



OPEN HOUSE: The Legacy of Fair Housing *New exhibit tells story of diversity in Oak Park*



Some of the leaders of the 1960s Fair Housing movement were on hand for the grand opening of the new exhibit. (l to r) McLouis Robinet, Harriette Robinet, Virginia Cassin, Roberta Raymond, John Dwyer, and Sherlyn Reid

No one doubts that Oak Park's decision to embrace racial integration 50 years ago changed the community forever. But to many, the 5-2 vote by the village board in favor of a Fair Housing Ordinance in May 1968 is the whole story.

Oak Park River Forest Museum puts that one moment in context in the new exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*. Using photos, correspondence, protest banners, art, artifacts, and words, the exhibit traces how race shaped the community from its early days, beginning with the small but vibrant African-American community building its own church in 1905. Decades of opportunity—and discrimination—followed.

The exhibit is staged in a purpose-built “house” on the second floor of the museum, complete with a real front door posted with this question: *Would you be welcome in this house in 1968?*

Co-curated by Sarah Doherty and Frank Lipo, assisted by Rachel Berlinski, and designed by Museum Explorer, Inc., the exhibit dramatically tells a story that stretches across a century of struggle as the community embraced and opposed racial equality at various points. It is a must-see for those who think they know the story

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Open House (continued from page 1)

but haven't yet seen the multi-dimensional layers.

But don't believe us. Stop in and see for yourself Wednesdays through Saturdays between 11 and 4. Or listen to these three reviews, two by local journalists, and one by a visitor from the north suburbs who popped in during a late July afternoon.



Our Real Living History

"I had the chance to see the exhibit last week when I stopped by the historical society's fantastic new museum at Lake and Lombard. Here's the very best thing about this exploration of race and fair housing in this village: It's not the glossy PR retrospective on the heroic inevitability of Oak Park pulling off racial integration against the odds. We've spent too many years polishing that chestnut. It is one of the reasons this remarkable history seems so damned pat and dull to younger people in town.

Instead, through the artifacts it remarkably displays and in the writing of the narrative on the various explanatory panels, you understand how complex and uncertain this effort was, the depth of the fear and emotion around race, the power of local grassroots organizing against seriously entrenched interests and bias. And finally, while there were heroes and innovators, many were enveloped by fear and failed the moment. That made the whole enterprise a remarkable crapshoot.

This is our real living history. It is a great tale, especially in this moment when racist demons have

been loosed again in our country. The exhibit will be up for some while. But don't put it off. Get to this jewel of a local history museum, finally in its own historic space and with some elbow room to really tell stories."

-Dan Haley, editor and publisher, Wednesday Journal



Its Proudest Moment

"I really liked the new exhibit *Open House, The Legacy of Fair Housing*. It was honest, easy to follow and understand, and powerful. Very powerful. What caught my eye right at the beginning was the intro signage [about the Dr. Martin Luther King assassination].....On the Friday night of April 5th, 1968, the day after MLK Jr. was killed, I was coming home for spring break from the University of Illinois in Champaign.

To make a long story short, after getting off the Illinois Central that evening, I needed to get on a west bound CTA el in order to go to my home west of Oak Park. There was no other way to get home. By 7:30 or so, the Eisenhower Expressway had been shut down, the fires were burning up the west side, and there was one last Green Line el headed to Oak Park that I needed to be on; fortunately I made it and the conductor told everyone to get on the floor (snipers possibly). About Kedzie and Lake I peeked up and saw the huge orange flames destroying that west side area. I'll never forget that orange conflagration. I made it to

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Open House (continued from page 2)

Oak Park... but little did I know that this riot would change forever not just the west side of Chicago but would also change bucolic suburban Oak Park forever. In looking back and reflecting on it all this afternoon as I went through the exhibit, I was still in awe that these changes, particularly in Oak Park (I attended Fenwick so I knew the place a bit), actually happened after 1968.

The exhibit does a fantastic job of explaining how this amazing transformation occurred. As I said it was all very powerful and thoughtful. Thank you for your efforts and those of all the people involved not only in the exhibit but also making the transformation happen in Oak Park. Oak Park has much to be proud of and this transformation since 1968 may be its proudest moment.”

-Mike Shields, museum visitor from Niles, Illinois



Journey to Racial Inclusion

“Want to learn more about the village’s journey to racial inclusion? Check out, *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, a year-long exhibit that impressively displays how the community grappled with race before the 1960s and how the 1968 Fair Housing Ordinance sparked changes still shaping the village today....

Co-curated by Museum Executive Director Frank Lipo and Oak Park resident Sarah Doherty, an assistant professor of Public History at North Park University in Chicago, each room tells its story with photos, words, artifacts, and original

documents....There are fliers from 1967, and “don’t show this house to minorities” forms. There’s a drawing by artist Franklin McMahon, depicting marchers walking down Marion Street heading to real estate agents to protest. See a hate letter written to Roberta Raymond, founder of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, asking why she loves black people so much.

Take a glance at the original banners donated by fair housing leaders Harriette and McLouis “Mac” Robinet, who had to have a white friend buy their Oak Park home for them. The banners were carried in the 1966 Fair Housing marches.

There’s all of the above and more on display. The exhibit’s final room depicts life after 1968 and how the community has changed since then.

“It shows how it changes perceptions, schools, friendships,” said Lipo. “Some of these are very contemporary things— how we all get along, can we find a way to love and work together?”

“We’re still talking about some of those things... these stories are not just ancient history... we’re living these stories today.

“This exhibit, we hope, is a bridge between the past and present. It’s an ongoing discussion and effort to make the community vibrant. We don’t take it for granted.”

-Felicia Dechter, *Oak Leaves* columnist



Lasting Images: The J. A. Dedouch Company

For over a century, this family-owned Oak Park business was a world leader in a little-known niche industry

By Michael Guerin

In 1893 a small family business opened on Harrison Street in Oak Park and became the first business of its kind in the United States. Over the next 111 years it set the standard for a very unique niche industry and produced, according to one estimate, one million of its products for sale throughout the United States and abroad.

The J. A. Dedouch Company produced ceramic/porcelain photographs which were affixed to tombstones in cemeteries throughout the U.S. and abroad. Joseph A. Dedouch (*pictured, right*), a Czech immigrant and portrait painter, used his own patents, registered in both the United States and Canada, and manufacturing equipment. With its continuing innovation in both products and manufacturing processes it quickly became one of the most successful and popular companies manufacturing such products, with its primary competitors located in Europe. A collection of Dedouch company portraits, artifacts and papers are currently on display in Oak Park River Forest Museum, donated by the founder's descendants, the Stannard family.

By the late 1900's the Dedouch Co. produced up to 15,000 ceramic portraits (or "Dedos" as they were nicknamed regardless of manufacturer) a year. It was considered the Coca-Cola of memorial portraits. The manufacturing process was complex. Dedouch started with a photo then used a dichromate (an orange to red chromium salt) process that resulted in a monochrome image dusted onto an enamel (ceramic or porcelain) base. Coloration was hand-applied by

artists with an airbrush to obtain a full-color image. The portrait was then covered with a protective transparent glaze and baked in a kiln. Over time, the finer aspects of the art developed - the addition of chromatic tints to color photographs, and manual editing of images to improve overall appearance.

The company also manufactured "Jadco" fasteners and "Jadcrest" frames and portrait covers for fastening Dedos to memorials.

In addition to portraits, the company also manufactured a limited number of miniature portraits and special jewelry items. These included charm bracelets, necklaces, tie pins and cufflinks. It also made ceramic portraits for general display.

In 1932, the U. S. government began work on the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. It commissioned the J. A. Dedouch Co. to produce two Dedos to be included in a time capsule placed in the cornerstone of the new building. The first was of William Howard Taft, the former Chief Justice and past President who had successfully campaigned to move the Court out of the Capitol Building into a building of its own, but who had passed away in 1930 before construction began. The second was of the official portrait of the Supreme Court in 1932, led by Charles Evans Hughes. Dedouch made two copies of each of these. Today, one copy of each remains in the cornerstone of the Supreme Court Building and the other copies are now on display at Oak Park River Forest Museum, along with many other examples of Dedo portraits

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from across the century, including commemorative portraits of Betty and Joseph Kettlestrings, the first European settlers in Oak Park.

In 1968 Richard Stannard, grandson of the founder and a veteran employee, was named president of J. A. Dedouch Co. In 2004, after 111 years in business, the Dedouch company was sold to the Canadian company, PSM. The company's Oak Park headquarters and manufacturing plant were located at 612-622 Harrison St. and expanded to 807 and 836-846 Harrison Street.

The museum collection does not present a comprehensive history of the company; rather, a snapshot of bits and pieces of the organization's governance, its leadership, employees, and manufacturing operations. The

collection presents an

interesting look at the

industry itself, and,

importantly, a family-

owned business that

started small, grew

incrementally, and

earned national and

international

recognition for its

products and

innovations. It can

safely be said that few

books or resources

concerning ceramic portraits in

the U.S. have gone to press without an

acknowledgement of the role of the J.A. Dedouch

Company. In addition, the artifacts contained in this

collection, and especially the portraits themselves, are

a wonder— beautiful, professional, and intriguing.

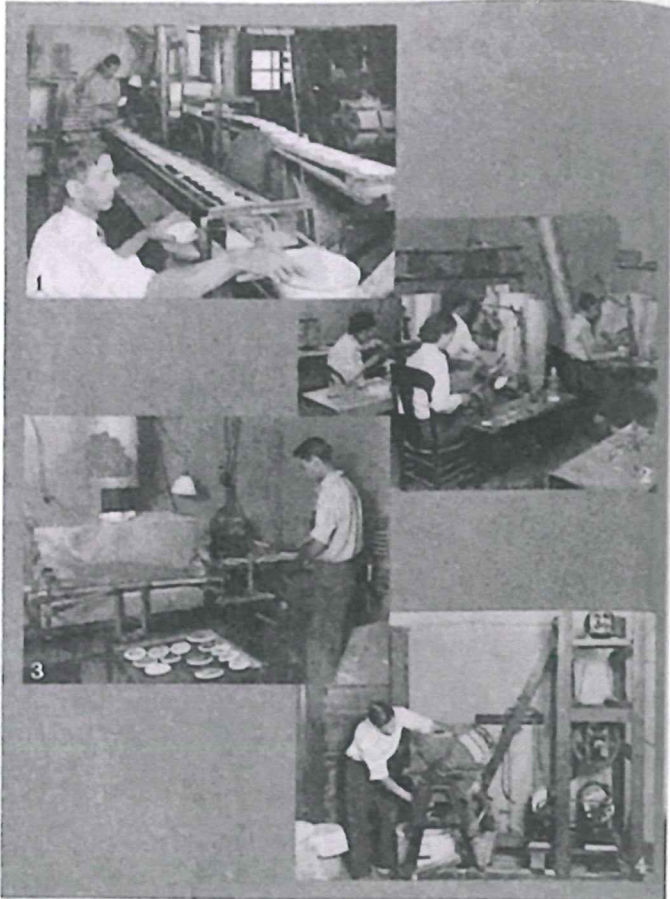
Joseph Dedouch died in 1952 and is buried in the

Bohemian National Cemetery with his wife, Rosa;

and yes, there are two Dedos on the tombstone.

Michael Guerin volunteers at the OPRF Museum every Friday, helping to organize and catalog donated materials. He also serves on the Museum's Collection Committee and is the 2018 recipient of the Historical Society's Carol Kelm Award.

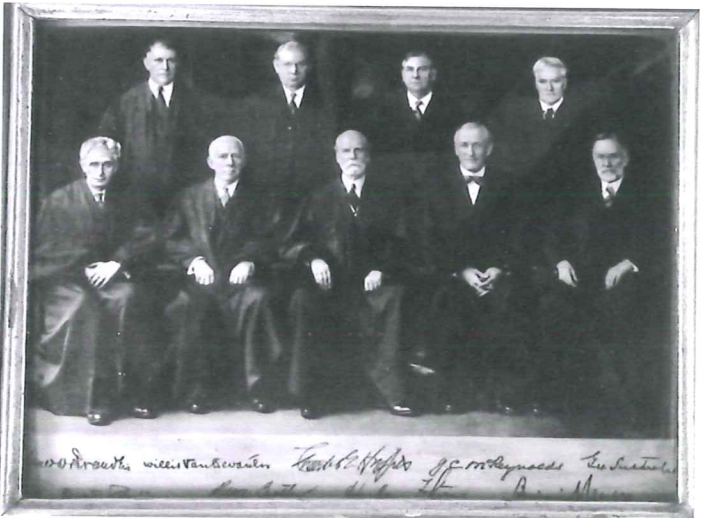
OAK PARK INDUSTRY RECEIVES HONOR



DeDou Ceramic studios, where ceramic miniatures were made for the new Supreme court building in Washington, D. C. Fig. 1 shows the plaque being coated with enamel prior to the heating process. Fig. 2 shows artists at work on the miniatures. Fig. 3 shows a finishing furnace into which the finished colored miniatures go from the art studio. Fig. 4 shows a portable frit-grinding machine designed by Mr. Dedouch himself.

Above: On January 20, 1933, Oak Leaves published these photos of the Dedo production process as part of its story about the Supreme Court Building commission.

Below: The Dedo of the Supreme Court on display at OPRF Museum.



Recently at Oak Park River Forest Museum...



Here are a few snapshots of the many ways OPRF Museum is sharing the stories of our villages: 1) OPRFHS history teacher Tyrone Williams brought his class to visit the *Open House* exhibit; 2) Marcia Brooks from Milwaukee was moved to find her great aunt, Hannah Dunlop Andrews Colt, featured in our WWI exhibit; 3) A 3rd grade class from Beye School was introduced to the history of their home town; 4) Museum volunteers were honored at the annual luncheon; 5) Costumed guides told the stories of women activists who broke down civic, social, and cultural barriers at the Women's History Walk; 6) 'Rambling Through Ridgeland' recalled the early history of Oak Park's east side; 7) Fun with food was the theme as people shared old family recipes at the Recipe Roadshow. Do you have a group with whom you'd like to share local history? Call us!

Jan Dressel, 2018 Philander Barclay Award Recipient

By Rachel Berlinski, Museum Operations Manager



Jan Dressel, who this summer stepped down from being President of the Historical Society, is the 2018 recipient of the Philander Barclay Award in recognition of more than thirty years of service to the Historical Society and her dedication to promoting the local history of Oak Park and River Forest.

Jan stopped by the museum on a Saturday to visit with me in the Fields Research Center. In between her moments of getting to know the researchers looking for information on their house on Home Avenue as well as the three-year-old visitor who she spent some time playing with in the children's area on the second floor, I got to ask her a few questions reflecting on her thirty years at the Historical Society and her plans to continue volunteering at our museum for many years to come.

Q: What are you doing with your new-found free time?

A: No, no, no. From one thing to the next. I'm teaching a class next week at Dominican University. It's called the Physics of Architecture, with a group of very gifted 5th graders. Then I'll be taking a trip with my grandkids to a place called the Family Farm, where you learn how to do farm chores, and they don't go easy on you. I took my kids there, and now they take theirs. I want them to know how much work goes into the food they eat and the luxuries they have.

Q: You've organized so many programs for the Historical Society through the years. What is the most fun activity you've been involved with?


A: I loved doing the Twelfth Night celebrations around Christmastime, and one year we outgrew Pleasant Home so we held it at the Nineteenth Century Club. The kids were upstairs with activities,

including a magician, and we even hosted the men's a capella group from Yale.

Q: Who is the most interesting character you've met from the Historical Society?

A: A woman named Buffy Austin. She was not related to the Austin family for whom Austin Blvd. and Austin Gardens are named. She answered a call I made when I was going around to the schools doing demonstrations with historical objects. I was expecting another young teacher, and when I talked to Buffy over the phone she began telling me how she was a friend of Ernest Hemingway's sister in her younger days in Oak Park and how she, like Ernest, drove an ambulance in WWI. It turned out she was ninety-three years old. And we would go to schools with objects that seemed historical even to me but especially to the kids. But these were things Buffy used in her daily life, and the stories she shared with the students made everything become real to them. She always had the kids in the palms of her hands.

Q: How do I start a historical society in my town?

A: Go to the library or the village and ask if they have a collection of historical records or old items. Take out a story in the local newspaper asking people to share stories or artifacts, or to recruit other people who might be interested. Think of people you know in town who have lived there the longest. Talk to them. You can usually bribe people with ice cream. 

History Matters

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The Quarterly Newsletter of Oak Park River Forest Museum
129 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302 / Phone (708) 848-6755
Published by The Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest
P.O. Box 771, Oak Park, Illinois 60303-0771

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We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at:
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In Memoriam

Connie Henderson-Damon, 1949-2018



Long-time board member and volunteer Connie Henderson-Damon died this spring after a long and courageous struggle with cancer.

Connie served on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society for more than a decade with unrivaled dedication, unbounded energy, and an unending belief in the Society's mission and its value to our villages. She was an ardent and tireless advocate who played a vital role in the project to transform an empty 1898 building into the new museum that she firmly believed would be a source of pride for our entire community.

Her enthusiasm was contagious. She brought many of her friends and neighbors to join in Historical Society activities, and her natural warmth made friends of all who worked with her.

Connie chaired or was a key volunteer or co-creator of any number of entertaining fund raising events: a Roaring Twenties dance party; a 1950s sock hop; an evening with actor John Mahoney; and many more. She excelled at creating art of all sorts, whether decorating Christmas trees with historic themes for

our museum, planning the décor for parties, or documenting Historical Society events with her camera. She loved dressing in costume for parades and special events, whether as a suffrage activist, a living Statue of Liberty, or even a Dalmatian fire house dog!

The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest extends its condolences to the family and friends of Connie Henderson-Damon. While we mourn her passing, we will always remember and be grateful for the talents, the wisdom, and the joyful personality she shared with us through the years. We dedicate the new exhibit, *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, to Connie Henderson-Damon.



Can you help us find this 'lost' River Forest home?

Here's your chance to be a history detective! Help us find this "missing" River Forest house.

A writer from Rochester, New York, recently emailed a question to our research center. He is studying the work of an upstate New York architect named Claude Bragdon. An advertisement from The American Face Brick Association that ran in several construction trade journals in June 1922 shows a home (pictured below) designed by Bragdon that supposedly was built in River Forest. It probably was built just a few years before before this ad ran.

June, 1922

NATIONAL BUILDER

3



A Service that is Helping Contractors Build Face Brick Homes

FACE BRICK advertising in the national magazines, read by prospective home builders, is creating an overwhelming interest in home ownership, and in the unlimited possibilities of face brick for homes of enduring worth.

Actual building is encouraged and made possible by this Association's providing, at nominal cost, complete working drawings and masonry material surveys for nearly two hundred attractive, well planned small houses. The photograph reproduced above shows a delightful house built at River Forest, Illinois, from plans designed for "The Home of Beauty," by Mr. Claude Bragdon, Architect.

So far, we have not been able to locate this home. It is quite possible the house has been significantly remodeled and some of the decorative elements may have been removed or covered up. It is also possible the home has not survived.

Do you recall seeing this home? Do you know where in River Forest it is? Do you know a home that might be the one pictured, although greatly altered?

If you have any information that might help us solve this mystery, please email the Museum at oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net or call us at (708) 848-6755.

Volunteering helps the Museum. And it's fun, too!

Volunteers are the lifeblood of almost every not-for-profit organization and OPRF Museum is no exception. We are always looking for generous people willing to share their time and talents. Whether it's helping out at a one-day event once a year or on a regular schedule every week; whether sharing a special technical skill or just doing whatever is needed to maintain the facility; whether working at reception as a public face of the museum or working anonymously behind the scenes; there are many ways you can help the museum and many ways we can shape your service to fit with your schedule and personality.

Here are just a few of the ways you can help:

Museum Docent: Greet visitors to OPRF Museum, offer a brief orientation to the facility, and answer questions from our visitors. We also need docents to help lead neighborhood walking tours and for our annual Cemetery and House Walks. Docents must have a love of local history and interact well with the public.

Research Center: Support the activities of the Museum's research center. Help maintain and update our biographical and subject files, clip relevant articles from recent newspapers, help with database entry and filing, and more.

General Office: Your office skills are always a valuable asset at the Museum. Office volunteers are needed to collate and prepare mailings, make copies, file, perform database entry.

Special Events: Our many events and programs are only possible because of the commitment and contributions of volunteers. There are plenty of opportunities for you to join others in the fun and challenge of event planning and coordination.

But perhaps best of all, no matter how you volunteer you'll get a behind-the-scenes look at the museum operation and get to know some wonderful and fascinating people: your fellow volunteers!

If you are interested in volunteering with us, whether for just one event or every week, contact Rachel Berlinski at oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net or call her at (708) 848-6755.

The Thompsons receive the 2018 Faye Devine Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service

Five years ago, Randall and Judy Thompson came to one of the Historical Society's recurring *What's it Worth?* programs and enjoyed the day. Soon afterward, Randall began to volunteer a few hours a week, offering to assist in any project where we needed a hand, including assistance with PCs and other related equipment. Since then he has proved to be an invaluable volunteer, first at Pleasant Home and then through our move to our new facility, from working with our PCs to assisting wherever needed. He has become a jack-of-all-trades for our facility—hanging artwork, fixing broken items, and helping us with a wide range of needs.



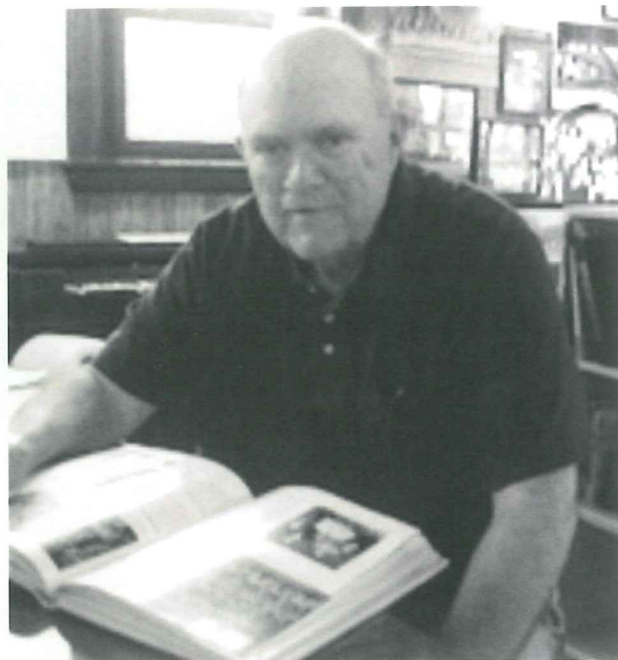
(l. to r.) Volunteers Randall and Judy Thompson accept the Devine Award from outgoing OPRF Museum President Jan Dressel

When Judy retired, she began to volunteer too! Her retirement came just as we prepared to open our new museum. She also jumped in where needed, but began to specialize in preparing the landscaping in front of our museum. Plant-by-plant, week-by-week, she has weeded, planted, watered, and trimmed. The landscaping looks fantastic and has received compliments from visitors. It is an asset to our operation and our new neighborhood. In recognition of all they do for us, at our June Annual Meeting the Thompsons received the 2018 Faye Devine Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service, honoring the memory of the 1990-94 Historical Society president.



Organizing the collection and helping us tell our stories: Guerin receives 2018 Kelm Award

After a long career as a top administrator at a hospital professional association, Michael Guerin retired and began volunteering at the Historical Society. We put him to work organizing various parts of our collection; his assistance has made materials pertaining to Frank Lloyd Wright more accessible, the yearbooks from OPRF High School more organized, and a collection of artifacts and documents from the J. A. Dedouch Company come alive with stories (see article pages 4-5) and a fascinating exhibit of Dedouch products and literature that is currently on display at the museum.



Michael Guerin examining one of the OPRFHS Tabulas

For these projects and so many others in the last few years, Guerin was presented with the Carol Kelm Award at the June Annual Meeting; the award recognizes the skill and professionalism of the former executive director in working with our collection.

Guerin's volunteerism also has included writing articles for our newsletter and website. This is a throwback to early in his career when he worked as a newspaper reporter. We are lucky to have him as a volunteer who helps us tell our stories.



Mark Your Calendar for These Great Events

Saturday, August 18, 3 p.m.

'Collector's Corner' kicks off with coin collector Dave Ekstrom

How do you know what your coin collections are worth? Dave Ekstrom, a lifelong coin collector, member of the American Numismatic Association, and retired school teacher will offer a presentation on coin collecting and gold and silver values. You will also have an opportunity to have up to three coins and gold or silver items appraised for free after the presentation.

This is the first event in a projected lecture and discussion series about collecting historical artifacts, presented by experienced, knowledgeable collectors.

This event is free for members. Regular museum admission rates apply for non-members since the event includes the opportunity to tour the museum.

Sunday, September 9, 2 p.m.

'Rambling Through Ridgeland' walking tour returns

Join Peggy Tuck Sinko and Kurt Etchingham as they once again lead a 90-minute walking tour in the neighborhood surrounding our museum. Learn about the history of Ridgeland, once a village separate from Oak Park, and about some of the little-known businesses, buildings, and people who contributed to its growth.

The tour begins and ends at the OPRF Museum and covers about one mile in walking distance. Tickets are \$8 for members or \$10 for non-members and may be purchased in advance on our website or at the museum on the day of the event.

Saturday, October 13, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, October 14, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Open House Chicago comes to OPRF Museum for a third year

We are pleased to be part of the Chicago Architecture Foundation's *Open House Chicago* once again. As one of over 200 buildings participating in this

annual free festival, we will be hosting visitors from all over Chicagoland and beyond. Make a day of it! Stop in to see what's new at OPRF Museum and visit some of these other marvelous venues across 20 Chicago area neighborhoods.

Sunday, October 14

Architectural Finds Tent Sale

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust and Oak Park River Forest Museum are pleased to co-sponsor the first Architectural Finds Tent Sale, held under the tent outside of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio. Architectural elements salvaged from area homes and donated for this event will be available for purchase, with all proceeds benefitting the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust and OPRF Museum. Special thanks to ReUse Depot of Maywood for coordinating the sale and providing logistical support.

Sunday, October 21, 1 p.m.

'Tale of the Tombstones' focuses on democracy in action

Our 26th annual Cemetery Walk features the stories of local residents who fought and sacrificed to ensure the benefits of democracy for all people.

Trained docents will point out many fascinating sights in Forest Home Cemetery as they guide tour groups to the graves where costumed actors will tell the stories of the people interred there.

Meet inside the front gate of Forest Home Cemetery. First tour departs at 1 p.m. and last tour at 2 p.m. The tour takes about 2 hours. Tickets are \$15 (\$10 for members) and can be purchased on our website or at the cemetery on the day of the event.

First Wednesday, each month

A Night at Your Museum returns

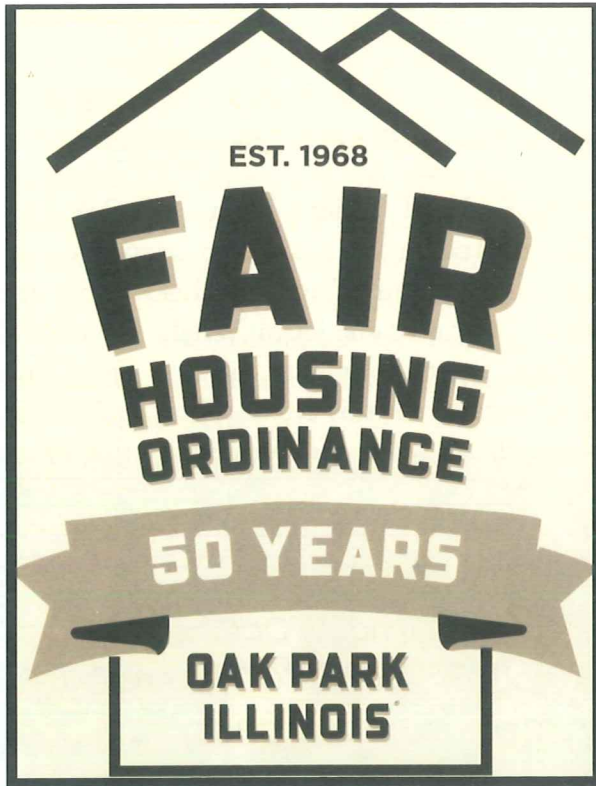
Beginning on Wednesday, September 5, OPRF Museum will be open from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month for those who are unable to visit during our regular daytime hours. Regular museum admission rates apply.





THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
OAK PARK & RIVER FOREST
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Now on view at the museum...

OPEN HOUSE

The Legacy of Fair Housing

This new exhibit explores the history of race relations in our community through the twentieth century, the people and events that led to the 1968 Fair Housing Ordinance, and how the impact of that landmark legislation still effects life in our villages.

"This is our real living history. It is a great tale, especially in this moment when racist demons have been loosed again in our country." - Dan Haley, Wednesday Journal

"Check out Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing, a year-long exhibit that impressively displays how the community grappled with race... and how the 1968 Fair Housing Ordinance sparked changes still shaping the villages today." - Felicia Dechter, Oak Leaves

"The exhibit does a fantastic job of explaining how this amazing transformation occurred... very powerful and thoughtful." - Mike Shields, Niles, Illinois