



## **Updates on the Carnegie Library Project**

**Summer 2021**

Newsletter of the Waukegan Historical Society

# Calendar of Events

## August

### August 21

Carnegie Library Fundraiser

## September

### September 25

Oakwood Cemetery Walk

## WHS Board

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## President's Letter

### Josh Bill

While we all realize that the pandemic and variants of the virus are still with us, it is nice to be writing to you in the midst of a much more normal summer than last year. With that, the Waukegan Historical Society is hard at work planning for the future. We are gradually returning to in-person events (see the calendar for details on what is coming up), and, of course, we continue our planning regarding our new space in the Carnegie. We have moved to the design development stage, and have started the exhibit planning process. We are grateful for all the help that our board, volunteers, and members have provided to us along the way. I want to also thank our partners at the Waukegan Park District; the project wouldn't be possible without their support.

There is great news to report for this summer. Thanks to efforts by the Illinois legislature, we have recently secured three million dollars to help cover the costs of the renovations of the Carnegie! We are incredibly grateful for the support of our state representatives and senators! As we continue our fundraising efforts, we are happy to report that the City Club of Waukegan is dedicating their silent auction to raise money for the Carnegie. See the details of the event in this newsletter. We hope to see you all there!

As we slowly return to our event offerings, you should know that you can always access Waukegan's history at your fingertips by using our companion app. You can either get the app by loading the companion app from the Waukegan Park District app, or you can access all the content by going online to [app.waukeganhistorical.org](http://app.waukeganhistorical.org), or by scanning the QR code below. Bryan Escobar has designed new content and quests to keep you busy and learning all summer long.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new board members. At our last annual meeting, our membership voted to have Dane Morgan and Julio Argueta join the Board of Directors. We welcome them aboard and look forward to all their contributions to the society. I would also like to thank Pat Cosgrove for his years of service to the Waukegan Historical Society. Pat is stepping down as treasurer. I know that many of you know Pat, and so this probably goes without saying. Pat has been one of our most active volunteers and has served the board exceptionally as treasurer. He is a friend to the society and a strong promoter of everything Waukegan. Thanks, Pat, and we wish you the best in the future. We hope to see you at events and at the opening of the Carnegie.



Scan this QR code on your phone or tablet to go to the Waukegan History Museum Companion app.

Just open your camera app and point it at the code!

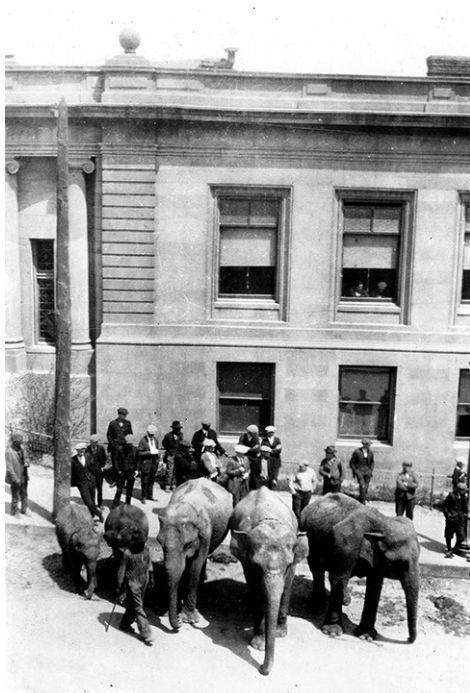
# Carnegie Library Fundraiser

Hosted by the City Club of Waukegan  
In connection with  
Waukegan Park District &  
Waukegan Historical Society

**Saturday, August 21, 2021**  
**Glen Flora Country Club**  
**6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**

Join us for an evening of memories both old and new. Short programs by both the Park District and Historical Society will provide insight into the renovation and programs to be available.

Plan to attend this inaugural event and be part of our history and our future. *Passed hors d'oeuvres, silent auction, and cash bar.*



Elephants line up next to the Carnegie Library on Washington Street.

# 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk: Stories of the Waukegan Carnegie Library

**Saturday, September 25**  
**12:00 pm.m - 4:00 p.m.**

Experience the stories relating to the Historic Waukegan Carnegie Library including the story of its construction, the early years prior to the library, as well as the years while it was open. The Oakwood Cemetery Walk is an annual “living history” event showcasing the rich history of Waukegan using costumed actors to portray local historic figures with connections to the cemetery in Waukegan.

Ticket prices are \$10 in advance and \$20 on the date of the event.

Advance tickets can be purchased at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts located at 39 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park, the Belvidere Recreation Center at 412 S. Lewis Avenue in Corrine J. Rose Park, and the Field House Sports, Fitness, and Aquatics Center at 800 Baldwin Avenue in Hinkston Park.

Tickets can also be purchased online at [waukeganparks.org](http://waukeganparks.org). When registering online, go to “Program Registration” and search for “Tickets.”

Day of the event tickets can be purchased by cash, check or credit at Lilac Cottage starting at 11a.m. Limited tickets are available and usually sell out.

**Cemetery Walk**  
**Tickets:** \$10 in advance, \$20 on the day of the Walk. *Limited tickets available.*

Start at Lilac Cottage in Bowen Park (1911 N. Sheridan Road) .

**Bus departure times:**  
12:00 p.m. and 12:30 p.m.  
1:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.  
2:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

The last tour will start at 2:45 p.m.

Public parking is not permitted at the cemetery during the event.

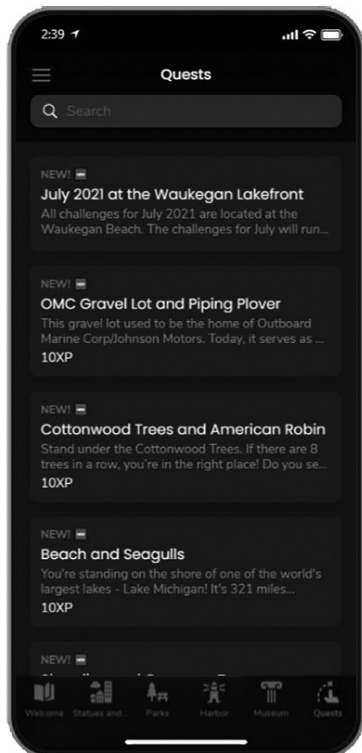
Each tour is expected to run approximately 1.5 hours and will include walking on uneven ground. The Cemetery Walk is held rain or shine.

# Waukegan History Museum Report

Bryan Escobar

This summer we have had the pleasure to welcome back more visitors and groups to the museum. It's been great to have both new and return visitors to the museum. With the Waukegan History Museum Companion App, the last year had over 900 people interact with the app and learn about pieces of Waukegan's extensive history.

Most recently, a new feature was added called 'Waukegan Quests.' The quests are monthly challenges that encourage participants to visit different places in Waukegan to do challenges that involve typing in a response or taking a photograph of their location. Instructions on participating in Waukegan Quests follow.



The companion app can be accessed by scanning the QR code on page 3 with any phone device. Then:

1. Open the Waukegan History Museum Companion App
2. Sign in with an email from the drop-down menu
3. After signing in, select "Profile Creation" from the drop down menu and enter a username and profile picture
4. Go to the now-visible Quests tab at the bottom right of the screen to start your Waukegan Quests!

# Celebration of Beverly Millard's Life

Friends and family gathered to celebrate the life of Beverly Millard at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts in late June. Wonderful memories were shared, as Beverly was truly loved by many. Following the memorial service, Beverly's family visited our Research Library. They enjoyed finding each other in the yearbooks, sitting at Beverly's desk, and finding her notes in the files.



# The Waukegan River

June Zaragoza (Guest Author)

*During the Summer of 2020, June walked the Waukegan River and wrote on her experience after doing research on the river.*

Did you know that the Waukegan River is one of only three rivers that run *into* Lake Michigan and not the Mississippi basin via the Des Plaines River? That fact and also that I was looking for something to do this summer, made me resolve to trace the Waukegan River starting at the northern most point.\* This was a solitary activity I could safely do in a COVID environment. In addition as a writer working from home, I gladly sought distractions. Turns out five Waukegan Parks plus a few off the beaten-path walks show the river's entire journey.

Strangely enough the river starts with a whimper, just south of Daniel Webster Middle School near Garden Place and New York Street. The "stream" flows behind private homes, crosses under Grand Avenue and then is widely visible in Yeoman Park, a rectangular piece of land bordered by Grand to the north and its namesake Yeoman Street to the east. The park is notable for open spaces, a playground and pedestrian bridge linking it to Lydia Street to the west and a little bit south of there, Hyde Park Elementary School. For history buffs, Louis Yeoman was an instrumental Park District founder (see Waukegan History Museum Companion app).

The river next winds through ravines, running behind homes south of Grand Avenue. You can get a good glimpse of it near N. Butrick Street and Tamara Court just south of an apartment complex, but it is next completely visible in Powell Park (Grand & N. Ash Street). A nice surprise greets you immediately, a free library book box (library closed at the time), which included lots of children books. One of the earliest parks Powell

was, according again to the Historical Society app, developed under the 1906 Perkins Plan, which aimed to use the ravines as parks. What a good idea. George Powell was a Waukegan Chief of Police and then Lake County Sheriff around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is notable about it, apart from the nice playground (shuttered at the time) and open grassy field, is the pedestrian bridge crossing the river at the south end. That day an intense summer rainstorm had swelled the river's banks and the water was hurrying angrily down to Lake Michigan. Pictures from Google Maps show the river at varying levels, sometimes with people wading in it. That would not have been possible today. The bridge led immediately to a series of switchback wooden stairs climbing to the road above (North Park Avenue). Besides a good short workout, ascending the stairs brought me to two more treasures, Ray Bradbury Park and another free library book box (this one filled with mysteries). It's hard to live in Waukegan and not hear about Ray Bradbury and see the 1990 picture of him leaning on the park sign when it was first dedicated. The park, which includes a playground as befitting Ray Bradbury's child-like sense of wonder, slopes down to the river with a bridge crossing it to the other side. There is a *steep* and rocky series of uneven steps to Madison Street above just behind Lilac Ledge. There is a railing, but *do not climb* if you have knee or cardiac issues. Since it was broad daylight, I felt no danger from any "Lonely One."

Continuing across Washington Street I came upon Washington Park, though in the summer the river is largely hidden by trees and there is no easily accessible way to explore it. That changes slightly when crossing Water Street and walking east of the Washington Park Playground. I could walk down the hill to the edge of the river through the trees and bushes to some "unofficial" trails made by people who might be wanting to party privately. I did not explore too far.



Last Leg Before the River  
Flows into Lake Michigan

There is an excellent video on YouTube of a man canoeing from what looks like Washington Park and through various tunnels under Genesee Street and Sheridan Road to enter Lake Michigan and even paddle through Waukegan Harbor. The sound track choreographs nicely with when he capsizes before one tunnel and then has to walk his canoe through a tunnel. Look it up.

In Washington Park the river splits, with the main branch running east through the ravine and to

the lake, and the South Branch, which can be followed through Roosevelt Park, ending near Jackson and Dugdale in south Waukegan. To follow the South Branch of the river first you must walk from Water Street and then south on Juniper, then west on Bluff, and then south on S. Park Avenue (just 3 short blocks). There you will see an excellent set of stone steps (though no railing), which takes you down to the river below. A small pedestrian bridge crosses to a sloping gravel road running along the side of

the river. Cooke Magnet School is just east of this road hidden way above by the trees. The short road, which shows up on Google Maps, ascends easily to Belvidere Road. The path seemed little used by anyone, (no signs of private partying), but nicely enabled me to keep following the river.

Just south of Belvidere Road I crossed the street and entered the spectacular Roosevelt Park. Roosevelt, the first official park in the system, was designed with classical ambitions (see Greek columns framing the entrances off Belvidere). Named after the earlier Roosevelt (Theodore, the “conservationist” president per the Museum Companion app), it was originally built around five natural mineral springs (hear/read about McAlister Springs on the Park District Website). Roosevelt is also featured in the late Ed Link’s *Waukegan, A History* in both the Parks and Retail sections. You can make several loops around the park on various levels, getting closer to the river and enjoying, in the summer, lush flowers, bushes and trees. The paths closest to the river were muddy. You can also walk across the “spillway” next to the pedestrian bridge near Belvidere Road. From the photos on Google Maps the water level greatly affects this mini-waterfall flowing to join the main branch. On that day children played on the playground above me at street level and people walked the park’s perimeter with their dogs. The overall impression was that I had stumbled into a lush valley produced with a little help from man and a bountiful nature.

Coming back to the fork, I traced the main branch after Washington Park by walking through the parking lot of the jail on Martin Luther King Drive, (here I was asked, “Ma’am are you lost?”), the parking lot outside Family Piano on County Street, and finally south of Dandelion Gallery on Genesee Street. It’s makes spectacular viewing to look deep down into the gorge and be fully aware of this ancient river that is so easy to ignore.

It occurred to me to wonder that being so

small was the Waukegan River ever used for anything? Turns out long ago, the mid-18th century, at least one mill and dam operated south of Grand Avenue, to build chairs and cabinetry. This is documented in *Lake Country Illinois; An Illustrated History*, by Diana Dretske. Then in the early 1990s, according to the *Lake County News-Sun* (6/6/2019), there was a proposal to put a river-based casino “tethered to the banks of a deeply dredged Waukegan River at its juncture with the Lake Michigan shoreline.” It would have had a great view, but was voted down by the City Council. Interestingly, the Rivers Casino in Des Plaines, according to the *Chicago Tribune* (7/15/2011) qualifies as a riverboat by sitting atop “a shallow pit filled with a few inches of water that’s hidden to visitors.” It is amazing which laws get passed.

It’s very easy to get up close and personal to the last section of the river on the east side of the Amstutz; there’s even a little gravel parking lot for your car. Is this for fishing when the salmon spawn? Probably most people driving on Market Street (turns into Pershing Road) aren’t aware that the river is there. It flows underneath an old railroad trestle that gives you a good final view of where the river empties into the lake. Google maps says there is a Waukegan Beach, but that sand is long gone. The entrance to the river is actually pretty hard to see from the south parking lot by the Waukegan Harbor & Marina office.

Doing a little environmental research for such an “urbanized” river released a cascade of articles written about the Waukegan River watershed, the health and plans for the Waukegan Harbor (Waukegan Harbor Citizens’ Advisory Group or CAG), and all the effort put in to stabilizing erosion and increasing biodiversity (fish) by improving the depth and aeration

along the 12.5-mile stream.

So, what did I get for my efforts? I am now much more aware of the ravine system, the curious fact that a river can just “spring” from the ground, and that there are a lot of folks working to improve the Waukegan River watershed, including the harbor, and reverse the pollution that is the unfortunate residue of our industrial past.

*\*For full disclosure this “jaunt” was not done in one day, but has been “recreated” for greater clarity.*

*Thank to Vanessa Harris at the Waukegan Public Library for help with getting info on the casino proposal and Sandy Kubillus, environmental consultant and instructor at College of Lake County, for steering me towards resources about the Waukegan River’s ecology.*

## Thank You!

### Building Fund Donors

Pat Hentosh  
Lida Gail Dever – in memory/honor of Thomas C. Dever  
Charlotte A. Gissel – in memory of Gar & Charlotte Leaf  
Mary E. Michael

### New Members

Lida Gail Dever  
Beata Ogorelska

### New Life Members

Tess Troha-Thompson  
Whitney S.G. Butler

### General Donors

Russell and Linda Bartmes – in honor of Sally Zeit  
Josh and Ali Schultz – in memory of Beverly Millard  
Pat Cosgrove  
Linda Gallu – in memory of Elaine J. Eagon  
Tim and Sally Lacey – in memory of Beverly Millard  
Dan W. and Gail A. Hamilton – in memory of Beverly Millard

## Join Us!

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### MEMBERSHIP

Senior (age 60+)	\$15.00
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Family	\$30.00
Patron, Organization	\$100.00
Life, Individual	\$150.00
Life, Couple	\$300.00
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.

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info@waukeganhistorical.org

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

[www.waukeganhistorical.org](http://www.waukeganhistorical.org)

### Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park

1917 N. Sheridan Road  
**Manager of Cultural Arts: Ty Rohrer**  
847-360-4744  
troher@waukeganparks.org  
**Arts & History Specialist: Bryan Escobar**  
847-360-4749  
bescobar@waukeganparks.org  
By appointment only

### John L. Raymond Research Library

1911 N. Sheridan Road  
847-360-4772  
library@waukeganhistorical.org  
By appointment only





**WAUKEGAN**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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