by Native Americans, early settlers, a 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and generations of hikers, bicyclists and nature fans.

We'll walk past a marsh and through woods along the Des Plaines River that are home to diverse flora and fauna. As with most history, many questions remain, particularly about the CCC camp. We'd love to hear any stories or information visitors bring with them.



Are these pipes remains of the CCC camp?

Evans Field Forest Preserve is west of Thatcher Ave. at the intersection with Bloomingdale Ave. Meet at the east end of the parking lot at 10 a.m. sharp. This event is cohosted by Trailside Museum. 

Saturday August 17, 2 p.m.


West Side Stories: Architecture & People that Shaped River Forest

Take a walk with us through scenic, historic River Forest! Starting and ending at Trailside Museum, this walk down Edgewood and Thatcher Avenues will show why these two streets are an outdoor museum of



Who was the very talented (and almost forgotten) woman who lived here?

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.

Meet outside the visitors entrance of Trailside Museum at 2 p.m. 

Saturday August 24, 2 p.m.

Growing with Gunderson: A Stroll Through the Historic District


Our stroll through Oak Park's Gunderson Historic District will 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

Where was this? And what is going on here?

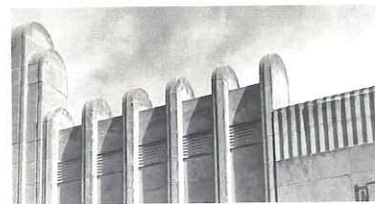
Arts, the controversial temporary homes built to ease the post-World War II housing crisis, and why this neighborhood was once called "Fertile Acres."

This tour starts and ends at the Longfellow Park Field House. 


Sunday September 15, 2 p.m.

Downtown Deco: Architectural Treasures in our Midst

Downtown Oak Park boasts an array of marvelous examples of Art Deco design that are often overlooked. Join our Executive Director Frank Lipo on a walk down Lake Street as he points out many of these treasures that we walk past every day without noticing.



Can you name this iconic building?

Details of this walk are still being finalized. Watch our website, emails, and social media for more information as it becomes available. 

Tickets for each walk are \$8 for members (\$10 for non-members). Purchase at OPRF Museum or online at oprfmuseum.org. Space is limited and advance registration is strongly recommended.

More Great Events in September, and October

Saturday, September 14th, 3 p.m. Saving Those Treasured Family Photos, Letters, Books, and More

Wondering how to care for your historic family materials? Check out *Preserving Your Family History!* OPRF Museum archivist Elizabeth Nichols will discuss how different materials like paper, photographs, books, and more wear down over time, and what you can do to slow that deterioration and help preserve your family's history for the next generation and beyond. She will also recommend sources for archival supplies to protect your family heirlooms.



Archivist Elizabeth Nichols

Each attendee may bring one item and Elizabeth will offer an evaluation of its condition and a recommendation for the best way to preserve it. Oak Park River Forest Museum will have a limited amount of archival supplies on hand for purchase if you have items that you would like to protect right away.

Admission to this event is \$5 for OPRF Museum members and \$10 for all others. Sorry, but we cannot and will not estimate a monetary value for any items you may bring.



Sunday, September 22, 1 p.m. Take Me Out to the Ball Game: Base Ball, circa 1858, in Oak Park

What better way to relax on a Sunday afternoon than like the earliest settlers of our villages? Take in a base ball game! That's two words; don't ever call it baseball.

Come to Lindberg Park in Oak Park to cheer on the Chicago Salmon of the Vintage Base Ball Association as they take on their arch rivals, the McClean County Prairie Chickens. These teams play

the game the way it was meant to be played— by the rules set forth in 1858. And with reproduction period equipment: uniforms, bats, balls and bases, but no gloves, please!

So bring your lawn chairs and sunhat, and root, root, root for your Chicago Salmon.

Of course, you'll be able to buy some peanuts and Cracker Jack, as well as water, soft drinks, and lemonade.

This is a free event and is co-sponsored by the Park District of Oak Park.



Sunday, October 20, 12:30 to 2 p.m. "Tales of the Tombstones" Returns to Tell More Forgotten Stories

Every community has those untoward stories that were told in hushed tones, perhaps not suited for the ears of more sensitive listeners. Our 28th annual Cemetery Walk will feature some of these tales of the macabre, the creepy, and the scandalous.



In addition to costumed actors at selected gravesites retelling the story of people interred there, trained docents will point

out remarkable monuments and share the fascinating history of Forest Home Cemetery as they guide tour groups from grave to grave.

Meet inside the front gate of Forest Home Cemetery. Gates open at noon and the first tour departs at 12:30 p.m. The last tour will leave at 2 p.m. sharp. The tour takes about 2 hours. Tickets are \$15 (\$10 for members) and can be purchased on our website or at the cemetery on the day of the event.



See "base ball" the way it was played when this early photo was taken on the grounds of the Henry W. Austin estate



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Suffragist leader and Oak Park resident Grace Wilbur Trout, at the wheel, during a suffrage demonstration on Michigan Avenue in Chicago in 1910.



Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Illinois' Approval of the 19th Amendment

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

On May 21st, 1919, the proposed Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution passed the House of Representatives, followed by the Senate on June 4th. But then it had to be ratified by three quarters of the States before it would become the law of the land. Just six days later, on June 10th, Illinois became the first state to approve the amendment. The Nineteenth Amendment was officially adopted on August 26th, 1920, the culmination of a decades-long movement for women's suffrage at both state and national levels.

When women cast their votes for President in 1920, the League was there to provide accurate, unbiased election information. The League of Women Voters of the United States was founded in Chicago on February 14, 1920. Oak Park's Grace Wilbur Trout was one of the signatories to the founding document. The Oak Park & River Forest chapter was founded four years later at the Oak Park Arms on May 13, 1924.

The League of Women Voters of Oak Park & River Forest is proud to sponsor this edition of *History Matters* in recognition of Illinois' pivotal role in the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment that enfranchised 26 million American women. For more information on the League, visit their website at lwvprf.org.

You or your organization can sponsor an edition of *History Matters*. By paying for the printing and mailing costs for an issue, a sponsor will receive a half-page ad, 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 mid-October.