

SWEETHEART MINE

WORLD WAR I LOVE LETTERS



Follow the story of two couples before, during, and after WWI. Homer Dahringer and Ruth Besley start their courtship while attending Waukegan High School. Homer joined an Army flying squadron in WWI. Elizabeth Tarver, growing up in Waukegan in a prominent African American family, started correspondence with Westley Dyer, who served as a corporal in the Army.



WAUKEGAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING EXHIBIT

New Exhibit Opening April 29 (see page 5)

Spring 2017

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

Calendar of Events

April

April 22, 2017

Guided History Walk

Discover Bowen Park (see back cover to register)

April 29, 2017

Exhibit Opening

Sweetheart Mine (see page 5)

May

May 22, 2017

Program Double Feature: Using Our Historical Society Resources & Returning Lost Purple Heart Medals (see page 4)

President's Letter

Harry E. Came

There are so many exciting things going on this year and I am so pleased to be able to share them with you.

Did you know?

That 2017 marks the 100th Anniversary of our partner, the Waukegan Park District. The Society is participating in several events this year to mark the historic anniversary.

Did you know?

That 2018 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society? We are planning several special events next year to coincide with this special year in our history.

Did you know?

That fundraising for the Museum addition has raised almost \$200,000. More information will be provided in an accompanying article. The generosity of our members and friends keeps amazing me. We are well on our way to providing more positive services to our diverse community through school programs, research assistance, community events such as the Tour of Homes, Cemetery Walk, and historical walking tours. The addition will provide more safe storage, accessibility for the second floor of the Museum

as well as access for everyone to the research library.

Did you know?

On April 29 we will be celebrating a new exhibit entitled "Sweetheart Mine - WWI Love Letters". Please make sure to mark your calendar for the opening day reception.

Did you know?

On May 21, the Society holds its Annual Meeting and a special program introducing members and friends to genealogy, how to get started in researching your family tree, and the many resources provided in our own research library.

Did you know?

That the Annual Tour of Homes is going to be held at a totally different time of the year in 2017. We are holding the popular event on **Sunday, October 1** and will be providing more than the usual wonderful homes. This year there will be music, demonstrations of pioneer crafts, and other enhancements to the well-attended event.

Did you know?

There are some interesting facts that everyone should know about your Waukegan Historical Society. So far in the 2016-2017 fiscal year (ends in May) we have provided 6 Community Outreach Programs (91 adults/25 students), 52 School Outreach Programs (67 adults/1015 students), 13 Guided Tours (167 adults/289 students). These are all provided by the WHS's secret weapons - Ty Rohrer and Bryan Escobar.

Did you know?

In order to keep the Museum open, the Library staffed, the Tour of Homes running smoothly, the Cemetery Walk providing an educational and entertaining experience takes volunteers; lots of volunteers and lots of hours offering their services at no charge to the community. So far this fiscal year these volunteers have logged 1,965 hours of service. We thank all the volunteers for making the Society the very successful resource it has become to the community.

WHS Board

Officers

President

Harry E. Came

Vice President

Josh Bill

Treasurer

Dennis Moiso

Secretary

Gail Dever

Directors

Patrick Cosgrove

Matt Crabb

Ellen Frew

Mary Goljenboom

Chris Lanning

Vicki Mattson

Jim Maguire

Doug Stiles

Programs Double Feature

Using Our Historical Society Resources & Returning Lost Purple Heart Medals

Sunday, May 21

2:00 pm

Schornick Theatre

Jack Benny Center for the Arts

39 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park

Have you ever wondered about getting into genealogy? Join us along with special guest speaker Marsha Peterson-Maass, Forensic Genealogist and Lecturer, to learn about the resources that we have in our Research Library and how to get started in your family's historical research. Marsha Peterson-Maass will also share some of her recent experiences in historical research where she has assisted on returning purple hearts.

Also during the program, we will present the **Waukegan Historical Society History Fair Award**. The Society each year awards \$500 to the top project that excels in the study, research, and presentation of a project focusing on the history of Waukegan, Illinois.

Tour of Homes Update

Just a reminder that we are trying something different this year with our annual Tour of Homes. Instead of June, we will kick off the fall season with the Tour on October 1st. If you would like to have your home considered for this year's Tour please give us a call at 847-336-1859.

From the Research Library

We have a volunteer opportunity if you are interested. We would like to have the extensive writings of Robert F. (Si) Williams transcribed. Williams seemingly wrote about everything, from everyday life in Waukegan to important events. If you are interested in being a part of this project, contact Ty Rohrer.



Beverly Millard, Librarian and Bryan Escobar, Arts & History Specialist, working with Whittier 3rd graders in the Raymond Research Library

Exhibit Opening: Sweetheart Mine

Sunday, April 29

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Waukegan History Museum

Join us for the unveiling of the exhibit *Sweetheart Mine: WWI Love Letters*. In the exhibit, you will follow the stories of two couples before, during, and after World War I.

Homer Dahringer and Ruth Besley start their courtship while attending Waukegan High School. Homer joined the Army flying squadron in WWI.

Elizabeth Tarver, growing up in Waukegan in a prominent African American family, started correspondence with Westley Dyer, who served as a corporal in the Army.

Light refreshments will be served.

Testimony from the Metro History Fair

Below is an essay Liesl Greider, a senior at Waukegan High School, wrote to earn the Chicago Metro History Fair DePaul University Scholarship. It highlights the importance of oral history and the importance of studying your community. Liesl was awarded \$20,000 by the university.

Liesl, and the other students on her team, used the Waukegan Historical Society Research Library's archives for their documentary titled "Waukegan's Poisoned Past."

I've always been thought of as shy. I am often reluctant to speak up, no matter the situation. With my Chicago Metro History Fair experience, I was put into unique social situations time and again. My group and I had to consult officials, locals, involved citizens, and our history teacher, Josh Bill, extensively in order to gather information, ask for help, and conduct interviews.

I was reluctant when our group pulled into the driveway of our first interviewee. When we stepped into Maryfran Troha's home, I was nervous about spending time with this woman whom I knew almost nothing about, other than that she was involved in an anti-pollution group in our city. I was worried that it would be awkward and that she would be intimidating.

Towards the beginning of our interview with her, I let the gregarious girl in our group do all of the talking. As the meeting went on, though, I became more comfortable with Maryfran Troha, and I did some of the talking along with my friend. By the end of the meeting, I had realized that there was nothing to worry about, because she was just someone who wanted to help us raise awareness about our topic through helping us with our documentary.

When we went to our next interview, I was much more comfortable talking to the person we were interviewing. I actually did the majority of the talking, because I found that I was getting more out of it when I was engaged in the discussion. Over the course of the creation of our documentary, I was pushed to branch out and conquer my self-doubt that I experience when addressing people. I used to think that I was inadequate and that no matter what I said, I would sound stupid. I now realize that if I continued being afraid to jump into conversations, then I would never be able to thrive in my chosen field or in life in general.

This is why I am so grateful for my history fair experience. Not only was I able to learn more about an important topic regarding my community, but I also learned how to be more sociable with people. I am grateful for this valuable lesson, because I know that it is something that has helped me to speak up more in all aspects of my life. I have applied this valuable skill in class discussions, general conversations, and my teen speech club at church. I intend to continue to apply this much needed courage to speak up in the rest of my entire life. Instead of stepping back and letting others do the talking, I now step in and speak for myself.

—Liesl Greider

Lisa Oppenheim, Director of the Chicago Metro History Fair, and Liesel Greider



Historical Happenings

The Kilbane Brothers

Ed Link

The Waukegan Historical Society depends on donations. Artifacts, memoirs, identified photographs, family histories, and business and personal papers add to our collection. The last items are particularly important in broadening our understanding of business practices of the time or of a particular enterprise. Such is the case of the Kilbane brothers.

Frank and Harry Kibane were twins born in 1905 and remained life-long Waukegan residents. They opened The Nook restaurant at 103 N. Genesee Street January 19, 1929, re-named it Kilbane's Tea Room the following year and moved it to its long-time location at 131 N. Genesee in September, 1934.

Being restaurateurs was far from their only endeavor. They were developers of commercial properties, politicians (Frank a Democrat, Harry a Republican), office seekers (though seldom victorious), Waukegan promoters, frequent contributors of letters to newspaper editors, and opinion providers on an endless supply of local issues. Harry especially became a curmudgeon and political gadfly.

However, these personal traits cannot diminish what they accomplished in Waukegan. Besides the Tea Room they built the buildings that housed JC Penney, Lanathans, and Ace Hardware. They were involved in the development of Lake County Gardens and the A&P store at 10th and Lewis. They owned apartment buildings and proposed some multi-story apartments in town. The Kilbane Shopping Center in Zion opened about 1984.

A major attempt on their part was to bring a Woolco Discount Department Store to Waukegan. Their dealings with the F.W. Woolworth Company contained many trials and tribulations before the eventual disappointment. The story of how it all came about is interesting.



Frank Kilbane

F. W. Woolworth opened its first variety store February 28, 1878. A store opened on Genesee Street in Waukegan in 1912. Another opened in Lewis Plaza at its beginning in 1956. The Kilbane brothers became involved with them in 1966 when they proposed moving the downtown store to Genesee and Grand. The pluses in such a move were to take advantage of the additional traffic on Grand and Sheridan Road as well as a parking lot.

When Woolworth expressed no interest in that location, it wondered about the Mages Sporting Goods store on Genesee Street. Frank Kibane countered with the JC Penney store. Both sites would increase the size of the Woolworth store, but discussions apparently broke down. A brief attempt was made concerning a site at Washington and Green Bay Road, but to no avail. Frank expressed great disappointment since he had already expended a great deal of effort in trying to work out the arrangements. FW Woolworth regional representatives apologized but said nothing could be done in convincing their management. There the matter dropped.

Communication with FW Woolworth was re-established two years later, but with a very different goal in mind. Woolworth began its Woolco Discount Department store subsidiary in 1962. By 1966 it had 18 stores in the U.S. with plans for many more. The Kilbane brothers, led by Frank, were interested in acquiring one for the local area. In June, 1969 Frank contacted E.R. Judy at Woolworth's regional office in Des Plaines, Illinois. Frank proposed a site at the northwest corner of Routes 43 and 120. Judy responded favorably with some reservations.

Judy continued a favorable outlook and came to town to inspect the site. Ground was broken in late September for what would become Lakehurst Shopping Center and Frank used that to show how the area was progressing. Judy suggested expanding the available space to better accommodate Woolco's needs. Those arrangements were made. By then Kilbane had added the possibility of including a



Harry Kilbane

Kroger grocery store to the site. Judy thought that such an addition would not be a problem.

He was enthusiastic about the entire project. On October 30, 1969 he wrote "Please rest assure (sic) that I am very much interested in this site and would like very much to complete a deal with you within the next 30 days. I would hope that construction could start right after her 1st of the year." The encouragement was enough to spur Frank into acquiring options and a plat plan.

Somewhere along the way the dealings with Kroger must have broken down. Frank began talking with A&P for one of their stores in that location. Talking, or letter writing, went along, but no physical action. Judy's time table was, at best, pushed back. He felt a lease could be drawn up and presented to his Executive Committee, but nothing was forthcoming from Frank. Some correspondence exists between Frank and Stinway-Ford Hopkins Drug Company and Belscot Retailers. It is hard to decipher where all these inquiries fit into any master plan.

Then a Belscot representative contacted Judy directly. It apparently came as a surprise to him that negotiations had taken place with another retailer. He expressed to Frank that no such store could be considered given space limitations on the site. The subject seemingly was dropped. A&P was still in consideration.

As 1971 drew to a close, both sides expressed satisfaction with how everything had progressed. Appropriate acreage had been secured. The proposed rental price seemed reasonable. A plat of building locations was forwarded.

Early 1972 didn't have a picture quite so rosy. Judy could get no commitment from Woolworth headquarters in New York. They weren't even willing to listen to his deals in Chicago. Frank responded with a resignation that a deal might not be worked out.

Finally, Judy was scheduled to meet with his management and present the entire project near the end of October, 1972. But prior to that date Woolworth

executives and Judy visited the proposed site and dropped the other shoe. Their stated objections were the existence of Lakehurst Mall and a nearby K-Mart and the lack of enough population to support all those retailers along with a Woolco.

Understandably Frank was discouraged, but wasn't willing to give up. He wrote to the Woolworth real estate department in New York. He summarized the work that had been done to date, the \$50,000 he and his brother had spent on options and why Woolco could still make money given the results of other nearby retailers. The appeal did no good since Woolworth reaffirmed its refusal.

Further appeals led to nothing besides more exchanging of letters between Frank and New York. Going over the heads of the real estate department, Frank appealed to the chairman of Woolworth, but again with no satisfaction.

Frank and Harry sought legal advice on bringing suit against Woolworth for the dollars they had expended in the development. The lawyers advised against such action. "Certainly, we cannot condone the seemingly apparent deviousness and duplicity which marked the Woolworth Company's dealings with you." Verbal assurances were not backed by any written documentation. "...the legal remedy available to you is remote."

The subject must have been dropped. There is no further correspondence and no store was ever built. Woolco built many stores throughout the United States before they closed 336 stores in 1983 as they went out of business. The

F.W. Woolworth parent company closed in 1997. The variety stores in Waukegan closed in 1980 downtown and 1993 in Lewis Plaza. Frank Kilbane passed away in 1976 and Harry joined him in 1990.



Kilbane's Candy

Museum Supervisor's Report

Ty Rohrer

What a busy spring we have planned at the Waukegan History Museum. Of course, Bryan Escobar and I are busy in the schools sharing Waukegan's history but we are very excited about



Ty Rohrer with Mrs. Carter's Class in Thompson School, Lake Villa

two special exhibits that are in the works. *Sweetheart Mine: WWI Love Letters* opens April 29. The other exhibit, *Pieces of the Past*, will be showcased outside of the museum and will be found throughout all of the Waukegan Park District parks. This exhibit is different from anything else we have ever done and it will be unveiled this summer.

This past February, many volunteers for the Historical Society, museum, and Oakwood Cemetery Walk were recognized at the Waukegan Park District's Volunteer and Patron Reception. Receiving awards were Doug Stiles, Gail Dever, Vicki Mattson, Meg Goljenboom, Joe Russell III, and Diane Verratti. Patrick Cosgrove was recognized for all that he does in the community by receiving the Jack Benny Arts and Humanities Award. All of these volunteers, like so many others play their own special part in helping to showcase Waukegan's history.

Building Addition Update

Preserving the past—Preparing for the future

Once again, we thank you for your generous response to our yearend appeal. Donations totaling \$11,779.00 were received from you our members

and friends, bringing the total in the Building Fund to almost \$188,000.00. As you will note from the following list of donors, memorial gifts played an important role here. Although we did not meet our goal of \$200,000.00, we remain encouraged that the Fund will continue to grow as we prepare to celebrate our 50th Anniversary in 2018.

Up to \$50.00

Jane Leonowitz
Thomas Donohue and Janice Schroeder
Kathleen Hansen
Judith Manning
Ruth Anne Hickman – In memory of Ruth Heringlake
J. D. Pecina – In memory of Dick Pecina
Patrick Cosgrove
Peter and June Zaragoza
Al Westerman and Diana Dretske
Tom Bartlett
Ann Olson
Richard and Alice Ribando
Michael and Emily Savage – In memory of Frances Ford
Charlotte K. Renehan
Beverly Millard
Janet Young
Ann Rippel
Lawrence Kilbane and Janet Kilkelly – In memory of Adi Kilbane
Jon Revelle – In memory of Francis Sauter
Penny Miller and Richard Hershman – In memory of Roman and Cresy
Miller and John and Bea Hershman
Anonymous
Anonymous

\$51.00 to \$100.00

Michael and Emily Savage – In memory of Florence Dart
Nick Nicketakis – In memory of Clayton Christensen
Sara Griffin - In memory of Walt Griffin
Sherrill Eichler – In memory of Howard and Cleone Petersen
Pat Galvin
Kathryn Clay
Gregory Alloian
Douglas and Marianela Peterson
Harry E. Came

\$51.00 to \$100.00 (continued)

Richard and Judith Larsen – In memory of Lorraine and Dick Larsen
 Martha Sherer – In memory of Henry and Jane Sherer
 Pat and Cass O’Keefe
 Michael and Jane Waller
 Faith Clark – In memory of Hank Clark
 Thomas and Eleanor Vick
 Susan Pantoja
 Michael Smole
 Sharon Came – In honor of Harry E. Came
 P. J. Ashton – In memory of Claire Herzog and Bob Wight
 Charlotte Callahan Wozniak
 Adena Staben
 Sally Zeit – In memory of my husband, Jack Zeit
 Anonymous
 Michael and Teresa Rodriguez

\$101.00 to \$500.00

Lawrence Quinn – In memory of Beulah M. Kennedy Quinn
 Baxter International Foundation Matching Grant
 Sharon Labelle – In memory of Bob Labelle
 Dorothy Buddenhagen – In memory of George and Betty Hughes
 Centerline Equipment Company
 Yvonne Martin
 Sue, Tom and Adam Koesser
 James and June and Maguire
 Philip and Sandra Tobin
 Douglas Eagon – In Honor of Paul and Elaine Eagon
 Lida G. Dever – In memory of Thomas C. Dever
 Joyce and Peter Ludovic
 Lunette Eichler – In memory of Howard and Cleone Petersen
 Sara and Jeffrey Dick – In honor of Doug Stiles
 Nancy and Bill Ashley in memory of Victor and Jennie Korenchan

\$501.00 to \$1,000.00

Elaine Eagon – In memory of my husband, Paul H. Eagon
 Thomas and Gloria Kaye – In honor of Charles and Mary F. Kaye
 Geralyn Capinski and Roy Czajkowski
 Warren Wood
 Anonymous



Find Us on Facebook!

Like the “Waukegan History Museum” on Facebook!

Join Us!

NAME(S) _____

 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____
 EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+)	\$10.00
Student	\$10.00
Individual	\$15.00
Family	\$30.00
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



Guided History Walk

Discover

Bowen Park

April 22, 2017

10 AM

Pre-register for walking tours at waukeganparks.org, call the Jack Benny Center for the Arts at 847-360-4740 or visit the Jack Benny Center at 39 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park.