



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Dundee Township Historical Society

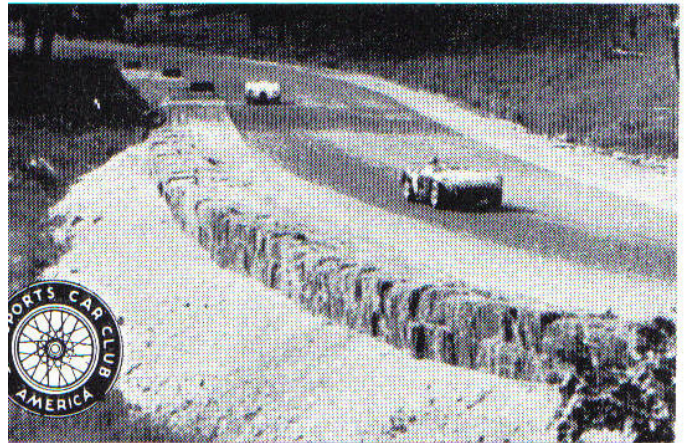
March 2008

## 2008 SEASON OPENING DAY

The museum will open on March 9 at 2:00 p.m. with a special presentation by Meadowdale Raceway historian Bill Pohnan. Mr. Pohnan grew up in Carpentersville and, at the age of 9, attended opening day at the raceway. As an adult he walked the old race track, now "Raceway Woods", and realized that this was the same track he visited with his father in 1958. Since that nostalgic walk Mr. Pohnan has done extensive research and has a book in the works. He will share his memories and information he has found in his research with visitors to the museum. If you have any memories or stories regarding the "raceway" we invite you attend this program and share your memories with us. There is no admission fee. Donations are appreciated.

(You can learn more about the raceway on pages 158 - 159 in our history book, *Dundee Township 1835 - 1985*.)

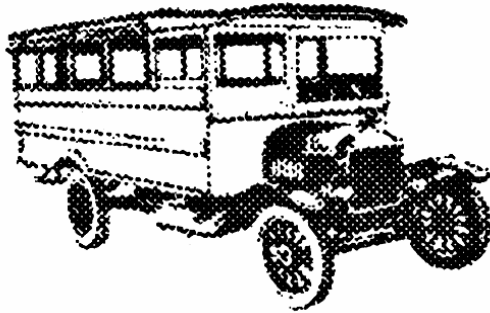
Meadowdale Raceway opened on September 13, 1958 to a crowd of nearly 200,000. The racing fans who attended the grand opening were confronted with traffic jams and dust. Aside from fulfilling the dream of a race car enthusiast it was Leonard Besinger's hope that the raceway would attract people from the city to his growing housing development.



On March 1, 1953, the Chicago Tribune reported the following; "A multimillion dollar residential-shopping-industrial development, eventually to house more than 15,000 people, will be built in the Fox River Valley, it was learned yesterday. It will be one of the largest projects of its kind ever planned for the Chicago metropolitan area." A map showed the target area for this development to be Carpentersville.

Leonard W. Besinger owned a "Gentleman's farm" just north of Carpentersville where he bred hackney show ponies. It was there that a new history began. Today the population of Carpentersville exceeds 35,000.

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Meadowdale Raceway, the museum will feature an exhibit of raceway memorabilia. Other exhibits will include The Streetcar, Triangular Central Park of Carpentersville and beautiful art work by Francis Sutfin, one of our earlier residents.



## HISTORIC BUS TOUR

The theme of the April bus tour on April 20th will be Riding the Streetcar.

The streetcar carried people to Elgin and back from a time before the turn of the last century until the early 1930s. Who were those people and where were they going? When and why did the street car stop running? Attend the historic bus tour and meet with some of the folks who traveled back and forth on a regular basis. Hear their stories as well as a history of this once vital means of transportation. Tickets will be available at Family Pride Cleaners after the 1st of April and at the museum the day of the event at a cost of \$5.00. Tours will be at 1:00 and 2:30.

For more information call 847-428-6996.

---

## ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Following a brief business meeting there will be a special presentation by guest speaker Craig Pfannkuche entitled "Digging Up Gramma's Privy".

Believe it or not, there are treasures to be found in the deep recesses of the old out house. The program is open to the public. There is no admission fee.

When memory keeps me company  
and moves to smiles and tears,  
A weather beaten object looms  
through the mist of years.  
Behind the house and barn it stood,  
a half a mile or more,  
And hurrying feet a path had made  
straight to its swinging door.\*



\*Taken from "The Passing of the Backhouse"  
by James Whitcomb Riley



## ORAL HISTORY

The goal of the recently organized oral history committee is to interview township residents in an effort to preserve the memories and family histories of the people who have long range ties to the community. These interviews will be added to the museum archives and will play an important roll in preserving our history.

Members of the committee recently interviewed Evangeline Sharp. "Vangie", who is a wealth of information, was born and raised in Carpentersville, attended the local schools, and worked at Joseph Spiess department store in Elgin until her marriage to Clyde Sharp. Together they opened The Sharp Funeral home in West Dundee.

This year "Vangie" celebrates her 96th birthday.



Evangeline Bremer Sharp 1929

---

## HISTORIC HOUSE WALK

This is the year for the Historic House Walk which is always held the 3rd Saturday of September. A committee has not yet been organized as we are in need of someone to chair the event. If you know of a home that may be of interest or are looking forward to helping organize or work at the event call the museum at 847-428-6996. The house walk is the major fund raiser for the society and the funds from the event help to keep the museum functioning.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Albert and Mary (Starr) Beelow of Carpentersville recently donated some family items which will be a fine additional to the museum archives. Included are photos of the Starr family and the Carpentersville area, a stereopticon with pictures, 1878 Kane County History book and local memorabilia.

Tim Loversky, principal at Lakewood Elementary in Carpentersville, found an old drum stored away at the school. It turned out to be from the town municipal band of years ago.

These are things that make a museum. Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Beelow, Mr. Loversky, and all who think to donate items to the museum rather than discard them.



Volunteering is a job that takes commitment, flexibility, dedication, conscientiousness, and team work. It is a job that offers no health insurance or even a pay check. So why volunteer?

In England during the 1700s, men who came together to form a fraternal group from which they could benefit socially, enjoy fellowship and help those in need were thought to be odd. This was in fact the beginning of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. It was odd to do a kindness without expecting something in return. If that is so odd, why do they still exist almost 300 years later? Did you know our local lodge in Old Carpentersville, Century Lodge 492, has been in existence over 100 years? That's a lot of fellowship and volunteering.

The Dundee Lions Club was chartered in 1937 and the Carpentersville Lions Club in 1959. Members enjoy social events, camaraderie and work to raise money to provide eye exams and eyeglasses to needy residents who cannot afford them. Work? Yes, sometimes volunteering takes work to raise funds needed to help others. Even in addition to a 40-hour work week, members strive to combat blindness during their free time.

When the Girl Scouts began in 1912, its founder asked her cousin to volunteer and the rest is history. Many of us have either been a troop leader, helped chaperone a troop trip, been a girl scout or had a daughter, sister, or friend who was in Girl Scouts. The Sybaquay Council that serves our area has been in existence for 50 years, with the help of volunteers. The Boy Scouts of America and our area's Three Fires Council also have volunteers to help our nation's future adults reach their potential. Was your Scoutmaster a volunteer?

Our own historical society is run by volunteers. It takes work to make sure our building is in good repair, clean and has someone to open the door to visitors. Sometimes it takes elbow grease but mostly it takes an interest in preserving history. If we did not know what happened before us, we would not know why we are who we are. Our society was formed by volunteers in 1964. We are a young organization. We should have energy and vitality and eagerness to share things with others. We should be able to work to make sure our society and our museum serve the people who are eager to learn, without looking at it as work.

Take some time this season to volunteer for our society. There are many different ways to do so. A couple hours a week, a month, or a couple of hours once or twice a year is well worth the investment. We can feed on the excitement of learning the how and why of our ancestors and former residents and what molded them that in turn molded us.

When the door of our museum opens, it is just like opening a history book. Help tell the story to those who haven't heard. You may learn something you did not know before about the people and villages that make up Dundee Township.

Thank you.

*Kristie Benedik*  
*President 2007/2008*  
*(847) 428-0932*  
*kbenedik@sbcglobal.net*



## **MEET YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Our Board of Directors is responsible for carrying out the objective goal of the Dundee Township Historical Society which is to inspire appreciation in our rich local heritage by encouraging understanding and preservation of the history of our township.

### *EINAR GRAFF*

Einar and his wife Lene joined the Dundee Township Historical Society soon after they moved to East Dundee in 1997 to learn the history of their new community. Soon thereafter they both became docents for the museum.

Einar became a board member in 2001 and continues to be a docent greeting visitors to the museum.

### *COLETTE McDONOUGH*

Attending a class on chair caning was Colette's first exposure to the Dundee Township Historical Society. She has been a Board Member since 1989 and was elected Secretary shortly thereafter and continues in that capacity to this day.

Assisting with programs as varied as Americana Days, the Cemetery Walk, Collector's Day, and Housewalk has kept her integrally involved with the Society year in and year out.

Receiving a plaque from the Historic Sites Committee for a previous residence, an 1892 Victorian, after many years of research and renovation still remains an accomplishment of which she, and her husband Dave, are particularly proud.

### *GENE LAMP*

In the spring of 1987, Gene received an invitation to a board meeting to see if he would be interested in being a board member. He agreed to join and at the Annual Meeting, he was elected treasurer. He replaced Vangie Sharp.

As a history major in college, he was interested in local history, but until then didn't have time to pursue it. Through the years he has enjoyed portraying various local residents. There have been many fascinating and outstanding people in our villages.

Gene feels that one of the strengths of the Historical Society is the programs we do for schools, both at the museum and in the individual schools. Recently he portrayed Angelo Carpenter at Perry Elementary School. Marge Edwards and I were Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter at Dundee-Crown High School. He was really pleased when several of the students recognized Mr. Carpenter. He also says that our exhibits are another strong feature of our organizations.



## HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

The new heating system is up and running. There is still work to be done as finances will allow. The air conditioning will make the summer museum hours much more comfortable for our volunteers and visitors.

A number of monetary donations and volunteer labor have made the new system possible and we are eternally grateful for the financial assistance and volunteer hours from those in our community who came to the rescue.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you have a few hours a month to volunteer at the museum ? The museum is open Sundays and Wednesdays from 2 - 4 p.m. There is a need for docents during those times. It is an opportunity to learn local history and share that knowledge with visitors. There is also a need for volunteers in the research library. There are obituaries, newspaper clippings, pictures and family histories to be filed as well as research assistance for visitors and phone and mail correspondence.

Please call the museum at 847-428-6996 if you have a few hours to volunteer on either of those days. Leave a message and someone will return your call.

We take this opportunity to thank those who have spent countless volunteer hours at the museum. Volunteers are an integral part of the workings of a museum. Thanks to our docents, library volunteers, display builders, construction workers and others who have helped to keep our doors open.

The compensation is little, but the rewards are many.

## HISTORY QUIZ

1. What native tribe populated the Fox Valley before the settlers came ?
2. Who were the first permanent white settlers in the place to become Dundee ?
3. Allen Pinkerton set up shop at 3rd and Main streets. What was made there ?
4. What was the nickname of the area in East Dundee that was populated mostly by German immigrants ?
5. Who was Dundee's most prolific photographer ?
6. Who built the R.L.B. opera house ?
7. What was made at Haeger's Pottery before art pottery?
8. Where was the first post office in the Dundees ?
9. Who owned a tavern at Main and 4th streets at the time of the Civil War ?

## THANK YOU

Thank you to the following for their monetary and in kind donations toward the heating system project that began in Fall 2006:

Kane County  
Village of Sleepy Hollow

10. What "romance" writer is the source of much of the historic information found in the museum archives ?

The answers to these questions can be found on the following pages of our history book:

*DUNDEE TOWNSHIP 1835 - 1985.*

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. pg. 7 - 12  | 6. pg. 92   |
| 2. pg. 33      | 7. pg 89    |
| 3. pg. 83 - 84 | 8. pg 30    |
| 4. pg. 89      | 9. pg 16    |
| 5. pg.116      | 10. pg. iii |

If you do not have a copy of this book it is available at the museum at a cost of \$20.00.

Proceeds benefit the historical society museum.





## Welcome New Members

Audrey Falese  
Jack Festen  
Carol Shedden Silvermann  
Mark & Kathleen McWhouter

## IMPORTANT DATES

<b>March</b> 9	Opening Day Presentation on Meadowdale Raceway
<b>April</b> 20	Riding the Streetcar
<b>May</b> 4	Annual Meeting and Program Digging up Grandma's Privy

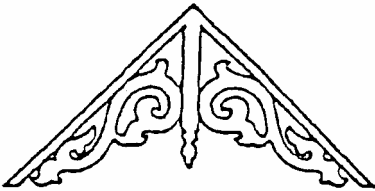
## Dundee Township Historical Society

**Kristie Benedik**  
President  
**Marge Edwards**  
President Elect  
**Colette McDonough**  
Secretary  
**Gene Lamp**  
Treasurer  
**Dave Culligan**  
Past President

**Faye Williams, Greg Ryant,  
Marge Edwards, Einar Graff,  
Jack Wendt, Sue Roeser, Cindy Gorski**  
Board of Directors

### Committees:

<b>Newsletter</b>	Marge Edwards Kristie Benedik
<b>Historic Sites Library Museum</b>	Jack Wendt Jack & Nancy Wendt
<b>Membership Docents</b>	Faye Williams Jack & Nancy Wendt
<b>Buildings &amp; Grounds Programs</b>	Jack Wendt Marge Edwards



Dundee Township  
Historical Society  
426 Highland Ave.  
West Dundee IL 60118