



See It Now: Sword of Thomas Clarkson

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Winter 2019

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

Calendar of Events

For more information and to register for Guided Walking Tours, visit waukeganparks.org

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February

February 23

Closing Reception of Lincoln Pop-Up Exhibit

March

March 30

Roosevelt Park History and Nature Walk

April

April 6

Waukegan's Civil War Sites History Walk

President's Letter

Josh Bill

Greetings and a Happy New Year to you and your loved ones! I hope that your holiday season was full of relaxation and enjoyment of family and friends. It has been wonderful to celebrate the society's 50th Anniversary with you, but we are now full speed ahead for 2019 and it promises to be an exciting year.

Our new year has begun with great momentum thanks to those who have presented or attended the events the society has sponsored to celebrate the opening of our new exhibit: Abraham Lincoln: A Man of His Time, a Man for All Times. I have seen the Schornick Theatre packed several times already and many have stayed to view the pop-up exhibit. We are grateful for the Park District's support in this endeavor, as the Jack Benny Center has hosted the exhibit since its opening in late-November.

Our 50th Anniversary interactive exhibit has concluded; we have crowned the establishment of the Little Fort Trading Post as our most significant

event in Waukegan's history. It narrowly defeated the runner-up, Waukegan's connection to the Underground Railroad. Thanks to all of you who voted, shared the event through social media, and participated in engaging and good-natured discussions about Waukegan's history. This event drew great attention from historical societies across the Chicago area and was a terrific success!

Our education outreach programs, which broke records in 2018, are under way for the new year. Bryan Escobar has taken the lead and continues the work that Ty Rohrer began several years ago (Ty still leads some outreach programs too). Bryan and Ty are also working to ensure every fourth-grade student in Waukegan Public School District #60 gets a chance to see the Lincoln Exhibit. Additionally, the winter also brings Waukegan High School students to the museum and library to conduct research on their Chicago Metro History Fair projects. We have already seen nearly 30 high school students from the new Waukegan History class at the museum and library to close out the month of December. It is refreshing to see so many young people embracing Waukegan's history. We hope that you can also make it to see our offerings at the museum and inside the Jack Benny Center this winter.



24th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk

Fall & Winter Special Events Recap

Our special events from this past fall and winter, the Oakwood Cemetery Walk, Tour of Homes and Holiday Open House, were again very successful. Thank you to everyone who helped with those events.

The 24th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk was held on Saturday, September 22 and crottwds were treated to stories relating to the theme “Typical Illinois: A Celebration of the Illinois Bicentennial.” If you missed this year’s Cemetery Walk, or if you want to experience it again, you can do so at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwub2pTZwaQ>. You can also type “Oakwood Cemetery Walk” into the YouTube search browser to find this year’s Walk, along with others from a few years ago.

The 2018 Tour of Homes on Sunday, October 7th was held on a damp, gray day which threatened rain all afternoon. In spite of the weather we had one of the more successful tours ever with about 400 attendees and a bottom line profit of about \$7000 to keep the Society in the black for another year. Four “Grand Victorians” were on the tour to celebrate the Society’s 50th Anniversary and our guests seemed to be very appreciative of the choice of homes for the tour. The revenue from the tour is the largest source of income needed each year to fund the many programs offered by the Historical Society. Our thanks to the many volunteers, the tour committee, and the home owner’s for all of their hard work.

Our annual Holiday Open House at the Waukegan History Museum was yet another festive gathering. A special thank you to Alice Winter and Rose Bhatt for decorating the museum this holiday season.

Join Us

All events held at
**Jack Benny Center Theatre-39 Jack Benny Drive,
Waukegan, IL in Bowen Park**

Free

Open to the Public, Family Friendly

We hope that you can join us for this upcoming program that is part of our special Lincoln pop-up exhibit.

February 23

Closing Reception and Lincoln presentations planned throughout the evening.

Thank You Jennifer!

Jennifer Berzin, Board of Director and long-time friend of the Historical Society, has been hired as the Processing Archivist for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Jennifer has been a major asset to the Historical Society for 10 years now. She started out with us as a volunteer while she was in high school. From there we brought her on as an intern with the Waukegan Park District and she served in that role for three years.

While in college, Jennifer would come back and volunteer at the museum during breaks and summers. After college, she returned to serve on our Board of Directors and chair the Library Committee. Jennifer volunteered on Saturdays as a docent at the Waukegan History Museum and worked the Reference Desk at the Waukegan Public Library where she was also the lead archivist of the Ray Bradbury Collection.

We are very proud of Jennifer and are so thankful for her support over the years.



The Historian's Desk

Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts

I had the pleasure of representing the Waukegan Historical Society for a few different unique events recently. I was honored to be the keynote speaker for the Abraham Lincoln portrait unveiling ceremony at the Lake County Courthouse Criminal Court Tower on October 2. This event was part of an initiative of the Illinois State Historical Society, which is to place the Lincoln portrait, taken by Springfield, IL photographer Alexander Hesler on June 3, 1860 in the old State Capital, in all county courthouses throughout Illinois.

Speaking of Illinois, the Historical Society and the Waukegan Public Library collaborated to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the state on December 3, 2018. I presented on the role that Waukegan has played in the grander picture of celebrating Illinois' history.

On October 12, 2018, the Waukegan Park District received the 2018 Helen Doria Arts in the Park Award from the Illinois Association of Park Districts in partnership with Arts Alliance Illinois. The Park District received the award in part due to the partnership with the Historical Society and the "Pieces of the Past" initiative.

See It Now: Unique Artifacts On Loan to Us

Lincoln Life Mask and Sword of Thomas Clarkson

Josh Bill

If you have ever wondered what it might have been like to inspect what Frederick Douglass called "the long lines of care" on Abraham Lincoln's forehead, you need to come down to the Jack Benny Center

for the Arts for a very rare treat. We are incredibly grateful to have a life mask of Abraham Lincoln that shows his full head and both hands on loan from the Bess Bower Dunn Museum in Libertyville, Illinois. The Dunn Museum generously loaned us this casting where you can inspect the facial features of Lincoln. It is the closest thing to meeting him that you will encounter. The life casting is featured prominently as part of our pop-up exhibit: Abraham Lincoln – A Man of His Time, A Man for All Times. Hundreds of visitors, adults and school children alike, have already made their acquaintance with Mr. Lincoln's life mask; make sure you do not miss out on your opportunity to come face-to-face with the Great Emancipator. Decide for yourself whether you agree with Douglass' characterization of Lincoln's face as one of compassion or Lincoln's own characterization where he once responded to the accusation of being two-faced with the quip, "If I had two faces, do you really think I would be wearing this one?"

Another exceptional artifact, also on loan in honor of our 16th President is the sword of Thomas Clarkson, a Waukeganite who served in the famed 96th Illinois Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. We are so grateful that Walter E. Diedrick, a descendent of Clarkson, has loaned us this prized family heirloom in order to enhance our pop-up exhibit. It is wonderful to see so many looking at the sword in awe as they pay their respects to this brave citizen of Waukegan.

You don't have much more time to catch these temporary artifacts. The Lincoln Exhibit is up at the Jack Benny Center from now until the end of February. Come over to see it now!



Waukegan History Museum Update

Bryan Escobar, Arts and History Specialist

This past November our pop-up exhibit, “Abraham Lincoln: A Man of His Time, A Man for All Times,” came up at the Jack Benny Center theater. Through coordination with the Waukegan School District, each 4th grade class will be visiting the exhibit, as well as making a trip to the museum. At the museum, they cover what life was like during Lincoln’s time, and then learn more about the man himself at the Jack Benny Center. This is a great opportunity for us to continue our outreach and have new teachers and students visit the museum.

Over the past few months, we have been working closely with leaders in the local African American community to help share the African American story of the Waukegan area. We sat down with Dr. Harlene Shipley and Sylvia England to discuss how we could create a history exhibit that highlights the African American community in politics, religion, and education within our local community. It was decided that they would be the best people to tell those stories. This led to the creation of the Community Curators Pop-Up exhibit concept. The main idea is that we as a museum provide a space

for an exhibit, but the exhibit is entirely curated by Ms. England to discuss these different areas in relation to the African American community of Waukegan. We hope to grow this concept into a more permanent fixture that will allow other community curators to share stories within the museum for others to see and experience.



Minor in History

WHS Campus Gossip Still Fresh, part 2

Ali Bill

While I was reading the old Waukegan High newspapers for my first appearance in this space, I found this item:

“A Halloween party was given Friday afternoon by Miss Ladd’s Freshmen Home Economics Club in the Domestic Science rooms. Sixty-seven girls were present, all dressed in differed costumes. During the first fifteen minutes of the party, the girls were masked and a grand march was held in the hallway. Each girl visited “Witch Krueger” and received her fortune tied in a peanut shell. Thirty or more Hallowe’en games and stunts including “The Spooky Room” were indulged in until 5 o’clock. The following program was given later in the afternoon: Piano duet – Ruth Johnson and Lucille Flander. Hawaiian dance – Georgia Ray. Reading, “Little Orphan Annie” – Marjorie Tasker. Piano duet – Lila Maki and Irja Hmpeck. Reading of dreams and presentation of dreambooks – Frances Groblech. Presentation of prizes for winners of different stunts – President Marjorie Tasker. After the program, the girls danced the Virginia Reel, which was followed by the serving of refreshments.”

As a high school teacher myself, I have to say that I am in awe of Miss Ladd and Miss Krueger. While I am no Domestic Sciences teacher, I do like crafts and scrapbooking, and the idea of writing 67 different fortunes to tie in 67 peanut shells, presumably breaking quite a few along the way, and creating 30 different “games and stunts” and perhaps 67 dreambooks, fills me with fear, even with the presumable help of some of the 67 domestically-industrious freshman girls. (I hope they were saying things like “I want to be the first famous female aviator!”, not

“I keep having this dream where spiders are chasing me.”) Even the idea of a Domestic Science Club seems quaint today. I wonder if there were any freshman boys who secretly wanted to join, if only to spend more time with freshman girls who wanted to learn more about cooking and sewing. The Virginia reel wasn't notably popular anymore by 1922, so I'd also like to know why they all learned it. Was it something they practiced during gym class? Private dancing lessons? Or was it something like how if you play the first bars of “Macarena” to Americans of a certain age they start putting their arms forward, one at a time, then flipping them over, one at a time, accompanied by self-conscious giggling? Perhaps the fox trot, the most popular dance of 1922, was unseemly for a freshman girls' Halloween party, plus required both a partner and standing scandalously close to him, so Miss Ladd and Miss Krueger went with something more dignified.

I went to the 1923 yearbook to put some faces to these names, but was disappointed to find out that yearbooks of almost a hundred years ago are quite different than what I think of as a standard yearbook. I found all of the teachers, including the frequently-tardy Mr. Muehl (he was pretty dashing – I bet he was pretty easily forgiven for his lateness by the female students while the male students rolled their eyes), the stern Principal Keller, and Miss Ladd and Miss Krueger. When the newspaper says that the sophomores taking yearbook pictures were all “on three plates”, that's literal – there are three pictures, one from each photographic plate, of the sophomore class, and the pictures are labeled “sophomores” when I'd hoped to find names. The seniors have the best pictures – perhaps a hundred of them have professionally-styled head shots groups in circles of six or seven on each page. Those without pictures are not mentioned, and some with pictures are listed only as “Not graduated”.

Beneath these pictures were names, a chosen quote, and a list of extracurriculars for each senior.

My eye was drawn to the extremely brief quote and information of Grace L. Avington. Her personal quote was “Silence is sweeter than speech”, which I was curious about because in her picture, she looks determined to me, and there is strength in her enigmatic smile. She is one of the only black students in the senior class. Did she simply prefer quiet? Was she silent because she felt she didn't have a voice? Or was the quote an arrow at other students, suggesting that they consider silence rather than running their mouths? She was in the home economics club as a junior and in chorus during sophomore and junior years, so she must have enjoyed singing – was that her way of communicating? Why didn't she participate in anything as a senior? Were any of the girls on the page her friends, as they likely sat next to her alphabetically in class?

Though I couldn't answer any of these questions, I did discover that Grace's parents were born in Tennessee, and she was living without them in Waukegan in 1920, as a lodger on a block with only three black families. Her whole family was in Sandusky, Illinois, including a younger sister, Flossie, whom she'd be living with in 1930 in Chicago. She doesn't have an occupation in 1920, so I hope she was in Waukegan for the education and not for work. In 1930, at age 24, she's listed as a “modiste” – I had to look that up, but it's a fashionable milliner or ladies' dressmaker. She works then in a tailor shop, and her younger sister is a nurse for a “private family”, and they live as lodgers on a block and section of Chicago that seems almost entirely black. What a life she must have lived, and the stories she could tell us.

I created more questions than I answered after looking at these newspapers and the yearbook, but isn't that what history, especially Waukegan history, is all about, anyway? If we knew it all, there would be no mystery, and no reason to keep poking around in the Raymond Library for something I haven't seen yet.

Museum Expansion Fundraising

Preserving the past—Preparing for the future

The Waukegan Historical Society has been working for over 10 years on a long-term plan to expand space for our exhibits, storage, and library. We have raised over a quarter of a million dollars towards our goal of 400 thousand dollars. Our partner, the Waukegan Park District has been a huge supporter of this goal and we are working together to make this project succeed. Our end of the year appeal is bringing in donations every day to match the \$5000 donated by two Historical Society supporters. What a great way to end the very special 50th Anniversary year of the Society. It is never too late to send in a donation and please think of the Society when talking to your lawyer about bequests in your will.

Thank You!

Building Fund Donors

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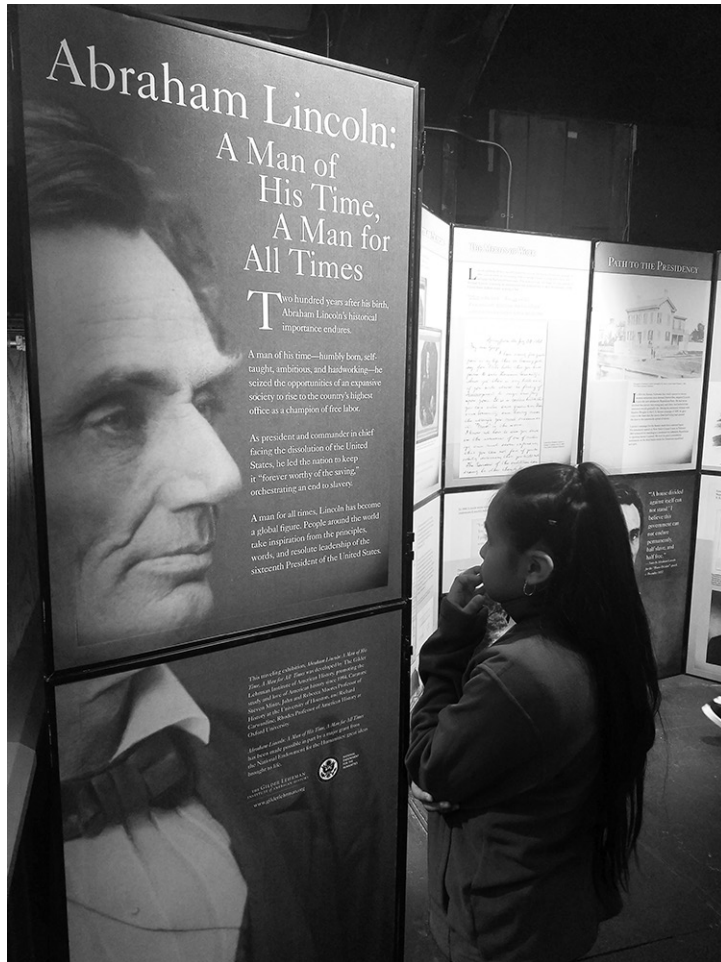
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Patron, Organization	\$100.00
Life, Individual	\$150.00
Life, Couple	\$300.00
My additional gift	\$ _____

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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.

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

www.waukeganhistorical.org

Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

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haines@waukeganparks.org
Arts & History Specialist: Bryan Escobar
847-360-4749
bescobar@waukeganparks.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



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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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