Calendar of Events

April
April 6
Free History Program (p.5)

May
May 17
Society Annual Meeting & Luncheon (p. 6)

June
June 7
Ray Bradbury’s Dandelion Wine Fine Arts Festival
June 22
Tour of Homes
June 29
Waukegan’s American Independence Day Parade & Festival

History Down the Road: Why Local Historical Societies Should Be the Next Frontier for Your Classroom

Josh Bill

In the few months since I wrote this article, I have realized that in addition to the Waukegan Historical Society, I also owe much of my success in studying local history to my work through Linking Learning Communities at Lake Forest College. I know that several members of this wonderful cohort are also members of the society. Truly, without your help, none of my success with local history (and otherwise) would be possible. Before an excerpt from this publication was put into this newsletter, I wanted to fix this oversight.

My high school teaching job in Waukegan was supposed to be temporary: I pessimistically thought I couldn’t possibly be happy in an economically blighted city where gang violence and drug busts dominated local newspaper headlines. Because of its location halfway between Milwaukee and Chicago, Waukegan is often either entirely overlooked or scrutinized only for its warts… The Waukegan Historical Society’s archives transformed my vision of Waukegan and my career. Additionally, it allowed my students to find an authentic voice, teaching them to think analytically about the legacy and people of their community while sharing fresh interpretations with a proud public. Not least of all, it allowed them to think of themselves as historians.

Every year, I watch students who seem passionless and disengaged spring to life as they research Waukegan’s history through their work on the Chicago Metro History Fair. After some initial hesitation in response to the enormity of the project (it begins in late fall and spans at least through the
winter, or further if they advance in the competition), students are liberated by the open-ended nature of the task and become enthralled by the stories that too often have lain dormant in the society’s files.

Once they are at the society, students will come to life as they see pictures of or read about their neighborhoods. Several students have explored civil rights issues, including an exhibit on how race riots in Waukegan demonstrated the division between violent and nonviolent approaches to America’s civil rights movement and a documentary on the legal battle to end de facto segregation in Waukegan elementary schools. The stories of the different immigrant groups that came to work in Waukegan factories throughout the 20th century have proven popular with Waukegan High School’s first-generation Latino immigrants, who empathize with the struggles for acceptance and learn from the strategies earlier groups used to overcome the strife that is endemic to being new to America. In these stories, students discover disheartening accounts of inhumanity, but the stories also reveal the courage of those who set out to change systems of injustice.

Student enthusiasm for undertaking a local history project does not come magically; I spend significant hours ensuring that students’ personal journeys to becoming historians are successful. Every year, in the late summer and fall, I reassume the role of a scholar, burying myself in the resources held in the Waukegan Historical Society. This essential step ensures that I stay acquainted with the rewards and pitfalls fundamental to primary source analysis—from the exhilaration of hunting for details about an intriguing subject to the confusion and bewilderment of hitting a wall. It’s vital that teachers experience these moments so they can teach problem solving and coping strategies. In order to teach our students to be historians, we must stay engaged with the art of historical detection ourselves.

Free Historical Program
A History of Waukegan Township
Sunday, April 6
2:00 PM
Jane Addams Center, 95 Jack Benny Drive in Bowen Park

Al Westerman, local historian and Waukegan Historical Society Life Member, will present a program that highlights his newly published book A History of Waukegan Township, Lake County, Illinois (1835-1850).

From the Research Library
Metro History Fair Update
Josh Bill

Each year, the Chicago Metro History Fair provides an opportunity for students in the Chicago area to complete a local history project. Thanks to an ever-growing partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society, most of our students are able to do so. Each winter, the Society’s Raymond Research Library opens its doors to Waukegan High School students, and the results have been phenomenal.

We have had five Waukegan-based projects in the last four years advance to the National History Day competition in Washington, D.C. This year, Waukegan High School is proud to announce that six Waukegan projects are moving on from the Chicago-area to the state-wide competition.

In addition, each year projects are judged locally by a panel selected by the Society and a $500 prize is awarded to the most outstanding project. The winner will be announced at our May meeting.
Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Saturday, May 17
1:00 PM
Bonnie Brook Club House
2800 N. Lewis Avenue
Waukegan

Mark your calendar for the Waukegan Historical Society’s Annual Meeting. This year the Society will be hosting its members with a light luncheon to be followed by the President’s Annual Report, Board Elections, presentations by the Waukegan High School Metro Fair winner and a look to the future. Details to follow in April.

Preservation Corner

The iconic Waukegan Carnegie Library was recently placed on the prestigious National Register of Historic Places. Waukegan native, Hector Bryan Escobar, chose the structure to fulfill a classroom requirement while studying as a graduate student at Loyola University. Bryan went above and beyond his assignment and he submitted the application for official review. Bryan first made a case for the Carnegie with the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and with their approval, paperwork was forwarded on to the National Park Service. The Carnegie Library was officially named to the National Register on December, 31, 2013.

Congratulations Beverly!

Our research librarian, Beverly Millard was honored recently by Beta Sigma Phi, a member organization of the Lake County Women’s Coalition at the coalition’s annual brunch celebrating Women’s History month. Each year at the brunch, nominees from the member organizations are honored. Beverly was recognized for her faithful and continuing commitment to our research efforts for the past 25 years. This year’s theme was “Women of Character, Courage & Commitment.” Beverly is a prime example of that theme.

Museum Supervisor’s Report

Ty Rohrer

The next few months will be busy as we finish out the school year working with teachers and students while at the same time gearing up for our summer events and activities. We are looking forward to wrapping up our education outreach programs and hosting the students at the Waukegan History Museum during end of the year field trips as well as talking the kids around Waukegan on guided bus/walking history tours.

There will be new exhibits opening at the Museum in the following months. Opening in April is the exhibit History of the Lake County Courthouse. Opening summer 2014 is a photography exhibit titled Waukegan: Then & Now. The last showing of the exhibit Back to School will be Saturday, June 7, 2014 during the Waukegan Park District’s Ray Bradbury’s Dandelion Wine Fine Arts Festival.

Please keep the Museum in mind as you do your “spring cleaning.” If you have a question about something that you would like to possibly donate, please do not hesitate to give us a call.

To learn more about what is happening at the Waukegan History Museum, like us on Facebook. If you are interested in history related events occurring throughout Lake County like “Northeast Historical Happenings” on Facebook.
Historically Speaking

George Kirke Spoor

Ed Link

Born in Highland Park December 18, 1871 George moved with his family to Waukegan within two years. One of 11 children he was the son of Marvin Spoor, a Civil War veteran. George attended Central School.

As a young adult George worked for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad in Chicago and was a co-manager of the Phoenix Opera House in Waukegan. He became acquainted with Edward Amet and the magniscope, a movie projector. Here the story gets a bit murky. In a May 10, 1944 speech to the Waukegan-North Chicago Chamber of Commerce, Spoor stated that Amet “was building a machine for projecting motion pictures” but needed money to finish. Spoor supplied $25 and went into partnership with Amet. Throughout his lifetime the story shifted in Spoor’s favor. George’s obituaries in sources like the Chicago Tribune, Variety and a Hollywood paper credited him with inventing or producing the first projector.

Amet disputed that view. In an undated letter purportedly written by him, Amet stated “Our Company (the Electrical Advertising Company) had sold more than 250 machines before I ever met Mr. George K. Spoor. He had nothing to do with the conception or development of my Magni-Scope motion picture machine.”

After a few years of producing and selling projectors the paths of the two men diverged. Amet went onto other interests while Spoor stayed in the entertainment business. George operated the National Film Renting Bureau.

In 1907 he and actor Gilbert Anderson formed Essanay (S for Spoor, A for Anderson) Studios in Chicago. At their location on Argyle Street they produced hundreds of films featuring major stars of the silent movie era, including, for a time, Charlie Chaplin. Anderson set up a studio in Niles, California and made numerous Bronco Billy westerns, starring himself.

The partnership ended in 1916 when Anderson pulled out and Spoor remained as the sole owner. Soon, however, the lure of Hollywood and Chicago weather ended Essanay Studios as a movie producer.

In January, 1915 George bought the property at the northwest corner of Genesee and Clayton Streets and began building the Academy Theater. The name was carried over from the Waukegan Academy which operated at the site the previous century. The theater, the first built in Waukegan for the showing of motion pictures, opened June 10, 1916 with Walter Spoor, George’s brother, as manager. The Spoor family continued to operate the Academy until it was taken over by Great States about the time of the Genesee’s opening.

George invested much time and money in developing Natural Vision, a precursor of 3D movies. He had a public demonstration in 1930 and showed it at Chicago’s Century of Progress in 1933. Although acclaimed the approach never caught on due to technical difficulties and cost. It would be another two decades before 3D movies were popularly produced.

At the 1947 Academy Awards George was one of four men given a special award for being film pioneers. He died November 24, 1953.
Recent Donations

Nancy Inskeep
Photograph

Dorothy Dorband
Plate, Yearbooks

Shirley Figeas
Postcards, Newspaper Clippings, Books

Sue Schwab
St. Anastasia Book-1990 & 2000 Yearbook

Debbie Harris
Henderson Jewelry Memorabilia, Waukegan City Directory 1905-06

Peter Popit
Photocopies of St. Anastasia Students

Francine Cunningham
R.L. Strip Co. Photograph

Cheryl Whitford
Guenette Family Memorabilia, First Federal Savings & Loan Passbook, Midwest Bronze & Alum Co. Papers, High School Information, Coast Guard and Army Information, Local Business Advertising, Postcards, Genealogy Information

Carl M. Yolz
1867 Letter,

Nancy Shumm
George Washington Calhoun and Family Genealogy Research

Marlene Graham
Blumberg Receipt Book, First National Bank Book, 1938 Worlds Fair Bank, Yearbook, Newspaper Clippings, Heins Store Bag

Tom Mellen
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Saulson Photographs, Marriage Certificate, Cemetery Deed, Spanish American War Certificate, Assorted Memorabilia

Margaret Boettle
Newspaper Clippings Scrapbooks

Jim Deram
Johnson Motors

Hank & Beverly Bogdala

William Tyre
2 Waukegan Postcards

Thomas W. Strus
Newspaper Articles about Andrew Cooke School, 1950s Photographs

Penny Miller
“A Little Bit of Verse” by Woodman, “History of Waukegan School Buildings” by Roman Miller

Jean Walsh
Jack Benny Letter

Dr. John Schwab
City Treasurer Report of Disbursements 1938-39

Dan Drury
Bernard Stiner Memorabilia

Gerald McGonigle
North Shore Photocopies

Nancy Bjerstedt
Waukegan North Chicago Coal Dealers Assn 1941-1955

Ann Darrow
1987 Commonwealth Edison Centennial Medal

Tony Pignaloni

Joseph Neumann
4 North Shore Railroad Photographs

Warren Township Historical Society
Waukegan High School Photographs (1920)

Theodore Wm. Strang Memorabilia

Waukegan Public Library
17 “Thirsty Elephant” Books

Alan Parshall
1934 Audio Tape of Phyllis Farrar
Sheet Music

Jim Malecha
2 Posters

YMCA Memorabilia

Betsy Alleman
1926 Photographs

1935 Snow Scene Photographs

1924 YMCA Photographs

First Methodists Church Photos

Diana Laurent
Book “A Promise For Life-The Story of Abbott”
Education Outreach

Students are back to school so our education outreach programming is gearing up for another great year! We have a few changes for the teachers and students this year. First for the teachers, we have lesson plans available to assist with preparing their students for the upcoming topic. For students we have incorporated two new programs. The first program will introduce the students to the Waukegan History Museum and the importance of studying local history. The second program looks at what it was like to be a student back when their school opened.

Teachers, don’t wait to schedule history programs for your class. The calendar fills up fast!

Native American History of the Waukegan Area*
Early settlers of Little Fort*
Waukegan and the Underground Railroad
Abraham Lincoln Goes to Waukegan
The Civil War: The War Efforts in Waukegan
Waukegan’s Famous Civil War Drummer Boys*

The Early Industry Worker*
“Firsts” in Waukegan*
Waukegan: A History of Immigration
Lake Michigan History and the Lady Elgin Shipwreck
Waukegan’s African American History
Influential Women of Waukegan’s Past
Prominent Events and Visitors of Waukegan
Waukegan and the Motion Picture Industry
Ray Bradbury: Waukegan’s Influence on a Visionary
Jack Benny: From Waukegan to Hollywood
Haunted Waukegan*

Titanic: A Fateful Ticket to Waukegan
Jane Addams: Remembering Bowen Country Club
Play Ball: Baseball in Waukegan
Day in the Life of a Student (corresponds to the year your school opened)

“What-Cha-Ma-Call-It” History Trunk (hands on program)*
*for school groups only (all other programs are for both school and adult groups)

Program length is 45 minutes to 1 hour. Many programs are multimedia presentations with hands-on artifacts. Programs can be given for multiple classrooms on the same day. Programs able to be scheduled to be given on a weekly basis. Programs presented in the schools are based on Illinois Social Sciences Performance Standards.

The Supervisor of the Waukegan History Museum will present each program.

For more information and to schedule a free program, contact the Waukegan Historical Society.

* for school groups only (all other programs are for both school and adult groups)
Thank You!

New Members
Dieck Arenas & Associates
Ann Richter
Alan & Kris Young
Susan Lerch
Claudia Grace
J. Brian Alleman
Carol Alleman
Vicki Mattson

New Life Members
Patricia Foley
Matthey Crabb
Tom & Sue Koesser
Douglas & Marianela Peterson

Donations
Howard & Cleone Peterson Memorial Fund
Baxter Employee Giving Campaign
Baxter International Foundation
Ann Richter
Robert & Michelle Crombie
William Tyre
Gregory Alloian
Joyce A. Ludovic
Douglas & Marianela Peterson

Join Us!

NAME(S) __________________________
_____________________________
ADDRESS __________________________
_____________________________
CITY __________________________
_____________________________
STATE _________ ZIP ______________
PHONE __________________________
EMAIL __________________________

MEMBERSHIP
Senior (age 60+) $7.00
Student $7.00
Individual $15.00
Family $25.00
Patron, Organization $50.00
Life, Individual $100.00
Life, Couple $150.00
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.

1917 N. Sheridan Road
Waukegan, IL 60087
847-336-1859
www.waukeganhistorical.org
info@waukeganhistorical.org

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

Waukegan History Museum
in Bowen Park
1917 N. Sheridan Road
Museum Supervisor: Ty Rohrer
847-336-1859
museum@waukeganhistorical.org
Tuesday, Thursday: 10am - 4pm
Saturday: 1pm-4pm

John L. Raymond Research Library
1911 N. Sheridan Road
Librarian: Beverly Millard
847-360-4772
library@waukeganhistorical.org
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
10am - 2:30pm
Carnegie Library, interior