



Mark Your Calendar for “Tales Our Houses Tell” 19th Annual House Walk Returns Sunday, May 7th

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Oak Park and River Forest High School, this year’s edition of *Tales Our Houses Tell* focuses on the neighborhood that grew up around the high school in what is today the world-renowned Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District. The six distinctive homes featured on this year’s house walk are all located on Linden, East, and Scoville Avenues, just a block or so from the high school campus and within easy walking distance of one another. And this year we’re even including a rare peek inside a multi-family home that was built as a large single-family house, then transformed into an apartment building, and is now a condominium!

But *Tales Our Houses Tell* is not just about architecture. It is also about people and their roles in our community, so we will share lots of personal stories, too; stories about the architects who designed the homes, the builders who constructed them, and the families who lived in them and loved them and maintained them over

(Continued on page 2)

PRESENTING THE “TALES OUR HOUSES TELL” HOMES OF 2023



(Above, clockwise from upper left) *The Charles Westcott Apartments*, designed by John S. Van Bergen; *the Frank & Nellie Long House*, by Leon E. Stanhope; *the Mary L. Messer House*, by Roy J. Hotchkiss; *the William & Isabella Lees House*, by Charles E. White; *the Joseph & Martha Guy House*, by Thomas E. Tallmadge and Vernon S. Watson; and *the William & Helen Kimball House*, architect unknown.

decades so that they are still here for us to enjoy today. It is these stories-- some funny, some tragic, some uplifting, some just a little bit weird-- of people who lived and worked in our community that shed light on how Oak Park came to be the village we know and love today. And it is the mission of OPRF Museum to find, preserve, and share these stories.

Please join us on Sunday, May 7th, for *Tales Our Houses Tell 2023*. The homes will be open from 1:00 until 5:00 p.m. Registration and ticket pickup, as well as "day of" ticket sales, will be at Pilgrim

Congregational Church on the northeast corner of Scoville Avenue and Lake Street. The registration and ticket pickup desk will open at 12:30 p.m.

Tickets for *Tales Our Houses Tell 2023* are available in advance online at oprfmuseum.org; by phone at (708) 848-6755; or in person at the OPRF Museum gift shop. Tickets are \$25 per person for OPRF Museum members or \$30 per person for non-members if purchased in advance. Tickets purchased the day of the event will be \$35 per person for everyone, so order your tickets now and save!



Meet the Architects Who Designed the Homes

John S. Van Bergen (1885 - 1969)



A native-born Oak Parker, he trained in the studios of Walter Burley Griffin, E. E. Roberts, and Frank Lloyd Wright before starting his own practice in 1911. A devotee of the Prairie School, he is widely considered one of the greatest practitioners of the style.

Thomas E. Tallmadge (1876 - 1940)

Tallmadge was the senior partner in the firm of Tallmadge & Watson, formed in 1905. Tallmadge and Watson met while both were working for famed Chicago architects Burnham & Root. Close friends as well as partners, the partnership ended when Watson retired in 1936.



Charles E. White (1876 - 1936)



Born in Lynn, MA, White came to Oak Park in 1903 to work in Frank Lloyd Wright's studio. He lived the rest of his life here. Among his well-known local designs are the Elizabeth Cheney Mansion and the Oak Park Post Office on Lake Street.

Vernon S. Watson (1878 - 1950)

Although Watson was the junior partner in the firm, he was actually the chief designer. Watson is widely recognized for designing smaller, more affordable homes in the Prairie School genre like the one featured on our house walk. In addition to homes, he also designed over 30 churches.



Roy J. Hotchkiss (1877 - 1945)



A graduate of OPRF High School, Hotchkiss worked in E. E. Roberts' studio for 20 years before starting his solo practice. Among local landmarks he designed are the magnificent art deco Medical Arts Building at 715 Lake St. and Good Shepard Lutheran Church.

Leon E. Stanhope (1873 - 1956)

Although Stanhope never lived in Oak Park, the home on our walk that he designed is one of the most memorable in our village. Trained by famed Chicago architects Burnham & Root, Stanhope is best known for designing churches, libraries, banks, and other commercial buildings.



Your Legacy and Ours


by Nancy Lynn, OPRF Museum Board Member

There are many ways friends of the Historical Society support us with generous annual gifts—writing a check, making a stock gift, purchasing tickets to our spring Gala and other events. At the same time, quietly behind the scenes, there are those who have expressed their commitment to our mission by making a bequest. These gifts continue to ensure that the stories and events that have shaped our villages can be preserved and shared for years to come.

One friend of the Museum put it this way:

“I’ve been a Historical Society volunteer for years, and I was thrilled to witness its move from the top floor of the Pleasant Home to the Firehouse at 129 Lake Street in 2017. As a local history buff, telling the stories of our two villages and welcoming visitors to our Museum has enriched my life and deepened my connection to Oak Park.

“I also support the Society with gifts when I can. Then it dawned on me that I could do something more for the Historical Society in the future. Put a gift in my will. This way, I can support the Historical Society and our community, even when I am gone.”

A bequest is a simple, powerful gift, made now and fulfilled later, which will help sustain our Society and OPRF Museum for the future. Just ask your attorney or financial advisor to add a specific gift or other provisions to your will, including our legal name and address: The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest, P.O. Box 771, Oak Park, IL 60303-0771. And while you may choose to remain anonymous, we would love to thank you personally, so feel free to reach out to us to discuss your plans. 

Other Tax-Smart Ways You Can Support OPRF Museum

Here are a few ideas you may wish to consider that will not only help the Museum, but may reduce your tax burden, as well. As always, be sure to discuss these options with your financial advisor or attorney first.

★ Donate Appreciated Stock

Under the new tax laws in 2018, the donor of appreciated stock held for more than one year is


entitled to an income tax charitable deduction equal to the stock’s fair market value on the date of the donation, up to 30 percent of the donor’s adjusted gross income.

★ Use Your IRA

If you are 73 or older, you can make a gift directly from your IRA Required Minimum Distribution to The Historical Society without paying income taxes on the qualified charitable distribution. Check with your broker or IRA administrator for specific details to name the Historical Society as a full or partial recipient for your RMD.

★ Update Your Life Insurance

You may designate The Historical Society as a full or partial beneficiary of your policy and specify the percentage of the benefit you are donating. Alternatively, depending on your specific policy, you may be able to add a charitable giving rider to your policy and designate a specific donation amount.


Be sure to discuss these options with your financial adviser, attorney, and/or insurance agent before proceeding. 

May 23 at OPRF Museum: IRAs as a Giving Tool and Other Strategies

Now that the 2022 tax filing deadline has passed, it’s a good time for individuals and families to consider some strategies and new ideas that may reduce their tax burden for 2023. Don’t wait until April 2024 to think about your taxes!

Financial advisor Dwight Atchley, who is partner and has managed an Edward Jones Investments office in Oak Park since 2005, will share insights about retirement savings and estate planning strategies, at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday May 23 at OPRF Museum and will answer questions you may have, including using IRAs as a charitable giving tool.

Guests can come early at 7 p.m. to enjoy a glass of wine and dessert as Historical Society Executive Director Frank Lipo will “Show and Tell” stories about a few of his favorite artifacts and photos from the OPRF Museum collection.

Please RSVP to (708) 848-6755 by Friday May 19. 

ARPA Funds to Support Additional Staff, Revamped Website and New Elevator to Make Second Floor ADA Accessible

The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest will receive \$500,000 in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support a revamped website, staff development and capacity, and the addition of a new elevator at Oak Park River Forest Museum. All ARPA funding must be spent by Dec. 31, 2026, per requirements of the federal legislation, aimed at promoting post-pandemic economic recovery and expansion in the United States.

The Historical Society applied for the funding as a part of a public process set up by the Village of Oak Park board of trustees to encourage community-based not-for-profit organizations to receive a portion of the \$38.9 million in ARPA funds earmarked for the Village of Oak Park. Much of the funding has already been used by the Village of Oak Park to offset pandemic revenue losses and to reimburse unforeseen expenses such as vaccination clinics and other pandemic expenses. The village board is responsible for choosing how the funds are spent to equitably benefit village government priorities as well as a wide range of Oak Park residents and diverse community needs.

In a competitive process beginning in October, the Historical Society's proposal was reviewed by staff and the Community Development Citizens Advisory Committee, which ranked the proposal highly. The village board approved the agreement in February, with funding for new staff focused on community outreach and collaboration, a revamped and upgraded website to better serve the community, and an elevator addition including solar panels on its roof. Elevator planning was paused during the pandemic but is under way again, spurred by this funding.

The funding for the Historical Society was part of \$2.1 million in ARPA funding approved by the village board in February including \$1.3 million to the West Cook YMCA, \$200,000 for Wonder Works Children's Museum, \$100,000 for the North Avenue Business District, and nearly \$50,000 to New Moms.

Because of the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry, supporting organizations vital to local tourism was a priority in the federal legislation. In an earlier \$3.5 million allotment of ARPA funds authorized by the village board in 2022, The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park, Visit Oak Park, Unity Temple Restoration Foundation and the Oak Park Area Arts Council shared \$877,000. That same 2022 allotment also included \$525,000 for Hephzibah Children's Association, \$1.1 million for the Collaboration for Early Childhood, and \$1 million for the Park District of Oak Park.

The Historical Society of OPRF is an independent, 501(c)3 not-for-profit organized in 1968 that historically has received no funding toward its day-to-day operations from any government. A long-time tenant of the Park District of Oak Park at Pleasant Home in Mills

Park from 1970-2016, the Historical Society raised \$1 million in private funds to modernize and restore features of the 1898 former firehouse at Lake and Lombard owned by the Village of Oak Park, transforming a vacant building into its new museum and a new attraction in east central Oak Park. The 30-year lease agreement stipulates that no local tax dollars will be earmarked for the operation of OPRF Museum and requires the Historical Society to make a monthly payment toward future capital needs for the Oak Park Landmark. But since the second floor is not ADA accessible, the ARPA funding is intended to bring the taxpayer-owned building at 129 Lake Street into full compliance with ADA regulations and increase accessibility and equity for anyone who has physical challenges that prevent them from walking to the second floor. The Historical Society has budgeted \$375,000 of the ARPA funds for an elevator, about half the money necessary for a small elevator addition on the east side of OPRF Museum. ARPA funds must be used for these specific purposes and not for regular operating expenses.



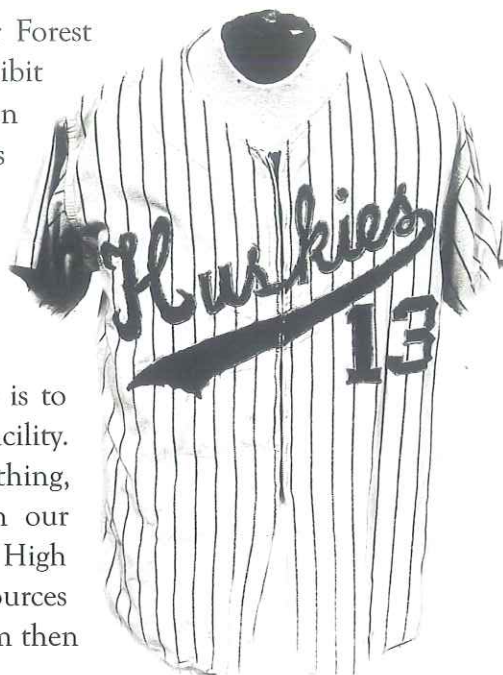
Share your Huskies Memorabilia with OPRF Museum.

As part of the 150th anniversary celebration of Oak Park and River Forest High School, OPRF Museum is hard at work planning a new featured exhibit entitled *Ever Changing, Yet the Same*. This exhibit will be unveiled on Thursday, September 21, kicking off OPRFHS Homecoming Weekend this fall.

OPRF Museum is participating in the community-wide process of planning and celebrating the roots of OPRF High School in 1873, when the first students began a high school course in the old Central School at Lake and Forest; the first three would graduate in 1877.

Part of OPRF Museum's commitment to celebrating the anniversary is to open a new exhibit for at least a two-year run on the first floor of our facility. We are drawing upon a wide range of documents, photos, clothing, memorabilia, etc. to tell these stories that we have been gathering in our collection for more than 50 years. And the 2021 transfer of the OPRF High School archives to OPRF Museum has opened up a wide range of other sources to help us shed light on a wide range of diverse and fascinating stories from then until now.

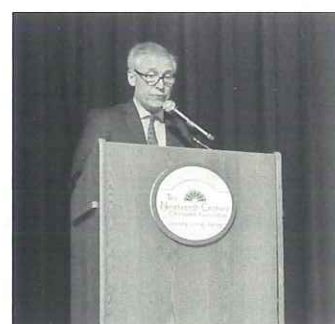
Do you have some object, photo, or other memorabilia that can help us shed insight into the Huskie experience? Email us a photo or call us to discuss items you might lend or donate. Ask for Rachel or Frank at 708-848-6755 or oprfhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net



1960s baseball uniform from OPRF High School, donated by Carole Ferguson, in memory of her late husband Tom Ferguson, long-time history teacher and later chair of the history division

Thank You for Making Our 4th OPRF Museum Gala a Success

A cold and rainy night outside could not dampen the spirits inside the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association ballroom where the fourth annual OPRF Museum Gala and Heart of Our Villages Award presentation was held on Thursday, March 9th, honoring Camille Wilson White of Oak Park and Jan Novak Dressel of River Forest for their decades of service to our communities. Thank you to all our members, guests, volunteers, and sponsors who made this event a grand success. If you were unable to attend, please enjoy a few photos from the event. We hope you'll be able to join us for next year's Gala in March 2024.



(Top, L. to R.) Camille Wilson White was presented the award by OPRF Museum President Peggy Tuck Sinko; Jan Novak Dressel accepted the award from Sinko; the ballroom of the 19th Century Charitable Association proved to be a warm and welcoming setting on a cold and rainy night; Museum Executive Director Frank Lipo served as Master of Ceremonies for the event.

(Bottom Left) The Jazz Combo of Oak Park and River Forest High School provided the perfect entertainment to accompany the evening's festivities.

A Sailor's Scrapbook

by Michael Guerin, OPRF Museum Volunteer

Through World War II, drafted sailor Ralph Whalen Manning, an Oak Park resident, kept a scrapbook of his experiences during the war in the South Pacific. Although sparse in its description of his service, perhaps due to censorship during the war, Manning and his wife documented those war years with photos, postcards, letters, telegrams, official communications, and memorabilia from throughout his service. The scrapbook, along with other sources, provide a peek into both the mundane and the dramatic aspects of one man's life in the harrowing years of World War II.

Manning, born in Washburn, WI, was living on Highland Avenue in Oak Park with his wife Ann and son Dennis when he was classified 1-A by the Selective Service on December 18, 1943. Soon after he was inducted into the U.S. Navy where he served for two years aboard the *U.S.S. Brown*, a Fletcher-class destroyer, in the Pacific through several of the major naval battles of the war.

Included in the scrapbook are 20 small pictures of the basic training Manning and his fellow recruits received at the Great Lakes Naval Station in North Chicago, Illinois, starting with "the typical American boy enters as a raw recruit" and concluding with a picture of the graduating sailors leaving the base by rail. The pictures illustrate the trainees' three-month curriculum of wrestling, lifeboat drills, using anti-aircraft guns and shooting dive bombers, working as a team, calisthenics, and swimming.

After a 10-day leave, the new sailors boarded a train for a seven-day cross country trip to San Diego. During the journey Manning diligently sent his son postcard packets of various locations along the way including desert scenes, the Rocky Mountains and Zion National Park. Although he wrote nothing on the packets, he also sent regular postcards with brief

messages to his wife: "Just saw some of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen, we're in the Rockies;" "Passing through Melford, NV- grass is green and weather is warm;" "Just saw the California oranges, it's hot."

After arriving in San Diego, Manning boarded a ship to Pearl Harbor on April 8, 1944. After arrival, he was assigned to the *U.S.S. Brown* as a Fireman 1st Class (F1c). During the ensuing months there were no cards or letters included in the scrapbook but it is clear from Naval sources that the *U.S.S. Brown* was heavily engaged in numerous Pacific raids and battles. Island hopping from late April to December, 1944, the *Brown* escorted U.S. aircraft carriers during the

assault and capture of Hollandia, New Guinea; the bombardment of Satawan; the raids at Truk, Marcus Island, Wake Island, Mindanao and Morotai; strikes in support of the assault on Saipan; the battle of the Philippine Sea, during which it rescued four American pilots; the bombardment of Iwo Jima; assaults on Guam and Tinian; supporting the capture of Southern Palau and Ulithi; raids against Luzon; raids on Okinawa, Formosa (now Taiwan), and the battle for Leyte Gulf.

But after all the engagements and battles Manning saw, the event that stayed with him the most had nothing to do with the war. Instead,

it was the weather. In a letter to his wife, he described his and the *Brown's* surviving Typhoon Cobra in mid-December 1944:

"No doubt you heard all about the storm we had out here. It started on a Friday night and lasted until Monday. It was by far the worst beating we ever had. Three destroyers and two destroyer escorts turned over. They convoyed some tankers out to us for refueling. We picked up 13 of the 52 survivors off the *Hull*, and the only 6 off the *U.S.S. Monahan*. Their bodies were just a mass of sores from getting knocked



F1c Ralph Whalen Manning

Manning Scrapbook (continued from page 6)

around before their ship turned over, and then they spent four days on a raft with the saltwater making it all the worse. Both rafts had eight or ten sharks swimming around it when we found them. The captain was firing at them with a Tommy gun, and the chief gunnery officer was using his automatic rifle, but it didn't do much good.

"Never in my life have I ever seen anything so bold. They would swim to the top and butt their nose on the raft or at anything that was floating. There were 15 men off the U.S.S. *Hull* when they started, two of them died, and 13 off the U.S.S. *Monahan*, and seven of them died, so you can imagine what condition the rest of them were in.

"I had one of the fellows off the *Hull* in my rack and he said he was in the aft engine room when she [the ship] took her fatal plunge. He managed to get out, but not before it was down about 40 feet, and he said his Mae West life jacket almost choked him to death. One fellow had the forearm of his right arm bit off. He made a pass at a shark's head with a knife and missed, and before he could get his arm out of the water it hit him.

"Sunday was the worst day of all. I put a life jacket on and went topside. I used the escape hatch to get there and despite the driving rain and terrific wind I managed to hang on to a hand railing on the clipping (sic) room. We were expecting it [the ship to capsize] to happen any minute. I didn't want to go that way. I stayed there all afternoon, and when it looked like it was starting to break I went below. I was frozen stiff, and my hands and arms were about paralyzed from hanging on. None of the men got panicky, but then we didn't miss it by far. When it was all over with the fellows told me that those sleeping up forward made a dozen breaks to get topside. We had to keep it headed into the wind, and there were times when it felt like it wasn't coming up after plunging the bow into a good one.

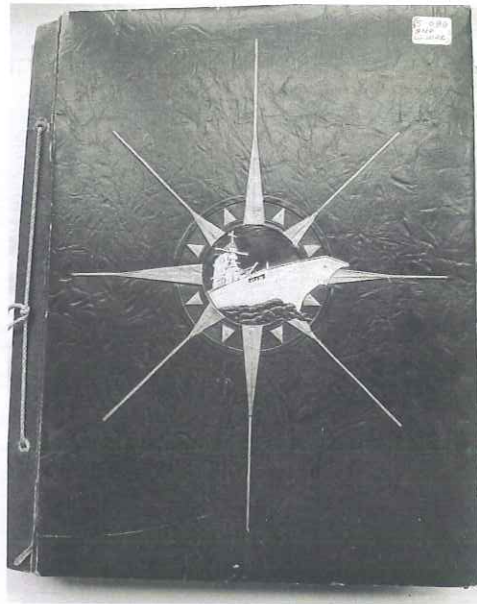
"I know now what it feels like to look up in the air and see the top of a wave."

Typhoon Cobra sunk three destroyers, killed 790 sailors, damaged nine additional warships and swept dozens of aircraft overboard off their aircraft carriers.

While accounts of his other experiences are not in the scrapbook, he did include several artifacts during his time in the Pacific—a set of red chopsticks; a postcard showing a ship bordered by a cave; a card with Japanese writing showing dwellings; and a unique folding postcard with images of Japan in black and white. There are also four photos of damaged or destroyed buildings, a physician examining a native while surrounded by children, and children and adults bathing from buckets of water in a paved circular space. All the pictures appear to have been taken on the island of Saipan. One particular artifact, a chunk of aircraft metal, is included in the scrapbook. Though not readily identifiable, some have suggested it is a piece from a kamikaze airplane attack.

Following the typhoon, the U.S.S. *Brown* was ordered to Seattle, WA for overhaul, where it arrived in mid-January. The work was completed on March 1, 1945, and the ship, without Manning, returned to the Pacific where it was engaged in the massive battle for Okinawa, which lasted nearly three months and took the lives of thousands of American and Japanese soldiers and sailors as well as inhabitants of the island.

While Manning missed the Okinawa invasion, the scrapbook includes a lengthy and detailed account



Ralph Manning's scrapbook survived 80 years before finding a home at OPRF Museum



U.S.S. Brown off San Pedro, California, July 24, 1943

(Continued on page 8)

of the battle, presumably, by one of Manning's shipmates. Titled *The Story of the U.S.S. Brown*, it was written in all capital letters and mimeographed for distribution. In its introduction, the author states "It is a story...of a radar picket destroyer that took almost everything the [Japanese] air force had to hand out at Okinawa and lived to tell the tale unhurt, proud of her job, boasting of 12 new enemy flags under the stenciled [Japanese] plane on her bridge."

The *Brown* was equipped with trained personnel and special equipment to give early warning of incoming enemy planes. As such it was no longer receiving protection from aircraft carriers and was alone in the seas surrounding the island. It was subject to numerous enemy fighter plane and kamikaze attacks. The story concludes with the following: "During the *Brown's* activity as a radar picket ship she had taken 30 planes under fire, she had been under close attack by suicide, torpedo, and dive bombers many times. She had shot down 17 enemy planes and assisted in shooting down five others. Three suiciders had missed her close aboard. Throughout the entire period of this duty, the *Brown* remained undamaged. The officers and men think she is a mighty lucky ship indeed."

Although it is not clear why Manning stayed behind when the *Brown* sailed for Okinawa, a May 1945 shipping tag in the scrapbook may hold a clue; it indicates he was suffering from acute subscapular bursitis, a very painful shoulder condition that affects the fluid-filled sacs that cushion bones, tendons and muscles near one's joints. Other documents such as a change of address form and a November shipment of his possessions from San Diego to Oak Park suggest he finished his naval service in Seattle and San Diego and returned to Oak Park in December 1945.

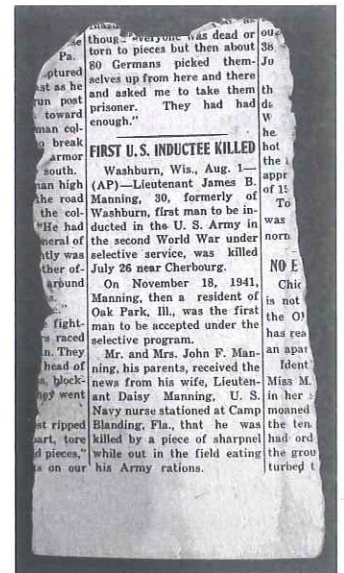
There is a final item in the scrapbook— a small obituary of 30-year-old Lt. James B. Manning who was killed on July 26, 1944, near Cherbourg, France. James was Ralph Manning's younger brother. He was also the first American inducted into the U.S. Army in 1940 under the Selective Service Act. With the obituary is a handwritten copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to Navy Lt. Daisy Manning, James' wife, informing her that her husband had been posthumously awarded the Silver Star. It appears the handwritten letter was copied by Daisy Manning and sent to her sister-in-law Ann.

Ralph and Ann Manning left Oak Park in the 1970's and moved to McHenry County. When Manning retired from his career in the hardware business they moved to Glendale, Arizona. Ann Manning died there on December 28, 1994, and Ralph died 4 days later on January 1, 1995.



(above) Lt. James B. Manning, brother of Ralph Manning.

(below) Lt. Manning's obituary, distributed by Associated Press. (Note the typo in the second paragraph. James entered the army on November 18, 1940, not 1941.)



We are able to share this story with you only because Ralph Manning's scrapbook survived not just World War II, but almost eight decades after the war before it found a home at OPRF Museum. Edward L. Cargill of Addison, IL, purchased the scrapbook several years ago at a garage sale in McHenry, IL, where the Mannings had lived after leaving Oak Park. Moved by the very personal story it told of a critical period in our history, he also recognized its value in a broader historical context. He realized that it belonged in an institution where it would be preserved and would be available to researchers and other members of the general public. Last December Mr. Cargill donated the scrapbook to our Museum because of its connection to the Manning family of Oak Park.

If you have an artifact that you no longer wish to keep, please seriously consider donating it to an appropriate museum, library, or research facility where it will be preserved and be available for others to view and appreciate in the future.

The Girls' Club

by Anna Miller, Oak Park & River Forest High School Student and Museum Volunteer

For the last several months, I have spent my Saturday afternoons at the Historical Society. I still consider myself a new volunteer so needless to say the idea of writing an article for the Spring issue of *History Matters* seemed daunting. I was first introduced to OPRF Museum through my AP United States History class, which made it possible for the participating students to visit the Museum on one of the gloriously free days following the AP test in 2022. I fell in love with the museum, and knew I wanted to get involved with whatever historical magic was taking place. One of my projects recently has been to research the Girls' Club at Oak Park River Forest High School, using a 1920s and '30s era record book kept by the various secretaries of the club over the years. This was a fascinating project which I'm incredibly fortunate to share, and so without further ado, I present to you the OPRFHS Girls' Club.

Initially created in 1916, The Girls' Club is technically the longest running club at the high school, as well as for a time, the largest such club since it counted all girls at the school as members whether they attended meetings or not. A flyer from 1929 claims the goal of the club is to "set standards of good taste in conduct and dress, to promote a friendly spirit, and to support worthwhile school activities." Throughout the years members organized a variety of school events such as the annual football dance, various plays and performances, conferences with other schools, and the annual "Mothers' Meeting" at the end of the year.

The Girls' Club also emphasized service such as its support of the Christmas stocking drive, which entailed the creation and filling of several hundred Christmas stockings to be given to Oak Park children. The club also made a donation to organizations when members determined there was a need for "more practical things." Year-round the club additionally raised funds for a number of local organizations and programs such as the Chicago Commons and a scholarship fund administered by the school. And each week during World War II, The Girls' Club was responsible for raising money to supply the Chicago Servicemen's Center with baked goods.



Girls Club of Oak Park and River Forest High School, circa 1923

In the spring of 1976 following the passage of Title IX, which forbid sex-based discrimination in educational programs that receive federal financial assistance (including public schools), The Girls' Club was renamed "Tau Gamma," which according to the 1977 *Tabula* means "The Club." While the name of the club changed, the commitment to service remains consistent, and today Tau Gamma still plays an active role in the school and community by running a number of charity drives and volunteer events at local organizations.

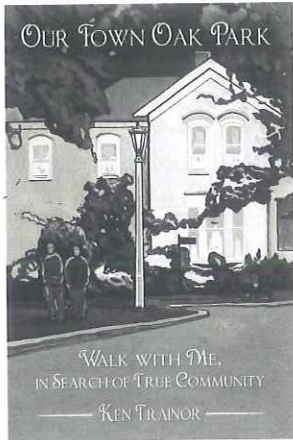
While originally Title IX may have been passed with the intention of stopping discrimination against students identifying as either male or female, I believe that its effect on this club has opened the doors for students of any gender identity to join, making it a space in which everyone can feel welcome to work with others to make a positive and lasting impact on our community.



Coming Events from Oak Park River Forest Museum


Friday, May 12, 6:30 p.m.

Journalist Ken Trainor Reads "Love Letters" to Oak Park



Welcome to *Our Town Oak Park*, Ken Trainor's new book featuring tales from his 30 years chronicling a dynamic, ever-evolving village like no other, and yet like all others; a place where the unique meets the universal. Based on columns he wrote for *Wednesday Journal*, Trainor shows that everyone has a story and everyone's story is

worth telling. Sketching who we are and finding true community, he captures life in one middle-sized, middle-class, Midwest town at the beginning of the 21st century.


Join us at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, May 12, at OPRF Museum for the launch of *Our Town Oak Park*. Ken Trainor will read selections from his book and take questions from the audience. Autographed copies of his book will be available for purchase. This event is free to all. 

Saturday, May 13, 10 a.m.

2023 Walking Tours Begin with Gunderson Historic District Walk

Learn the history of the American Foursquare home and hear stories of some of the early residents of this landmark residential development as we stroll through the beautiful Gunderson Historic District. The tour begins from the south side of the Longfellow Park Field House, Ridgeland Avenue at Adams Street.

Tickets are \$10 for Museum members (\$14 for non-members) and must be purchased in advance at oprfmuseum.org/store or by calling (708) 848-6755. Space is limited to 20 guests.

Watch for an announcement of our full 2023 schedule of neighborhood walks on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month, coming soon. 


Thursday, May 18, 7 p.m.

Cruising Madison Street: Oak Park's Motor Row

For much of the 20th century, Madison Street in Oak Park was a premier destination for car buyers, attracting customers from not only our local communities, but also Chicago and the western suburbs. Peggy and Kenn Sinko will share stories of this important commercial strip where one could not only purchase an automobile, but also find all the supporting services needed to maintain it.



They will explore how and why Motor Row developed, share stories of some of the buildings, dealerships, and key figures-- including a dentist turned car dealer. Early automobile promotions were often creative and zany, and the Sinkos will relate efforts involving a movie star, a limerick contest, and a race to Moline with an airplane, a train, and a Packard.

This event is free to Museum members. Regular admission rates apply for the general public. 


Thursday, May 25, 7 p.m.

Thursday, June 29, 7 p.m.

History Book Club Announces May & June Selections & Dates

Our History Book Club, led by writer, teacher, and librarian Doug Deuchler, will discuss two nonfiction selections about Chicago's two World's Fairs. On May 25 the discussion will be about *Broken Icarus: The 1933 Chicago World's Fair, the Golden Age of Aviation, and the Rise of Fascism* by David Hanna.

On June 29 we will discuss *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson, a true tale of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and the serial killer who used the fair's magic and majesty to lure his victims.

Space is limited. To reserve your place please email us at oprphistorymatters@sbcglobal.net or phone (708) 848-6755. 

(Continued on page 11)

Saturday, June 10, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

OPRF Museum & Oak Park Vintage Car Club Team Up for 2nd Annual Vintage Car Show

Come see dozens of beautiful and rare vintage automobiles on display on the streets around OPRF Museum when we present our second annual Vintage Car Show, co-sponsored by the Oak Park Vintage Auto Club and OPRF Museum.



One of the dozens of vintage cars displayed at last year's event.

This family-friendly event is free to everyone and our Museum will also be open with free admission for all during the show.

Sunday, June 25, 3 p.m.

Chicago's Place in the History of Country Music & the Folk Revival

In *Country and Midwestern*, veteran journalist Mark Guarino tells the epic story of Chicago's influence on sounds typically associated with regions further south. Guarino reveals a forgotten history of music, migration, and rural culture infiltrating urban communities through radio, the automobile, and the railroad. The Midwest's biggest city was the place where rural transplants could reinvent themselves and shape their music for the new commercial possibilities the city offered.



Oak Park native Mark Guarino covers national news and culture from Chicago for the *Washington Post*, *ABC News*, *New York Times*, and other outlets.

This event is free to Museum members. Regular admission rates apply for general public. Autographed copies of his book will be available for purchase.

Sunday, July 9, 3 p.m.

More Than a Color: The Marginalization of African Beauty Through History

This presentation examines how women of African descent have been seen in society, art, history, and modern media. Karen J. Anderson will speak about women of color in 1760 French America who learned how to free themselves from slavery only to be bound by draconian laws; women like Sarah Baartman who had to choose between being a circus oddity or a slave; women like Sarah Breedlove and Ann Malone who changed the way women of African descent saw themselves and redefined beauty.



Karen J. Anderson

Karen J. Anderson is an artist, writer, photographer, publisher, and filmmaker. Her desire is to share the history of women of African descent in hopes that these communities will become less marginalized.

The program will last approximately 45 minutes, followed by a question and answer period. This event is made possible by the Road Scholars Speaker Bureau of Illinois Humanities and is free to all.

History Matters

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Bode's AUTO STATION
6025 Lake Street
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William C. Bode's Auto Station, catering to electric cars and their owners, was at the corner of Lake Street and Humphrey Avenue. Part of that building now houses Bump City Auto Body, Inc.

Everything Old Is New Again: Electric Car Charging, 1913

Every day, more all-electric vehicles are on the road. Teslas, Chevy Bolts, Nissan Leafs, Hyundai Ioniqs, Ford Mustangs, and many others are making significant inroads in today's automotive marketplace. What was a notable curiosity just a few years ago has become so commonplace that we no longer comment-- or even notice-- when an all-electric car pulls up next to us, and many of us now drive all-electric vehicles ourselves.

But this isn't the first time that all-electric automobiles were a common sight on the streets of River Forest and Oak Park. Over a century ago, at the dawn of the automobile age, electric cars captured a large share of the marketplace because they were quieter, cleaner, and easier to maintain than internal combustion powered cars of the time. By 1910, 30% of all motorized vehicles on the road were electric powered. They were so popular in our community that auto mechanic William C. Bode, opened Bode's Auto Station where, for "the very reasonable terms of \$1.33 1/3 a day" Bode would not just keep your electric car running; he would pick it up from your home in the evening, service it, wash it, charge the battery overnight, and return it to your home in the morning!

The popularity of electric cars faded quickly in the 1910s because of their limited range, lower weight capacity, the lengthy time it took to recharge, and the lower initial cost of mass produced internal combustion vehicles. But today, improvements in battery technology, rapid charging capability, computer-controlled power management, and dramatically improved range have once again made electric automobiles a practical, cost-effective alternative to gasoline powered vehicles and a way to combat climate change, as well. Now, if we just could find a place that would maintain them for \$1.33 1/3 per day!