



**PARK RIDGE**  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

# *THE* **LAMPPOST**

*June 2015*

## **HISTORY ON THE MOVE UPDATE**

Good news! The Society is writing a new chapter in its long-anticipated move to a new home in the Hannah Solomon Cottage.

Last December, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency established certain directives for rehabilitation of the Cottage as part of its Mitigation Plan to offset the adverse effect of historic Cottage demolitions at The Youth Campus, a property listed on the federal National Register of Historic Places.

Working with the Agency, we have found a new plan to better preserve the historic character of the Cottage, and we are revising our plan for presentation of local history there accordingly. The new approach calls for retention of the character of the original dormitory, parlor and hall within the Cottage. We no longer see the need for a large open-ceiling multi-purpose room in the Cottage.

Our new plan brings us to the highest level of historic preservation, planning a new home for local history in the original interior of a very historic building. A great place to launch our next home!

There is still room within IHPA directives for extended room for meetings, lectures, special displays, exhibits, student and scout visits as we've desired all along.

We thank our Members and Park Ridge friends for their support over the last five years as we navigated through so many changes in the ownership of The Youth Campus and different plans for the new land under development. We promise you will be pleased with our plans for opening windows to local history at our new Prospect Park.

*Paul Adlaf, President,  
Park Ridge Historical Society*



## "FASTER AND HIGHER, THAT'S THE MAINE FLYER"

DOCUMENTARY PRODUCED

BASED UPON INTERVIEWS FROM THE WARTIME MEMORIES PROJECT

On Saturday, May 2, 2015, the Park Ridge Historical Society premiered the new documentary "Faster and Higher, That's the Maine Flyer" at the Park Ridge Nonprofit Center at 720 Garden Street. Several years in the making, the documentary, produced by Maine East and South Students under the supervision of TV & Radio teacher Phil Ash, told the incredible story of how students of Maine High School sold over \$500,000 in war bonds in a few short weeks during the winter of 1944-1945 to "buy" a giant C-54 Skymaster transport plane built in Park Ridge. The documentary is named after the slogan painted on the nose of the plane and brings its story to life using interview footage from the Society's "Wartime Memories" oral history project, still photos, and vintage sound to provide a strong and lasting testament to the industry and patriotism of the wartime classes.

The cross-generational audience included Society members, residents, guests, District 207 Superintendent Ken Wallace, Maine East Principal Michael Pressler, Maine South Principal Shawn Messmer, owners of the Nonprofit Center John and Leigh Sasser, and the real stars of the program, Maine Township alumni who graduated from the wartime classes of 1945-1948. The "old-timers" present were Marilyn Trenton Zillner, Dick Stranahan, Joyce Ryan Kurkowski, Nancy Welty Clark, Bob Peacock, Jim Trecker, Bill Amundsen and Ralph Bishop. Bill and Ralph were also featured in the documentary.

In 2011 the "Wartime Memories Project" began as Society Vice President John Murphy and Society Trustees Jeff Caudill and Laurie Pegler were inspired by the C-54 Skymaster story to partner with the students to find and interview the wartime alumni. A Wartime Class Reunion for the alumni was held in May, 2013, and oral histories were recorded by the students, culminating in the student-produced "Maine Flyer" documentary created with the help of teacher Phil Ash. Student interviewers included Grace Murphy, Samantha Smart, Fiona Kurylowicz, Andrew Lazara, Rohini Vikat, Matthew Weiss and Rachel Maurer. Video editors included William Reyes, Rachel Stan, Mahnoor Syed, and Damaris Gonzalez.

We invite you to enjoy the complete interview videos, transcripts, and the documentary at [www.pennyville.org/wartime-memories/](http://www.pennyville.org/wartime-memories/).

*John Murphy, Society Vice-President*



*John Murphy with District 207 Radio, Television & Broadcasting Teacher Phil Ash, Maine South High School Principal Shawn Messmer, Maine East Principal Mike Pressler, and District 207 Superintendent Dr. Ken Wallace, along with student members of the Documentary editing team*

*Leigh & John Sasser join in on the celebration at the Documentary Premiere, greeted by Society President Paul Adlaf*



*Bob Peacock, Jim Trecker, Bill Amundsen and Ralph Bishop, Maine Class of '45, along with John Murphy and members of the student Maine Flyer Documentary editing team*



## THE PARK RIDGE “VICTORY GARDENS”

Recently, I had the pleasure of spending some time with John Arbo, a long-time Park Ridge resident, who spent his formative years on North Prospect Avenue and has many great stories to share. One of John’s early memories is of a watering hole or spring on North Prospect, just west of Prospect and a touch north of Edgemont Lane. (I shared with John that I was aware of this pond as it was in the backyard of one of my childhood schoolmates. It still lies in the backyards of some of the homes along North Prospect Avenue, however, it is currently bordered in by stone.) Back in the 40’s & 50’s when he was a boy, John recalls playing in and around the spring which was across the street from the “Victory Gardens.” When John said “Victory Gardens” I was shocked! Although I grew up a stone’s throw away on North Washington Street, I had no idea there were Victory Gardens in this neighborhood.

Victory Gardens (or war gardens) were encouraged by the United States government to increase the food supply during a time when all efforts, goods, and services were being directed to the war effort. These shared gardens were a source of local pride and helped move citizens towards action as neighbors all toiled and pitched in together to produce food.

In John’s own words:

“At that time, the spring was in a natural state. It was across the street from the Victory Gardens. During the war years there were Victory Gardens on Michael John Terrace that stretched eastward. I can’t recall exactly how far they went because you have to remember I was just a boy. As a kid of 8 years old, it was my job, with the other kids, to fetch pails of water to bring to the tomato plants. Our family had 200 tomato plants that were part of our plot in the Victory Gardens. Each family was responsible for maintaining their plot. The Victory Gardens stretched up north on Prospect from Michael John to Oakton, that whole area. I felt like the ‘Sorcerer’s Apprentice’ carrying two 1-gallon pails of water for our tomato plants. The Boy Scouts would also gather pails of water from the natural spring and walk them over to water the plants growing in the gardens. I still have the tomato canning (stove) in my garage here. I’ll show you before you go! It was quite an operation when it was time to can. We could can over 200 quarts of tomatoes at a time. We would have the whole family canning the tomatoes and then we would store them on the shelves in our cellar that I showed you earlier.

Up north there (North Prospect Avenue), we had to watch out for spiders and poison ivy. There were also lots of blackberry bushes. I also used to go hunting for rabbits in the willow slough, near the spring, with my bow and arrow. Park Ridge was a quiescent place to grow up as a child. When I was older, my friends and I would find a car abandoned in a cornfield and we’d go take the engine. No one else wanted it so it was ours. As kids, we could do those sort of things. We were free. If we did step a little too far out of line we’d get pulled aside and given a lecture. Park Ridge was pretty quiet back then. I feel that Park Ridge really didn’t expand greatly until the 1940’s....the post-war era.”

I can’t thank John enough for sharing this snapshot of Park Ridge during the post-Great War era. Not all Victory Garden locations are known for the Park Ridge area, and we have no photographs of the Victory Gardens referred to by John Arbo, so we are all the more appreciative of John sharing his memories.

*Brian Lazzaro, Society Trustee*



*Victor Soderbergh, his wife and children in their WWII Victory Garden in Park Ridge (exact location unknown)*

**Have memories or photos of the Park Ridge Victory Gardens? Please share!  
Contact us at 847-696-1973 or [www.pennyville.org](http://www.pennyville.org)**

## THE YOUTH CAMPUS ARCHIVE

In April, 2012, The Youth Campus closed its residential facility in Park Ridge after 104 years of serving children in need. The Campus is now being redeveloped as our new Prospect Park.

The first name of The Youth Campus was The Illinois Industrial School for Girls. The School had been located in Evanston since the 1880s, after it was chartered in 1877. The School relocated to Park Ridge in 1908, thanks to a providential bequest of Park Ridge pioneer Mary Talcott, which covered the purchase of 40 acres of land for the School's new campus-like setting under the leadership of Hannah G. Solomon, President of the School at the time.

Visitors to the Library during April, 2015, may have noticed our exhibit of print materials and photographs of the Park Ridge School for Girls, evoking the long history of this community institution, one of the few remaining dating to the days when we were still a Village.

Children's Home + Aid, another social service agency dedicated to serving children, was the final owner of The Youth Campus, beginning later in 2012. We salute Children's Home + Aid for their handling of historical records of The Youth Campus, and are grateful to its Chief Executive Officer, Nancy Ronquillo, for donating to the Society an eclectic trove of historic materials reflecting operations of the School for Girls from the 1880s to 2012. There are no student records in this material.

The Society has named this trove 'The Youth Campus Archive' and is working to sort out these materials so that portions of them may be displayed from time to time in the Solomon Cottage. The Society accepted the responsibility of conserving these materials in perpetuity on behalf of Children's Home + Aid. The Society also thanks two of the final Youth Campus Trustees, Kevin Buggy and Doug Johnson, for their support in confirming the Society's intention of preserving the School's history to the administration at Children's Home + Aid.



*Delia Louise Rockwood Wardner*

Also, the Society accepted responsibility for this periodic display of School history, as described in the Mitigation Plan required by a Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and the Park Ridge Park District.

Among the treasures in the Archive is the oil painting of Delia Louise Rockwood Wardner, founder of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls, which hung in the parlor at Wohlers Hall for many years. A photograph of that painting is included here. Mrs. Wardner, wife of Union Army Brigade Surgeon Horace Wardner, was moved with compassion for the many young girls orphaned or left destitute by the ravages of the Civil War, and, along with Myra Blackwell, first woman lawyer in this State, arranged for the School's Illinois Charter in October, 1877.

*Paul Adlaf, Society President*

## PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXHIBIT



A special exhibit depicting the history of the Park Ridge Youth Campus/Park Ridge School for Girls was on display at the Park Ridge Public Library during the month of April, 2015. The exhibit included photos, maps of the grounds and information on the Park Ridge Campus history. The School in Park Ridge provided housing, education, vocational training and care for children for more than 100 years.

*at left: Patricia Adlaf, Society Secretary and Laurie Pegler, Society Trustee*

## PARK RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2015 BIKE HIKE PEDAL PAST "CATALOG HOMES" IN OUR TOWN! SEPTEMBER 12, 2015

Please join this year's PRHS Bike Hike as it tours some of the catalog homes that still exist in Park Ridge. Our 2-hour tour will begin and end at Hodges Park, located at the intersection of Vine & Prospect. This free event will begin at 9:00 a.m. on September 12, 2015 and will be limited to the first 20 people who register.

*A bit about the ride:* 

Many of us think of **Sears Roebuck and Co.** when we recall hearing about "mail order" homes in Park Ridge. Yet, other companies also created these build-it-yourself homes. For example, **Harris Brothers Co.** offered "The Roselle" for \$1,835 as well as "Harris Home No. E-1033" for \$2,076. **Montgomery Ward**, another retail giant in Chicago, offered "The Stratford." Sears' models included "The Kilbourne", notable for its steep roof pitch and two forward gables and large front porch, and "The Crescent" which provided "5-rooms and a neat porch" for \$1,351 to \$2,410. While the vast majority of catalog homes have likely been replaced with new homes, it will be interesting to see the "survivors" and what exterior renovations, alterations, etc. owners may have added since the kit was initially assembled.

We hope you will join us for this year's roll around town. The pace is slow and flexible depending upon the discussion generated by the riders. Your contributions to our history of "catalog homes" are welcome, as are ideas for our next bike hike!

**Date & Time:** Saturday, September 12, 2015  
(*Rain Date: September 19, 2015*)

**Reservations:** (847) 696-1973  
Please leave your name & phone number and we will confirm your reservation.

## PRHS 2014 ANNUAL MEETING

Seventy-five guests attended the Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 9, 2014 at the Park Ridge Country Club. As part of the business meeting, President Paul Adlaf updated those present on the History on the Move project and the following Board of Trustees were elected:

President: Paul Adlaf  
 Vice President: John Murphy  
 Secretary: Patricia Adlaf  
 Treasurer: Kirke Machon

Trustees: Jeff Caudill, Maureen Connelly, Randy Derifield, Brian Kidd, Daniel Koziol, Brian Lazzaro, Laurie Pegler, and Nancy Pytel

Special guest speaker Bill Scharringhausen reminisced about his family's long retail history with the Park Ridge retail community, beginning in 1929 when his grandfather George opened the original Scharringhausen Pharmacy in the Buchheit Building on Vine Avenue across from Hodges Park. He spoke at length about the Park Ridge community spirit and strong volunteerism, exemplified by the number of our town's citizens who came to the aid of his family during the Great Depression. He also told how many of the local businesses that used to occupy the Uptown area supported many good community causes. He urged all present to continue that legacy of community spirit, volunteerism, and neighbor helping neighbor.

*Nancy Pytel, Society Trustee*



***Historical Society  
Board of Trustees,  
2015-2016***



***Jack Hoeg as  
Charles G. Sherwin,  
Civil War Soldier, and  
Natalie Briggs as  
Mary Fricke,  
Dr. Fricke's wife.***



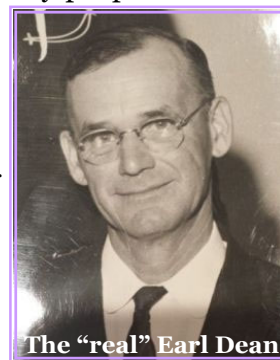
***Barbara and Bill Scharringhausen***

## “SPIRITS OF OLD PARK RIDGE”

By popular demand, the “Spirits of Old Park Ridge” tour returned on October 4, 2014, a fittingly blustery day. Fifteen students from Maine South High School and 5 adult actors braved the chill to share moments of Park Ridge history with 200 guests. The hour-long tour featured each “spirit” standing next to his or her gravestone and talking about life in Park Ridge as it was then.

Spirits featured this year included Albert Buchheit and William Malone, two of Park Ridge’s first mayors, who were still not quite over old election grudges. Harriet Rand, the first schoolteacher in Maine Township, was also represented and kept the behavior of tour groups in line. Of course, Park Ridge was built not just by famous names alone, but lesser-known spirits such as Minnie Haseman (servant) and Charles Sherwin (Civil War soldier) spoke about their lives. William “Big Bill” Ahrensfield, a volunteer fire-fighter, and his wife Gladys Ahrensfield, who managed the Lincoln School cafeteria, took time after their speech to take pictures with some descendants who had come to see them on the tour.

Walking through the cemetery, visitors learned how the contributions of ordinary people over time came together to turn a small frontier community into a thriving brick-making hub and into the community we know today. Some of the spirits’ stories illustrated just how Park Ridge had changed over time. The spirit of Earl Dean spoke about how when he bought his property, across from Maine Township Cemetery, it was a corn-field. Today, the street is lined with townhomes, and Dee Road is a busy four-lane street. Dean also talked about his first business, delivering coal and ice to people of Park Ridge and the barn on the property that housed horses. As years passed and people no longer needed coal and ice in their homes, the business adapted to the change and focused on asphalt paving; as did the barn, which was then used for mechanical equipment. Whether a person made laws, paved driveways, or fed students, each contributed to create the City of Park Ridge.



The “real” Earl Dean

Jerry Dean, Earl’s son, reflected on his experience on the tour: "A person doesn't have to change the world to have an impact. Our notion of history is about famous figures, how they made their mark and impacted the generations that followed. However, people born and raised in Park Ridge now benefit from those contributions made by our own local historical figures—the teachers, the shopkeepers, the doctors, the volunteers, who were engaged in their community then and helped shape the future." As guests toured the cemetery, they learned about the legacy of each spirit while being reminded that they themselves are valuable members of their communities, just like the citizens of yesteryear, helping to shape the communities of the future.

A special thanks to the actors and other volunteers who braved the rain and cold to share this valuable experience, as well as those actors who recreated the experience for those at the Historical Society’s annual meeting.

*Heather Dean*



Wayne Dean, Earl’s son, on left, with other Dean family members and Tim Kwasny, Maine South student, the “Spirit” of Earl Dean



The Maine South cast, Spirits of Old Park Ridge

**SAVE THE DATE: The 2015 “Spirits of Old Park Ridge” tour will be held on Saturday, September 26. Visit [www.pennyville.org](http://www.pennyville.org) for up-to-date information on this popular event.**

## Youth Campus Archive



The latest addition to the Youth Campus Archive, the fire hydrant was previously in service behind Wohlers Hall for nearly 100 years. This is the first model hydrant put into service in Park Ridge, the only other unit still in service here is located in the alley between Stanley and Belle Plaine Avenues.

**Would you like more information about the Park Ridge Historical Society?**

Please call the Society at 847.696.1973, or visit [www.pennyville.org](http://www.pennyville.org).



*Park Ridge Historical Society  
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