



PARK RIDGE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE LAMPPOST

November 2012

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Please allow me to recap some of the Society's 2012 highlights:

- ◆ During the last twelve months, the Society continued to participate in and add to Park Ridge affairs. Our Board Members and Society Volunteers were active at two Community Fairs at the Public Library, and at National Night Out in Hodges Park in August. We presented our Buchheit Day event on May 24th, to celebrate the exact day 102 years ago when our first mayor was elected. Dr. Albert Buchheit continued his dental practice in Park Ridge into the 1960s. The window at 106 Main Street was decorated several times to change out the historic artifacts and photographs on display.
- ◆ We provided strong support for the Park Ridge Post Office Mural restoration project, through fund-raising efforts and our own matching grant to power the restoration fund-raising to the finish line. Many of our Members contributed generously to the restoration program.
- ◆ Our Members-Only Homecoming Reception in March was a warm and respectful event dedicated to thanking those residents still living in Park Ridge who came to Mary Wilson House 41 years ago to sign up in support of formation of the Society.
- ◆ John Murphy's C-54 oral history project moves ahead. This project will yield a valuable history of Park Ridge as seen through the recollections of Maine Township High School students who worked hard raising funds for the Department of Defense equivalent to the cost of manufacturing a C-54 'Skymaster' airplane at the Douglas Aircraft plant at Higgins and Mannheim Roads in 1945.
- ◆ Many thanks to those Members who strengthened our publicity and communications efforts this year: Carol Gonzalez for getting publicity copy for our affairs and programs into local print and on-line media, to Laurie Pegler for guiding the Lamppost into its fourth edition this year, and to John Murphy for keeping our website looking sharp and fresh. We appreciate your efforts for the Society.
- ◆ At our Annual Meeting, Society Members elected the following Officers for 2012-2013: President Paul Adlaf, Vice President John Murphy, Treasurer Kirke Machon and Secretary Pat Adlaf. Continuing as Trustees are Nancy Pytel, Brian Kidd, Maureen Connelly and Jeff Caudill. Randy Derifield, Brian Lazzaro, Daniel Koziol and Laurie Pegler were elected as new Trustees. We'll offer a brief profile of our new Trustees in the next issue of the Lamppost, and you can find their names on the 'Board' page of our website, www.pennyville.org. Please enjoy the fine summary of our 2012 Annual Meeting within this Lamppost.

Continued on page 2

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

- ◆ We thank retiring Trustees Millie O'Brien and Barbara Christopher for their service on the Board. Millie joined the Board several years after her husband Harry was elected as a Trustee, and has always added welcome perspective to our deliberations and hard work at our Flea Market and Spirits of Old Park Ridge events. For three years Barbara has lent her graphic artistry to a variety of Society print materials and promotional media. We are grateful that both Millie and Barbara have offered to continue as Society volunteers.
- ◆ Despite the completely unexpected interruptions to our History on the Move project which started in mid-April, the Society has continued steadfast in its resolve to pursue the Solomon Cottage as its new home. As this issue of the Lamppost goes to press, we are beginning discussions with the Park Ridge Park District for ownership of the Cottage, plus a long-term land lease for some space around the Cottage, which will be on the grounds of a new Park Ridge Park -- Youth Campus Park -- assuming approval at a local April, 2013 referendum for funding to purchase the Campus.
- ◆ We will publish the history of this project, no matter the outcome, so that all will know of our efforts to preserve one of the historic cottages from the early years of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls in Park Ridge. The enthusiastic reception for this continuing effort, at our most recent parlor meeting in late August, affirms the resolve shared by our friends and neighbors for this project.

Please don't hesitate to call or write or email if you have any questions about the Society. It's always a pleasure to speak with our Members and friends.

Paul Adlaf



Keep up to date with the
Park Ridge Historical Society

Visit our website at: www.pennyville.org

PARLOR MEETING AT HISTORIC HOME OF TOWN'S SECOND MAYOR

Thanks to the hospitality Terry and Nageen Wilson, the Society held a wonderful parlor meeting in their home. The home was previously inhabited by our second mayor, William Malone, from 1916 until 1956. The home, located at the corner of Grand Blvd. and Cedar, was built circa 1850 and is just magnificent inside and out. The home has been improved several times but many of the original features have been retained. One long-time resident, Peter Malone (grandson of the mayor) resided in the home until 1999. What a treat it was to see the current young residents of the home meet the former resident of their home! Peter also entertained the Society with a delightful videotape of a wedding that took place at the home in 1927.

President Paul Adlaf brought the Society up to speed with the current state of affairs with the Solomon Cottage and related matters. Board member Jeff Caudill informed the guests of the on-going project to secure part of the World War II C-54 Skymaster Transport airplane (a/k/a the Maine Flyer).

Continued on next page

SOCIETY BENEFACTORS

We take a moment to respect and appreciate the generosity of four Park Ridge ladies who added to their own distinguished legacies with generous bequests to the Society. Our History on the Move project has continued forward thanks to their solicitude for our mission.

Gloria Boye

Lifelong Park Ridge resident, lived on Cumberland Avenue. Her father, Bill Boye, operated an automobile repair shop at 42 Main Street. She is noted for her long career with the City of Park Ridge in the Public Works Department, starting when City Hall was still in the George Carpenter House on Northwest Highway. Gloria was a tireless volunteer for the Society, beginning in 1971.

Lynne Iorio

Long-time resident on Habberton Avenue in Park Ridge. Spent many years as a teacher, as did her husband Jack. Selfless Society volunteer for many years at 41 South Prairie, chairing the Hosting Committee for Museum guides.

Paula Kobel

Major benefactor for the establishment of the Park Ridge Senior Center in the 1980s. Generous to many not-for-profit Park Ridge organizations in her bequests.

Elizabeth Chipura

Descendent of the John Sunderman family, pioneers in Park Ridge after coming here from Ohio. John's daughter, and Elizabeth's mother, Gertrude Ruby, was the office manager for many years in John Burkitt's Cadillac agency on the Highway. Elizabeth and her husband John lived on Hastings for many years.

PARLOR MEETING...CONTINUED

Guest speaker Milt Nelson shared yet more wonderful stories of our history. He spoke about Thomas P. Robb, member of a pioneer family in Park Ridge in the mid-1800s. Mr. Robb owned the farm that eventually was purchased to make the Country Club in 1906. Also, he owned another 40-acre farm across the street that eventually was purchased by the Illinois Industrial School for Girls, as it made plans to move from Evanston to Park Ridge. [12 acres still left, and we call it The Youth Campus.]

Mr. Nelson also mentioned Robb's travels to California, especially Sacramento, where he was an alderman on the first Sacramento City Council. While there, he married Miss Miriam Goodenow, a renowned vocalist with the Alleghanians, a musical group touring California at the time. The family returned to Maine Township in 1854.

The meeting concluded with a viewing of the videotape of the wedding mentioned above. While a silent movie, no one who viewed it could help but "hear" the celebration!



Peter Malone with the current young residents of the home, Makala, Sean and Audrey

2012 ANNUAL PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Thanks to the gracious hospitality of the Park Ridge Country Club staff and a delightful presentation by Dino Vlahakis, co-owner of the Pickwick Theater and his business partner, Dave Loomos, members of the Park Ridge Historical Society had a wonderful annual meeting on October 21, 2012. Special guests included Mayor Dave Schmidt, Janet Van De Carr, Director of the Park Ridge Library, and members of the Vlahakis family.

STATE OF THE SOCIETY ADDRESS

Before hearing from our speakers, guests were given a "State of the Society" address by our president, Paul Adlaf. Formed in 1971, the Society continues to thrive on community support for discoveries of residents, events and artifacts worthy of note. The enthusiastic response to Society events of the past year, nicely summarized by Mr. Adlaf, are sure signs that our community's interest in learning about and preserving our history are strong. Details of these events are discussed on the cover page of this Lamppost.

SPECIAL THANKS: MADELEINE BRENNAN

On behalf of the Society, board member Nancy Pytel extended a special thank you with good wishes for the future to one of the Society's original members, Madeleine (Madi) Brennan. Nancy shared with us Madi's role as social entrepreneur of the Society in the 1970s and early 1980s. Stories of her flair for making St. Patrick's Day dinners, Annual Meetings, parlor meetings and other gatherings reminded everyone at the meeting of what a special friend we have in Madi. As Madi relocates to California to live closer to her son, we wish her the very best.

PICKWICK THEATER PRESENTATION: HISTORY & RENOVATION UPDATE

By now, perhaps you've seen some of the old-fashioned red-fabric-on-black-metal Pickwick seats around town. Whether in a window on Main Street or at the Iannelli Center on Northwest Highway, these chairs -- original to the theater -- are now history. In their place, moviegoers will find beautiful chairs that not only look lovely and have great cup-holders and arm rests, but accommodate the slightly larger moviegoers of today!

In addition to enhancing the comfort afforded by a luxurious seat, guest speakers Dino Vlahakis and Dave Loomos also explained how various components of the audio system were updated. Digital sound and projection improvements have also been installed. Considering the fact that the theater was built in 1928 to accommodate silent movies, these enhancements are truly phenomenal.



Dino Vlahakis spoke on behalf of his family: wife Sophia, father Jim, sister Elaine and business partner Dave Loomos

Certainly the most noticeable aspect of the \$1.2 million dollar renovation project noted by passersby is the marquee. The color schemes revealed as layers of paint were removed served as a basis for the variety of interim "test" patterns you may have witnessed. Rest assured, the faces that appear at the corners of the marquee and the 1,100 light bulbs that frame it are here to stay!

Continued on next page

2012 ANNUAL PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Great stories were shared by guests and our speakers regarding Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert's request to use the Pickwick as the background for their 'At The Movies' television program. This was truly a family affair -- each member of the "cast" selling tickets, serving popcorn, etc., was a Vlahakis! Long after Siskel & Ebert moved on, "Shake It Up Chicago" chose to feature the Pickwick in several scenes.

Guests inquired about the bowling alley, newspaper publisher, elevator, stained glass in the tower, and many other interesting aspects of the Pickwick. **Can you guess Dino's response to the inquiry regarding which movie generated the most income at the Pickwick?** (See the response on the back cover of this Lamppost!)

Together, Dino and Dave presented a story of a theater that just continues to get better and better. They are very proud of their listing on the National Register of Historic Places, conferred upon the Pickwick by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior in 1978. Also noted was the significance of the cooperation the Pickwick received from the City of Park Ridge during the current renovation period and application for Park Ridge Landmark status.

Looking back at his father's purchase of the Pickwick Theatre in 1967, Dino expressed gratitude to his family and his business partner for not only maintaining but also treasuring the Park Ridge landmark. Dino and his sister, Elaine Loomos (wife of Dave), began running the theater when he was 21 and she was 19. Today, as longstanding members the Uptown business district, their dedication to the theater, community, and history buffs is apparent. Feedback from the community continues to be welcomed by Dino and Dave. Be sure to stop in and ask about the latest enhancements to this town jewel!

Special thanks to Society board member Brian Kidd for welcoming Mr. Vlahakis & Mr. Loomos to not only address the Society, but also to field a number of very interesting questions from the audience.



Madeleine Brennan, Pat Adlaf, Nancy Pytel



Dave Loomis, Brian Kidd, Dino Vlahakis, and Paul Adlaf

FIRE ENGINE FEVER!

I first had the pleasure of meeting Retired Park Ridge Fire Department Captain and Park Ridge Historical Society member Ralph Bishop several years ago at the Town of Maine Cemetery walking tours event. Since that time, I have had the privilege of listening to many of Ralph's accounts of Park Ridge Fire Department history. One night this summer I bicycled over to Ralph's home, unannounced, to show him a photo I acquired several years prior. The black and white photograph (below) was a snapshot of an antique Park Ridge fire engine and I was hoping Ralph would be able to tell me more about it. I specifically remembered Society president, Paul Adlaf, sharing with me that Ralph likely knows the final resting place of every fire apparatus that Park Ridge has ever owned. When I showed Ralph the photograph, not only did he know exactly where it was, but he also shared a detailed oral, written, and photographic history of the truck.

Ralph affectionately refers to this open-cab 1934 Pirsch fire engine as the "Lil' Pirsch." The Peter Pirsch and Sons Company have built ladders and fire equipment since the late 1800's in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Park Ridge ordered a new pumper from Pirsch, but when it was first delivered to the Park Ridge Fire Department it was not completely brand new! Ralph recounted that pieces of the department's 1921 Nash fire engine were sent to the Pirsch Co. and its parts, including the chassis, were used to make the "new" 1934 Pirsch Pumper. The pumper was in service in the fire department from the 1930's until being retired in 1959. Ralph further shared that the pumper was bought by Drake and Sons funeral home (now the Cooney funeral home) and was used in various parades. In the early 1980's, Drake and Sons sold their equipment to a funeral home in Memphis, Tennessee and the Pirsch pumper left Park Ridge and went down south. It was then donated to the Memphis Fire Department where it currently resides.



That night, on Ralph's porch, I caught the fever. Fire engine fever. Ralph's closing words to me that night were, "It sure would be nice to get that Pirsch back." Well, hearing that, my mind was made up. It was now time to turn thoughts into action. There was no doubt in my mind that this Park Ridge pumper had to come home.

FIRE ENGINE FEVER!

So, in July, I decided to take a “road-trip” down to Memphis, Tennessee and see the **Lil’ Pirsch** with my own eyes. Her current home is smack in the middle of the Memphis Fire Department Headquarters at 65 S. Front St. just above the great Mississippi river. At first, I could only view her through the glass because the fire department had just left on a call. But when the firemen came back they allowed me to enter their firehouse and to photograph the pumper. The **Lil’ Pirsch** is in beautiful condition and has obviously been well attended. I photographed the pumper and brought the photos back home to Park Ridge to share with members of the PRHS and the Park Ridge Fire Department.

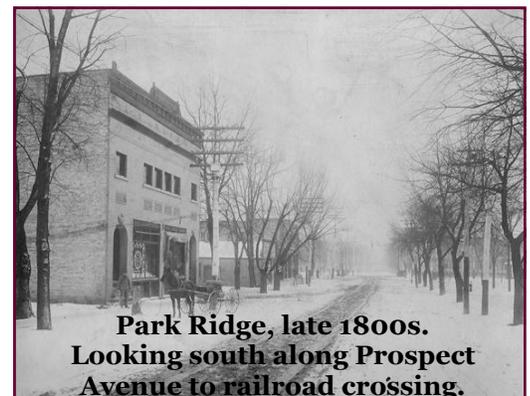
After months of phone calls and letters, we are happy to report that the Park Ridge Historical Society has an agreement with the Memphis Fire Department for the return of the engine back home to Park Ridge. The gentlemen in Memphis were sympathetic to our plight to acquire an important piece of our past.

Now, this is where you come in. We are going to need a little bit of help from everyone to bring her back safely. The **Lil’ Pirsch** continues on her journey and the next stop is home. I can’t wait for you to see this original Park Ridge fire engine in person at one of our future unveilings. All of our efforts will be well worth it. In the past, the Lil’ Pirsch helped keep our citizens safe. In her retirement, she delighted thousands of children in Park Ridge parades. Now, we have this exciting and rare opportunity for the **Lil’ Pirsch** to delight thousands more in the future. We want you to catch the fever. Fire Engine Fever! Stay tuned for an update on the return of **Lil’ Pirsch** to Park Ridge!

This article was authored by Brian Lazzaro, a recent addition to our Board of Trustees.

PUT HISTORY IN ITS PLACE: AN ON-LINE FORM OF TIME TRAVEL!

“Put History in its Place’ is the subtitle of a new on-line history resource found at www.whatwasthere.com. This new website is supported by a team working out of Ann Arbor, MI. It was brought to our attention by Michael Johnson, the Information Technology Coach at Field School in Park Ridge, who turned to the Society for support in loading historic images of Park Ridge into the website. As do we, Mr. Johnson is eager to open windows to local history for the students at Field School, and we are pleased to oblige. The novelty of the website consists in viewing a historic place ‘then’ and ‘now’ by way a Google Street View for the transition, which can be controlled by the site visitor. We’ll continue to add more photos to the site. Anyone can participate, so please load in your own photos and Street Views for any place you’d like to honor with historic images.”



WALLACE WELTY: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT EXTRAORDINAIRE

In the July of 2012 Lamppost, we introduced you to local historian, Nancy Welty Clark. In addition to her autobiography, *Blessed With Too Many Talents*, from which our last story about growing up in Park Ridge in the 1930s was selected, Nancy has also written a historical account of her father, Wallace Moorehead Welty. Following is a summary, including excerpts from *Wallace Moorehead Welty* (Second Printing, September 2011).

Park Ridge became the home of the Wallace Welty family in April of 1928, nearly 20 years after his parents moved to Chicago from Greensburg, PA. Wallace planned everything in and around his new house on south Fairview from the ornamental brickwork to the chimney to the large hand carved ceiling beams to the knotty pine paneling and built in beds with drawers below. Within five years, Wallace and his wife, Elizabeth, had four children. Their eldest daughter, Nancy, resides in the family home today.

Educational Background ... Early Landscape Projects

Wallace earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois in 1914. Requests for his landscaping services began long before graduation. While still a student at U of I, Wallace designed landscapes for the Estate of Windsor McCay, Esq.; a country estate for Honorable Peter Stiplig of Springfield; a landscape planting plan for the well-known chemist Prof. W. A. Noyes; home grounds for Harris Decker; and many other professionals, educators, and estate owners.

College Instructor

Before Wallace taught landscape architecture classes at the Iowa State University at Ames in 1916-1917, he landscaped holes at the Indian Hills Country Club in Winnetka and had a variety of commissions in the Northshore area. He also completed landscaping projects at golf courses such as Medinah, Nordic hills and Billy Caldwell. Another project involved Polly's Garden on the Hubbard Carpenter place at Lake Geneva where he planted 1000 bulbs! He also laid out the Post Farm Subdivision and Judge Stevens' grounds in Madison, Wisconsin.

Breadth of Locations and Projects

Wallace designed a number of architectural landscape projects in the Midwest. He combined trees, bushes, formal gardens, naturalized areas, gates, paths, pools and fountains in his landscaping. Some of the large projects he worked on included the Robert R. McCormick Estate, Peacock (jewelry), Reynolds (aluminum), Johnson (wax), and Hawthorne (Hawthorne-Melody Farms) estates. He also worked on the roof garden at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago.

WALLACE WELTY: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT EXTRAORDINAIRE

Park Ridge Projects

- 🌳 Once Wallace and Elizabeth moved into their new home on south Fairview in Park Ridge, he was hired to plant trees in city parks and parkways. Many of the elm trees he planted later succumbed to Dutch Elm disease. For years, neighbors requested Wallace's help to plan their yards. Amongst the commissions Wallace had in Park Ridge, Nancy recalls these two:
- 🌳 The home of Lawrence J. Ryan, 315 Cuttriss, was professionally landscaped by Wallace in March of 1932. Built in 1920, this stately home was demolished around 2005.
- 🌳 The home of Mrs. Harry Duncan, located at the corner of Sibley and Merrill, was landscaped in September of 1939. This home still stands, but the gardens created by Wallace were reduced when an addition was built many years ago.
- 🌳 Wallace enhanced the gardens of other homes in the Park Ridge & surrounding communities.

Wallace Welty was born on June 19, 1890 in Greensburg, Westmoreland County, PA and died on November 8, 1966 at his Park Ridge residence.



Calling Local Historians

Our **Lamppost** thrives on historical material provided by local residents.

If you have a story, postcard, photograph, or other treasure
you would like to share with us,
please call the Society at 847.696.1973.



Lamppost Available On-Line

Lamppost Now On-Line. You may have noticed that back issues of the Lamppost for 2011 and 2010 are now posted at our website, www.pennyville.org.

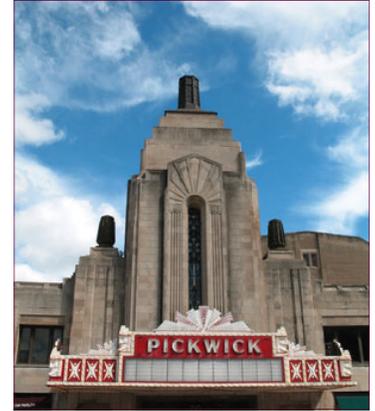


The Lamppost has been so well-received by the larger Park Ridge community, that we decided to make it available to more readers in this manner. Please be assured that Society Members will be the first to receive new issues, with the on-line publication of same following some months later.

Answer to Pickwick Trivia Question:

Which movie generated the most income at the Pickwick?

My Big Fat Greek Wedding ran at the Pickwick for 33 consecutive weeks and grossed over \$250,000!



*Park Ridge Historical Society
721 North Prospect
Park Ridge, Illinois 60068
847-696-1973*