



Roosevelt Park in Winter

Winter 2014

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

Calendar of Events

December

December 6

Holiday Open House at the Waukegan History Museum (see p. 6)

December 18

Exhibits closing: *Waukegan: Then & Now*; *Dr. Vincent Price and His Many Endeavors*

January

January 20

Exhibit opening: *The Civil War: The War Efforts in Waukegan*

March

March 3

Exhibit opening: *The Lincoln Assassination: 150 Years Ago*

April

April 18

Guided Tour: Waukegan's Civil War Sites (see p. 6)

April 18

Historical Presentation: The Assassination of President Lincoln (see p. 6)

President's Letter

Harry E. Came

As the new President of the Waukegan Historical Society I would like to thank all of the members, volunteers, and Waukegan Park District for all of their hard work in keeping the Society moving forward. Dennis Moisio, my predecessor, has done a wonderful job for the past few years and will be staying on

the Board as Immediate Past President. I would also like to single out Ty Rohrer, our museum Supervisor, for all the wonderful things he accomplishes on our behalf. His outreach to the schools and the community really epitomizes the Society's mission statement to share our history with the community. The two Sheridan Road Tours that he has conducted recently have been real crowd pleasers.

Once again, Thanksgiving is upon us with Christmas and winter not far away. This year has been a good one for the Society with more and more interaction with the community. Ty Rohrer, our Museum Supervisor has been in more classrooms than ever and is now giving tours of Bowen Park, Sheridan Road, and downtown. Our library is a great resource all year long and has been a huge asset to the high school's Metro History Fair with award winning projects being honored by the State as well as by the Society. Our annual tour of homes was another great success as well as the Cemetery Walk in September. The Museum continues to offer our members and guests top notch exhibits on Waukegan history such as the exhibits on Dr. Vincent Price and *Waukegan, Then & Now* which are currently available in the Museum through December 18. This year the Society also treated our members to a lovely luncheon at Bonnie Brook where we were able to thank all our volunteers as well as update the membership on our plans for the future. At the luncheon Ty Rohrer was able to point to specific statistics showing the incredible number of visitors, researchers, and outreach provided to schools, clubs, and other organizations by the Waukegan Historical Society.

In our last newsletter and at the Member's luncheon we began to introduce our members to the planning which the Board has been undertaking over the past eight years to take the Society into the next few decades. Forty six years ago the Waukegan Historical Society was founded with a few members and some big ideas. After modest beginnings we now

have a museum and library of which we can all be proud. Unfortunately we have been so successful that we have outgrown our current facilities and need to expand. We need a new library which is fireproof, offers more space, and is more accessible. We need climate controlled storage and exhibit space for our museum and collections as well as upgraded access to the second floor of the museum. The decision has been made with the Park District to try and move ahead with this project. Architects have been hired, conceptual plans have been drawn, and now all it takes is money—lots of money. We will begin our fundraising this fall and you will receive a brochure outlining methods of giving. The Park District and the Historical Society will be reaching out for grants as well as private giving. Please consider naming the Society in your estate planning and your end of the year contributions. All donations will be fully tax deductible and will go toward accomplishing so much for the history of Waukegan. The Historical Society has always been the repository of Waukegan's history and not only are we preserving the past but also preparing for the future.

Historically Speaking

Swimming

Ed Link

Given our proximity to Lake Michigan it is no surprise that water sports are very popular locally. A large part of that enjoyment is swimming.

From Waukegan's earliest days Lake Michigan was used by its citizens as a cooling off place. Before the days of air conditioning, summer's heat was offset by a dip in the cool lake water. Many early pictures show large crowds in the water and on the beach probably enjoying lake breezes. The Waukegan Woman's Club established a bathhouse and refreshment stand around 1914. One could rent baskets, towels and suits there. A 50 foot diving tower was

erected on the pier in the early 1920s. The beach house opened in 1940 and the building used bricks from the lighthouse that was razed two years previously.

Problems arose in later years as industrial pollution impacted the water. Around 1970 the Lake County Health Department recommended the beaches be closed. The City of Waukegan disagreed.

In more recent times a different use of the lake was found. On each New Year's Day since 2000 many hearty individuals have taken part in the Polar Bear Plunge. Braving the cold weather and often icy water they immerse portions of their bodies in the name of charity.

Indoor swimming is also a major pastime. The high school boys held their first swim meet December 1, 1927. The girls organized into teams by school class at the beginning of that school year.

The YMCA also was a popular destination for swimmers. It is unclear if the first building on Genesee and Clayton streets (the site of today's Genesee Theatre) contained a pool or not. The next building at County and Clayton, opened in 1925, certainly did, as well as its successor on Western Avenue which opened in 1987. The latter building closed December 31, 2012, leaving the city without an indoor pool.

The Waukegan Park District opened a pool at Belvidere Park in 1956. A new one was built in 1980. The pool at Bowen Park opened May 25, 1980 and closed in Spring, 2002. It was replaced by the popular skate park the following year.

With the recent announcement of the building of an indoor pool at the Field House Sports and Fitness Center at Hinkston Park, Waukegan residents will again have the option of swimming inside when outdoor pools and Lake Michigan are not too appealing.



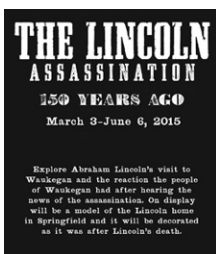
Swimming at Waukegan Beach circa 1900.



Holiday Open House

Waukegan History Museum
Saturday, December 6
1:00-5:00pm

Members and friends of the Waukegan Historical Society, join us at our holiday open house to visit with old friends and new! The Museum will be all decked out for the holidays and refreshments will be served.



Free Historical Presentation The Assassination of President Lincoln

April 18, 2015
3:00pm
Jane Addams Center in Bowen Park
95 Jack Benny Drive

The Waukegan Historical Society is hosting a free program by historian Jim Gibbons titled *The Assassination of President Lincoln* to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln memorabilia from the Waukegan Historical Society and private collectors will also be on display.

Guided Walking Tour Waukegan's Civil War Sites

April 18, 2015
10:00 am

Learn the history of Waukegan relating to the Civil War while walking the streets of downtown in this guided tour led by Museum Supervisor, Ty Rohrer. The tour starts at Veterans Memorial Plaza located on the southwest corner of Washington and West Streets in Washington Park.

GREAT GIFTS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

HELP SUPPORT
THE WAUKEGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

2014 HOLIDAY CATALOG

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www.waukeganhistorical.org

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Size 11" X 14"

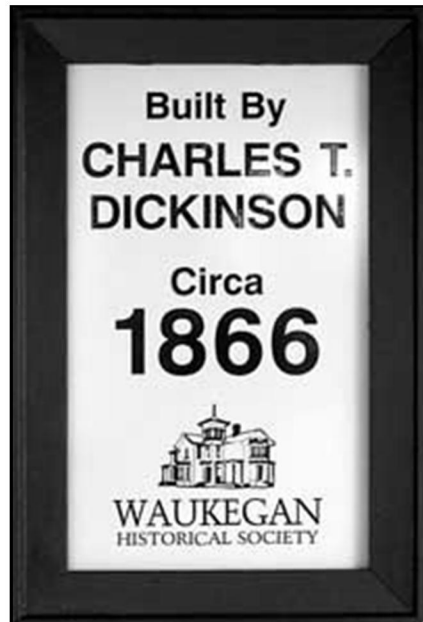
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Prints are frame ready!

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black frame ready to
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UNFRAMED PRINT \$30

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HISTORIC MARKERS are a great gift for that house-proud friend or relative!

Historic Markers for Waukegan homes built prior to WWII. We will do the necessary research on your home or building if needed. You will receive a plaque that will include the date of construction, the original owner, and possibly other interesting historical information.

We will even assist with installation.

\$75.00

A Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt

By Ty Rohrer

A few weeks ago, PBS showcased the new Ken Burns documentary, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*. Since then a few people have inquired about the origins behind the naming of Roosevelt Park in Waukegan. Most people seem to assume that the park is named after President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945). They think that maybe it was to honor FDR for his uplifting radio speeches during the Great Depression or maybe for his leadership during World War II. Others think that it may have been a name that was used to honor FDR after he died in office or maybe that the park itself was part of the New Deal and created by the Civilian Conservation Corps. All these ideas seem logical; however, we're talking about the wrong President Roosevelt.

Roosevelt Park is actually named in honor of President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919). TR is remembered today for his larger than life persona, for his thirst for hunting and adventures including an African safari, as well as being featured alongside Presidents Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln on Mt. Rushmore. When we look back on history though, the naming of a park in Waukegan after Theodore Roosevelt makes perfect sense.

Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States from 1901-1909. TR's presidency just so happened to coincide with the movement by local organizations and citizens to establish the Waukegan Park District. TR would have

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt (left) and nature preservationist John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, on Glacier Point in Yosemite National Park. In the background: Upper and lower Yosemite Falls.



surely been an inspiration for those realizing and promoting the need for a citywide park system. TR is known as the “Conservationist President,” as he used his authority to protect wildlife and public lands. He created the U.S. Forest Service and established 51 Federal Bird Reservations, 4 National Game Preserves, 150 National Forests, 5 National Parks, and also signed the “Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities Act” that established the first 18 National Monuments including Devils Tower and the Grand Canyon.

As Theodore Roosevelt was preserving the natural beauty of America, comprehensive plans were being made to do the same in Waukegan. The Waukegan Park District officially formed on December 26, 1916. The first park district commissioners followed the early plans that had been developed during TR’s presidency to build a good park system. Early lands acquired contained one of Waukegan’s most beautiful natural features, the ravines. From July 10, 1917 through May 10, 1918, several parcels of land were assembled to create Roosevelt Park.

Today, Roosevelt Park located at 520 South McAlister Avenue is 12 acres of beautiful land that closely follows the legacy of President Theodore Roosevelt’s conservationist efforts. Coincidentally, the National Park System will be celebrating its Centennial in 2016 during the same time as the Waukegan Park District.

Twentieth Anniversary
Oakwood Cemetery Walk



Winter 2014

Oakwood Cemetery Walk Recap

This past September we celebrated the 20th annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk with the theme “Firsts in Waukegan!” We shared wonderful stories from Waukegan’s past and helped showcase one of Waukegan’s most interesting places, Oakwood Cemetery. Special thanks go out to the research and planning committees as well as everyone who participated in various capacities during the event. We had a great turnout and aside from a heavy rain near the end of the event, it was a perfect day!

Mark your calendars for next year’s cemetery walk on September 19, 2015.

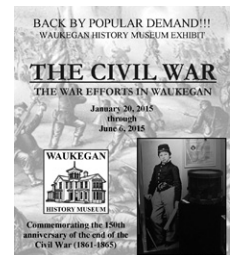
Museum Supervisor’s Report

Ty Rohrer

2015 throughout Lake County will be dedicated to commemorating the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War as well as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The members of the Lake County Historical Alliance (of which the Waukegan Historical Society is a part) are coordinating efforts in what is being called *The Civil War: Going Home*.

For our part, we are bringing back our popular exhibit *The Civil War: The War Efforts in Waukegan*. This exhibit will run from January 20 through June 6. A new exhibit titled *The Lincoln Assassination: 150 Years Ago* will explore the story of Lincoln’s visit to Waukegan and the reaction the people of Waukegan had after hearing the news of the assassination. On display will be a model of the Lincoln home in Springfield, Illinois and it will be decorated as it was after Lincoln’s death.

Saturday, April 18, 2015 will be a day in Waukegan



dedicated to the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination. Starting in the morning at 10:00 am, the free guided tour Waukegan's Civil War Sites will take place. The tour starts at Veterans Memorial Plaza located on the southwest corner of Washington and West Streets in Washington Park.

In the afternoon at 3:00 pm at the Jane Addams Center in Bowen Park-95 Jack Benny Drive, the Historical Society hosts a free program by historian Jim Gibbons titled "The Assassination of President Lincoln." Lincoln memorabilia from the Historical Society and private collectors will also be on display during the presentation.

In the meantime, you still have until December 18 to catch the exhibits *Waukegan: Then & Now* and *Dr. Vincent Price and His Many Endeavors*.

Thank You!

New Members

Valli Tolleson
Mary K. Rinehart
Jeanie Resendiz

New Life Members

David Jaskela
Laura Wideburg

Monetary Donations

Baxter International Foundation
Baxter Employee Campaign
Mary Ann Johnson
Laura Wideburg
Jeanie Resendiz
Howard & Cleone Petersen Memorial Fund
Charlotte K. Renehan in honor of Betsy Alleman
Raj & Rose Bhatt (matched by Abbott Laboratories)
in honor of Betsy Alleman

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MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+)	\$7.00
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Family	\$25.00
Patron, Organization	\$50.00
Life, Individual	\$100.00
Life, Couple	\$150.00
My additional gift	\$ _____

Make checks payable to
Waukegan Historical Society.

VOLUNTEER

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Waukegan Historical Society

Founded in 1968, the Society collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits significant materials about the history of the Waukegan area. The Society, in cooperation with the Waukegan Park District, operates the History Museum and Raymond Library and publishes this quarterly newsletter.

1917 N. Sheridan Road

Waukegan, IL 60087

847-336-1859

www.waukeganhistorical.org

info@waukeganhistorical.org

Visit our website for more information
about events, exhibits, and our
extensive library.

www.waukeganhistorical.org

Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

1917 N. Sheridan Road

Museum Supervisor: Ty Rohrer

847-336-1859

museum@waukeganhistorical.org

Tuesday, Thursday: 10am - 4pm

Saturday: 1pm-4pm

John L. Raymond Research Library

1911 N. Sheridan Road

Librarian: Beverly Millard

847-360-4772

library@waukeganhistorical.org

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

10am - 2:30pm



Holiday
Open House
Saturday,
December 6
1pm-5pm

