



PARK RIDGE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE LAMPPOST

July 2012

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At this writing, our plan to create the Park Ridge History Center in the former Youth Campus space has been subject to much discussion by your Board of Trustees. As you probably know, The Youth Campus facility in Park Ridge will be sold, and its operations will be folded into Children's Home + Aid located in Chicago. As noted in the July 2, 2012 joint press release prepared by these organizations:

The Board of Directors of The Youth Campus has voted to combine with Children's Home + Aid, bringing together centuries of service to abused and neglected children. The Youth Campus board identified the need to take a proactive stance to ensure the best use of resources and respond to the critical need to sustain services for children and families at risk. Children's Home + Aid was determined to be the partner best able to achieve this objective. All Youth Campus foster care cases will be moved to, and operating staff will join, Children's Home + Aid following transition steps with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Children's Home + Aid has agreed to accept the joint offer secured by The Youth Campus from the Park Ridge Recreation and Park District and Mark Elliott Corporation to purchase the Park Ridge property, located at 733 North Prospect Avenue for \$6.4 million. This offer is contingent upon passage of a referendum bond proposition by the Park Ridge Recreation and Park District in November 2012. Both organizations determined this to be the best proposal to preserve The Youth Campus mission and to meet the community need for open space in Park Ridge.

The partners plan to split the Campus land area approximately 60/40, with the larger space to the north occupied by the District, and housing to the south. The sale depends on a successful Park District referendum to raise funds for its share of the purchase.

We will continue to monitor developments. Obviously, our path to the Solomon Cottage is now more complicated and somewhat uncertain. In view of this, the Board is also compiling a list of potential alternate locations for the History Center, preferably historic sites and reasonably close to the center of town. If you have any suggestions in this regard, know of any places that we should consider, we would like to hear from you. Your comments about our mission are always welcome.

Paul Adlaf

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT, TUESDAY, AUGUST 7 IN HODGES PARK

The Society will be participating in several events this summer in Park Ridge, and we want to invite you to join us at these 'home town' programs.

The first event is the **Park Ridge National Night Out** program, which is Tuesday, August 7, between the hours of 6:30 pm and 9:00 pm in Hodges Park. This nation-wide event, sponsored locally by our Police Department, was first convened in Park Ridge in 2005 by Jeff Caudill, long-time Historical Society Trustee and Chief of Police for many years here. This program is intended to strengthen neighborhood spirit, and police-community partnerships. According to the police department's website,



National Night Out provides residents with an opportunity to meet police officers, talk with their neighbors, strengthen the community, learn about safety and fight crime. The Park Ridge Police have, again, organized a free, fun filled evening complete with crime prevention informational booths, children's games and activities including a petting zoo, camel rides and an on-site broadcast with Radio Disney. The Honorary Master of Ceremonies this year will be Members of the Park Ridge Troop #1 Boy Scouts in celebration of 100 years of service to the community, and the Honorary Guest Speaker will be a member of the Chicago Blackhawks alumni team. The Alumni member will also be around after the welcome ceremonies to sign autographs and take pictures. In addition, attendees can take a tour of the police department, or may walk away with a prize to be given away in a free raffle.



The event is open to all Park Ridge residents, and has the warm and comfortable feel of a country fair, with many neighbors, families and children attending.

The Society is both Sponsor and Exhibitor at this year's event. Please stop by to say hello at our exhibitor's table. It would be wonderful to see you there.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR CEMETERY TOUR

The Society's autumn tour of Town of Maine Cemetery is planned for a Saturday in late September or early October. We invite Members and friends to help us at this event. Volunteers are welcome to help conduct tours or to welcome guests in the cemetery gatehouse.

If you are interested, please let us know by telephone, 847.696.1973, or by email: george@pennyville.org.

Thank you.



RESTORATION OF HISTORIC POST OFFICE MURAL HAS BEGUN

Thanks to the generosity of Society members and others in the community, the \$38,000 needed to undertake the restoration of Park Ridge's New Deal-era Post Office mural has been raised. Restoration began in June of 2012 and is expected to be completed by next spring. Once the restoration is completed, the mural will be on permanent display at the Park Ridge Public Library.



Maquette for Indians Cede the Land

A little background ...

The 6' x 20' mural, "Indians Cede the Land," created for the Park Ridge Post Office through the Depression-era Treasury Relief Art Project, is a rare treasure from the City's heritage. The mural depicts U.S. soldiers and pioneer explorers meeting Native American leaders in the wilderness. To the left, behind the soldiers, are two rivers. To the right, behind the Native Americans, are brightly-lit forest trees. The mural was installed in the former unadorned Park Ridge Post Office at 164 South Prospect Avenue on June 20, 1940, when the building was just three years old.

Muralist George Melville Smith was one of a handful of artists who were awarded multiple mural contracts through the Treasury Section. He was selected from the designs he submitted to produce murals for post offices in Crown Point, Indiana, (1938), Elmhurst, Illinois, (1938), and Park Ridge (1940). Smith was paid approximately \$2,000 for each mural.

What's in store for the mural now ...

The mural is being restored by Parma Conservation, Ltd., located in Chicago. Parma Conservation has a stellar reputation for its quality of work and has been involved in restorations of many similar murals. The restoration of the mural is anticipated to take 6-8 months, followed by installation in the Park Ridge Library early in 2013, soon after the start of the Library Centennial year.

The mural is a memorable piece of Park Ridge history and will be enjoyed in the Library for generations to come. Thanks to all who made contributions to the project!

Activities of Society members ...

In the spring of 2011, the Park Ridge Mural Restoration Committee was formed to raise money to pay for mural restoration, and for installation of the mural in the Public Library. This Committee is a collaboration of the Historical Society and three Library Trustees active at the time the mural restoration project came into focus. The Committee is still raising funds for the preferred solid aluminum support to be used as a mounting surface for the restored mural.

Bear in mind, none of this could have occurred had one Society member / Maine East history teacher extraordinaire not treasured this mural some 42-years ago. Park Ridge Historical Society Founder Paul Carlson rescued this mural from certain destruction in 1970, when the local Post Office at Prospect Avenue and Garden had just closed. It was in storage until 2008, when it was returned to the Park Ridge community by Mr. Carlson's family after his death.

What you can do to help ...

Please contact us if you would like to make a donation for the completion of the restoration (mounting surface) of the mural.

PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNOUNCES C54 WORLD WAR II ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Over sixty years ago, students at Maine High School successfully undertook an amazing initiative: selling \$500,000 in war bonds to finance a World War II C-54 Skymaster Transport airplane. According to Maine Alumni, Society members and historical documents gathered so far, the aircraft was named the "Maine Flyer." It was indicative of the students' significant contribution to the war effort.

The aircraft, which still exists today, was made by Douglas Aircraft Company, located on Mannheim Road, just west of our city limits. It is currently located in Arizona and is the focus of an oral history project currently underway by Society members working in conjunction with Maine Alumni.

On July 21, 2012, Maine Alumni and Historical Society members gathered at the Park Ridge Non Profit center to launch an ambitious initiative to document this historic event. Committee member Jim Trecker vividly

remembers how World War II affected teens and their families growing up in Park Ridge. To inaugurate the committee's effort, Jeff Caudill collaborated with a friend to build an exact replica of the "Town of Maine Flyer." The committee—which also includes Luella Trecker, Otto Kohler and Society members Jeff Caudill, John Murphy, Paul Adlaf and Brian Kidd—agreed that the project will include details of the

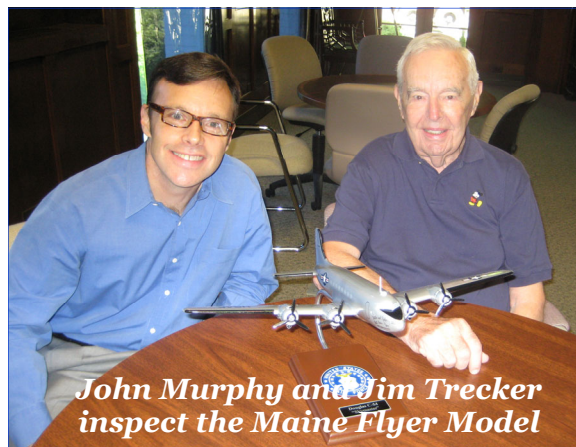
C54 bond fund raising efforts and the day-to-day life of teens in Park Ridge during World War II.

The committee will use various methods to research this 1945 event, including interviewing alumni and others who participated in the initiative. The committee is looking for photo-

graphs, articles, souvenirs as well as any other relevant documents and artifacts. Volunteers and/or tips are urgently needed. Please contact **John Murphy** at 312-229-0110 if you have information on this historic event.



*Model of the Maine Flyer,
a C-54 Skymaster*



*John Murphy and Jim Trecker
inspect the Maine Flyer Model*



*Attendees at the first meeting of the
Historical Society's Oral History Project*

PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PILLAR'S CIRCLE

The Society is thankful to all those who support our vision of a Park Ridge History Center. We acknowledge with the deepest gratitude the first three members of our Pillar's Circle. These are friends to the Society and Park Ridge history who have placed their trust and support in our organization to create an innovative History Center for display and celebration of the history of all the people, places and events that have made this a wonderful community.

John Simms, local philanthropist who has made significant donations to the Society and many other community organizations for years.

Edith Kooyumjian, local philanthropist who has also contributed generously to the Society, and other community organizations, with her financial support, and in our case, personal hands-on support of the tasks behind the scenes required by an organization such as ours.

David and Juli Grainger, long-time residents, who, although no longer living here, made a generous donation to the Society to honor the community where they raised their family.

When completed, the Circle will have ten members whose generosity opened the door to our History Center. As we now renew our efforts to complete the Pillar's Circle, please know that each of these individuals made a significant gesture to the support of a Park Ridge History Center.

ALBERT BUCHHEIT DAY IN HODGES PARK: MAY 24, 2012

On May 24, 2012, Society docents shared a 'View of History' with citizens who gathered in Hodges Park. The tour began at Butler Place and concluded at the Camp Fire Girls fountain. Visitors received a copy of the Heritage Committee Foundation brochure along with souvenirs of our first mayoral election held in 1910.



Visitors to Albert Buchheit Day, May 24, 2012

Recollections of Nancy Welty Clark, Long-time Park Ridge Resident in the 800 Block of South Fairview Ave.

My father, Wallace Welty, designed our family home at 803 S. Fairview Ave., in 1928. The house has beautiful ornamental sand-cut brickwork on the front of both the house and the garage.



In addition to his attention to the detail of the exterior and interior of the home, my Dad's passion for landscaping was -- and remains -- a remarkable aspect of the home in which I continue to reside. Following are some of my earliest recollections of growing up in the vicinity of Roosevelt Grade School.

In 1933, Park Ridge was in the midst of a scarlet fever epidemic. In many children, scarlet fever was followed by streptococcal pneumonia, mastoid infection, encephalitis, meningitis, rheumatic heart disease and kidney failure and/or bone infection.

Within my block, two children died and two children, Annie and Caroline, became deaf and severely physically and mentally handicapped. My father and sister and I all had scarlet fever. I suffered bilateral pneumonia, mastoid infection, bilateral mastoid surgery, and meningitis. For a long time, I could not hear, walk or raise my head.

The scarlet fever scare was barely finished when a whooping cough epidemic began and took another toll on the neighborhood children. This was followed by chicken pox and measles. During this time every third house, including ours, had a 'Quarantine' sign on its front door. Official people came into the house and threw books, toys, mattresses, and bedding out of the second floor windows and onto a fire they had started in our backyard. I was particularly horrified at their burning my books, particularly a beautifully illustrated Wizard of Oz, Mary Poppins and a wildflower book.

Theodore Roosevelt Grade School, located one block south of our house, was a new addition to the neighborhood. It was built to accommodate one kindergarten, taught by Mrs. Vandermolen, and two of each grades one through six. For the first three years, the school had reduced attendance due to the on-going fear that gripped parents aware of all of the contagious illnesses suffered by children in the area. Miss Virginia Snyder, the first grade teacher, who was herself handicapped with a lift on a very short leg, bravely walked from home to home teaching quarantined children.

In 1938, things finally approached normalcy. Most children were back in school; their grades determined by age. Miss Hoper was the third grade teacher, and in October my mother carried me into her classroom. I had to wear heavy shoes with metal braces that extended up the

outside of my legs. With my weak legs and poor hearing, I needed to sit at the desk closest to the teacher. My father had spent time during those years I was at home teaching me to read, to do trigonometry and to paint watercolors. We had a four-wheeled green wooden cart called an Irish Mail Pump Cart. You steered it with your feet over the front axle and made it go by pulling and pushing a handlebar on a long lever, kind of like a rowing machine. It was great for me with my weak legs.

The playground at Roosevelt School was wonderful. It extended from the school all the way to Talcott. First, there was the 15-foot high support holding two trapezes, rings, and a high bar. We found a sturdy wooden box and placed it so that we could jump for the swinging trapeze. Next was an octagonal merry-go-round made of angle irons supported from a bearing on the top of a 14-foot center post. It offered many opportunities for climbing on the rigging and hanging by our knees as it went around. Third, there was a long high slide. Holding on to the support legs, we could walk up the underside of the slide and flip over. There was a ladder swing, and three teeter-tauters, as well. Girls were required to wear dresses, so for playtime we tucked our skirts into our underpants.

Across the street from Roosevelt, the entire block was a slough about 30 inches deep with huge cottonwood trees and thick grape vines that we swung on. Within the vicinity of where we played, there was the occasional poison ivy, nightshade, snakes and spiders. We used to wade or pole around on a homemade raft.

Teeming with wildlife, the swamp held lots of beautiful beetles and other bugs, including big orange and black or yellow and black spiders sitting in the center of their large webs. There were tadpoles, frogs and turtles for us to try to catch. We treated them gently and let them go. Occasionally boys brought snakes into school to scare some of the girls -- and the teachers! I helped the boys catch the snakes so that they wouldn't think I was afraid of them. We also tested plants for edibility, finally setting on crabapples and sour grass

Neighborhood Fort Building: Nancy (left), Ginger (mid front)



Nancy & fellow explorers

as well as a few flowers. The favorite route to school was the alley between Fairview and Prospect. There were cottonwood trees and sturdy willows along the alley. My father and a neighbor built tree platforms, Tarzan slings and hand-over-hand ropes between the trees. We navigated most of the block in the trees.

The foregoing recollections are but a few of the many wonderful experiences Nancy documented in her autobiography: Blessed With Too Many Talents, Memories of Nancy Welty Clark (2007). A copy of the book, which includes wonderful photographs, is located at the Park Ridge Public Library. You may reach Nancy at drnwcdc@aol.com.



Park Ridge Fire Truck from 1921

*1921 Pirsch Fire Truck purchased new by the Park Ridge Fire Department, shown as it now rests in the Fire Department headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee. How did this journey from Park Ridge to Memphis take place? Watch for more of the story at Pennyville.org, and in the next issue of *The Lamppost*.*



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