

COBWEB

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World War II theme slated for 2015

The community will have to look no further than the Des Plaines History Center to participate in a few events and activities related to World War II next year. The year 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, and the History Center has been busy combing through its archives for objects and photos to include in its upcoming exhibit, “World War II: Des Plaines and the War against Fascism.”

“There are many stories to be told about military service, work on the home front, and efforts to memorialize the sacrifices of so many men and women,” said Philip Mohr, History Center curator. “We will feature some specific Des Plaines stories in each of these three categories.”

The exhibit, which will open Thursday, February 12, at 6 p.m., will transport viewers back to a time when it was common to have relatives and neighbors leave home determined to defend their country and make a difference in the world. All residents are invited to visit the display and stay for the February Coffee Talk, “World War II and Des Plaines on the Home Front,” which will immediately follow the exhibit opening from 7-8 p.m.

Mohr will deliver the Coffee Talk and speak about how the war changed home life and industry in Des Plaines. He will also present artifacts from the war donated by Des Plaines men and women. Light refreshments will be served all evening. A \$3 donation is suggested for those who attend the Coffee Talk.

Two other war-related events are scheduled in January. The book discussion group will meet Wednesday, January 21, from 6-7 p.m. at the History Center to examine A.J. Baime’s book, *The Arsenal of Democracy*. The book focuses on how the U.S. supplied the Allied war effort. Its title stems from a phrase Franklin Delano Roosevelt coined during one of his radio addresses. Copies of the book are available at the Des Plaines Public Library.

In addition, homeschool families are welcome to at-

tend a wartime-themed program, “War Factories in Des Plaines,” Wednesday, February 4, from 1-4 p.m. at the History Center. Homeschool Adventures is a program designed for children ages 5-12 and includes a fascinating hands-on activity.

Mohr is thrilled to shine a spotlight on what life was like during the war years. “Take some time to consider the enormous effort made in repelling the danger of fascism in Europe and the Pacific,” he said. “We hope that you come to the History Center and visit other local venues for 2015 programs.”

Students fund plane



Townpeople gathered at the Douglas Aircraft Company near Des Plaines in 1945 to gaze at a C54 named the “Maine Flyer.” Local students sold war bonds to build this transport plane.

Earlier this year, a group of Park Ridge and Des Plaines community members led by Shel Newman, a member of the Park Ridge Preservation Commission, began meeting to discuss ideas to commemorate the history of Douglas Aircraft and a cargo plane built there, which was named the “Maine Flyer” by Maine

Township High School students in 1945.

The project began when Newman set out to identify specific World War II-era houses in Park Ridge that were built for the purpose of housing employees of the Douglas Aircraft Company, which was then situated on land now occupied by O'Hare Airport. From that initial project, Newman learned more about the Douglas company and its history, the planes that were built for the war, and the incredible story of the students at Maine Township High School, who collectively raised \$551,000 by selling war bonds in December 1944.

Their successful drive provided them the opportunity to select the name of one of the planes. They chose to call it the "Maine Flyer," and they coined the motto, "Faster and Higher—That's Maine's Flyer." Current-

ly Newman is working with state legislators to pass a proclamation that designates August 14, 2015, as "Spirit of '45 Day in Illinois." Also, students in the broadcasting department at Maine East High School have created a video about the history of the Maine Flyer and the role of the students in that 1944 fund drive. Here is the link to the video: <http://www.desplainshistory.org/maine-flyer-celebration>.

Additionally, District 207 high schools have been discussing launching special art projects to commemorate the history of the "Maine Flyer." In Des Plaines, members of the VFW have met with the group to also generate ideas for a possible memorial at the Lake Park area. Watch for more news and details about "Spirit of '45 Day" and events to come.

German students explore the town

More than 40 teenagers from Germany participated in a tour of downtown Des Plaines and the Kinder House during a picture-perfect autumn afternoon October 22. The students visited as part of Maine Township High School District 207's German exchange-student program.

"It's important to learn about the area the students are staying in, and not just about Chicago all the time," said Brigitte Tautz. "Plus, a lot of Germans came to this area, so we have a local day and talk about immigration."

Tautz was one of the German instructors from Dilthey School in Wiesbaden who led the 43 students, who are juniors at that school. She appreciates traveling to the United States with her 16- and 17-year-old students because "in their grade, they focus on America, the American Dream, and emigration from Germany to America. We come here so they can experience that a lot of people left Germany and can be descendants of those people. We really study that in class this year."

Rebecca Schneider, 16, enjoyed the walking tour of downtown Des Plaines, which included the Des Plaines Theater, Metra Station, and various other historic buildings. "It was interesting to hear about the development of the city," Schneider said.

"I liked learning about what's the same and how things have changed."

History Center Curator Philip Mohr informed the group that they can access the guided tour on the Internet at any time at desplainestour.toursphere.com.

Tautz's school first popped up on District 207's radar screen after Margaret Wolf, a German teacher at Maine South, located it on the Internet a few years ago.

"She was looking for a partner for Maine South that had a high reputation in Germany," Tautz said. "In Germany we all learn English, so we would like to have a special relationship with an American school. Not all schools get such an opportunity."

The first group of German students visited Park Ridge and Des Plaines in 2012. The next year, the



The German exchange students enjoyed a tour of the Kinder House guided by volunteer Sandy Johnson.

American students toured Germany.

Tautz said that more and more students have been applying for this program and the number of American families that agree to host is rising as well. "It's a great opportunity for us to learn about American family lifestyle and culture, and students can improve their English. And we offer the same to American students. We are enjoying ourselves, and the students think it's very exciting."

Director's Message

by Shari Caine

It has been quite a terrific year here at the History Center. We've had so much happening, great programs and exhibits, great events, great press in the local media, and a great team of people to pull it all off! Thank



History Center Executive Director Shari Caine is grateful that the Kinder House is once again open for tours and encourages the community to stop by.

you to everyone who has helped. A special thank you goes out to our staff and volunteers who have put in so many hours to keep the History Center lively and full of activity!

We've now had our curator Philip Mohr and our publicity coordinator Sue Fox McGovern for more than a year, and they've kept up the momentum needed to get our programs planned, publicized, and put into action.

Philip has additionally covered a lot of ground in getting the History Center back up-to-speed once again managing collections and developing new exhibits. Sue has kept the information flowing out into the community, through the media, on Facebook, and out to all our members. Our volunteers also bring an enormous amount of value to the History Center, and they all deserve our gratitude and thanks for the many hours they've put in to help the History Center.

In special projects, Stan Kotec, a professional photographer in Des Plaines, has donated his time and talents and spent hours photographing the unique details of the Kinder House. Stan is also the creator of several of our great Des Plaines postcards that are available for sale at the History Center. Also, Des Plaines resident Herman Zelk volunteered his time to help the History Center create the audio portion of our digital mobile walking tour app. If you haven't had a chance to try out the new app, give us a call to find out more, or access it online at

desplainestour.toursphere.com.

We also thank our trustees and committee members, who also volunteer their time to oversee the stewardship and management of the History Center and make sure it is financially sound and serving its mission. Not only do our trustees meet monthly, but they also serve on several standing committees including building and grounds.

Finally, I'd like to thank our interns, Sarah DePuy, for her work helping Philip with programs and collections, and Chris Liston for his help working with the newspaper collection and framed objects collection. Looking forward, we have much more to come in the year ahead.

You can help the History Center by encouraging friends and family to become members, attending programs and events, becoming a volunteer, or giving financial support. And if you've already supported the History Center this year, we thank you! Each contribution you give helps build up the strength of the History Center.

NEW AT THE HISTORY CENTER January's Coffee Talk in English and Spanish

The History Center has decided to offer its next Coffee Talk in English and Spanish. A key component of the History Center's Mission Statement is to provide access to its programs and resources to all those in the community.

The Coffee Talk, "Coffee Growers and the Coffee Trade," will be presented in English

Thursday, January 15, from 7-8 p.m. at the History Center and in Spanish Friday, January 30, from 7-8 p.m. at the Des Plaines Public Library.

Historian Carmen Kordick, who will present the talk, has researched growing and distributing coffee in early twentieth-century Latin America. Come learn some history of the staple beverage at this aptly named Coffee Talk!

Remembering Des Plaines

by Thomas Baranski

The wet snow was falling, and the word was being passed around to the “senior boys,” i.e. the sixth graders at Central School. This afternoon after school was the day for the annual snowball fight with the Lutheran School boys across Lee Street.

It was 1942. The current Lutheran Church at the corner of Lee and Thacker had not been built so that northeast corner where their pastor’s home sat was an empty lot and exactly

halfway between schools.

At 3:30 about seven or eight of us donned our wool coats, galoshes, and still-wet knitted wool mittens and ran across Thacker (ignoring the underground tunnel built for safely crossing Thacker and Lee streets).

We immediately built a snow fort and started making and storing pre-made snowballs for the upcoming battle with those Lutheran kids.

All of a sudden we were

being attacked from behind as the Lutherans had snuck around the pastor’s home and come up from the rear.

It was a glorious fight! We finally routed the five or six opponents, but we were not able to catch any of them to “wash their faces” as the sign of victory. I wonder if kids have fun like that today.

Send in or email your 200-word story to contact@desplaineshistory.org.

In Memoriam

Recently the Des Plaines History Center lost two longtime members, Carol Ehnert and Lois Warnke. Both women had a strong interest in the history of their community and were active supporters of the History Center.

Carol Ehnert, 85, died October 25. She was a native of Waukegan, Illinois. After marrying and moving to Des Plaines, she worked as a library clerk for Orchard Place School. She and her husband, William, raised two daughters and a son. Carol was also the former president of both the American Legion Auxiliary 36 and the National Woman’s Relief Corps. She delivered library books to homebound patrons and was an avid reader who loved camping and gardening.

Lois Warnke, 72, died November 28. She was a Des Plaines native. Her family, including both the Warnkes and the Steils, had a long history in the area and owned farmland in Maine Township. As a family, the Steils were very active in the Cook County Truck Gardeners and Farmers Association. Lois’ mother, Mabel Steil Warnke, who died ten years ago at age 100, grew up on a farm in what is now Niles. Mabel attended Maine Township High School and later wrote local newspaper columns



about farm life for 25 years. Lois’ father, Albert J. Warnke, died in 1996.

When Lois’ parents married in 1931, the couple moved to Des Plaines that same year and attended Immanuel Lutheran Church. As a writer and traveler, Lois’ mother took seven trips to Brazil and later published a book about her travels. “German was her home language; she took Spanish in high school, and after coming home from Brazil she taught herself Portuguese,” Lois once said of her mother.

Like her parents, Lois attended Maine Township High School and continued membership in Immanuel Lutheran Church. Because of her family’s long history in Des Plaines, Lois and her sister Eunice donated many items to the Des Plaines History Center’s collection over the years, providing a time capsule of family life.

Curator's Corner: First grade fun

by Philip Mohr

If you visit the History Center frequently, you probably know that it does not usually take much to get me away from my desk. One of the reasons I like working in a museum is that I'm not at my desk a lot of the time.

There are things to do in the archives, tours to give in the Kinder House, exhibits to dust, et cetera. Those are regular tasks. The last quarter, though, I have had an explosion of requests from local schools for classroom presentations.

Between October 28 and December 10, 2014, I talked with roughly 380 students in first and second grades in District 59 and District 62.

In first grade, students get their first real social studies units where they are challenged to consider an unfamiliar past. My "Frontier Days"

"It is incredibly rewarding to guide the students through thinking like a historian. With a little help, they make all of the connections that a professional makes."

presentation exposes them to some of the everyday objects and work from roughly 150 years ago and 100 years ago.

The students are encouraged to compare and contrast the past with modern days, and they get many

chances to find patterns in technology development and household work. Social studies develops important critical thinking skills even for those students not bound to be history curators.

It is incredibly rewarding to guide the students through thinking like a historian. With a little help, they make all of the connections that a professional makes.

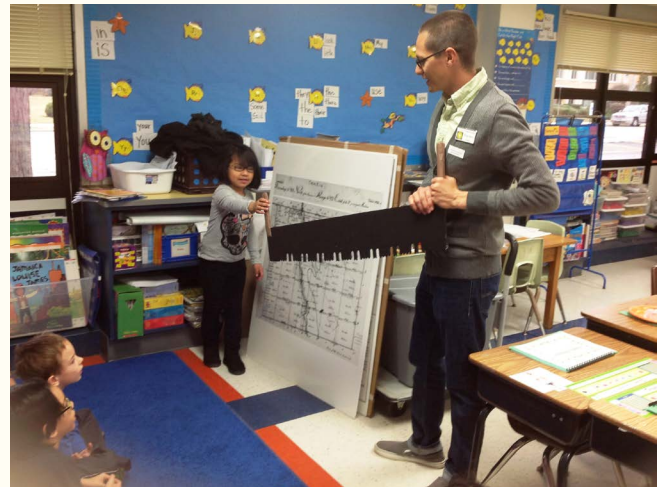
It is like when you contemplate your own education or career. I looked back on high school when I was in college and thought "I really didn't understand how to be a historian back then." Then in grad school I looked back and thought "I really didn't understand how to be a historian back then." And now I think "this is nothing like school." These first graders are at least as intelligent as you or me. The wheels are turning.

Not too much has changed in the twenty years since I was in first grade. I think I have kept up with technology, education, and pop culture enough to be easily relevant to these young people.

However, I was stunned when entire classes of first graders in District 59 walked into the presentation each with a tablet. Their teachers asked if

the students could take photographs of some of the historic objects I brought to show them. Their assignment was to take a picture of the modern equivalent object for a past-present comparison.

It was one of those moments when half of you thinks "of course, why didn't I think of that?" and the other half thinks "I never thought



Curator Philip Mohr and a first grader from Central Elementary School demonstrate how two people have to cooperate to use a big saw.
Photo by Polly Brenner

each kid would have a school-provided tablet." I have heard that District 62 might have sets of tablets for their students sometime soon too.

It is good that our local schools are able to provide early exposure to today's technology. The schools certainly have using the tablets well under control.

And, yes, there are still lots of books and learning-oriented toys in each classroom. History is still being made, and I'm glad to be part of these students' formation.

We couldn't do it without all of you!



To all our volunteers: Thank you so much for all that you do for the History Center! We appreciate your time, effort, and skills.

Audrey Fendius, Lois Garner, Steven Giese, Rev. Dr. & Mrs. William G. Grice, III, Pat Grzebieniak, Judith Hart, Mary E. Hart, Susan Hart, Marlene M. Hinsch, Lillian Janes, John and Karen Jasionowski, Janice Johnson, Sandra Johnson, Stan Kotecki, Karen, Joe, and Natalie Kozenczak, Agnieszka Laton, Chris Liston, Elizabeth Makelim and John Paul, Mariann and Raymond Mannarelli, Laura M. Maya, Mary McAlevy, Herm and Nancy Wright Meyer, Don Militec, Arnold Miller, Bobbie Nelson, Rex Nyquist, Carol Pompetzki, Lauren Reimer, Robert and Rosemary Reinke, Judy Riordan, Terry and Carol Shannon, Carolyn Lee Simmons, Juanita Soong, Anna Wiktoria Sroka, Barbara Therien, Mary C. Thing, Mark and Janet Thompson, Don Turner, Rich and Kris Tyler, Kathleen Vana, Mindy Ward, Ellen A. Yearwood, Laverne Zavacki, Herman Zelk.

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Digital fund established

The Des Plaines History Center has created a new Technology Fund in memory of Ruth Blietz. Ruth was among the earliest founding members of the Des Plaines Historical Society and worked as the society's research librarian for many years.

After Ruth passed away on May 26, 2014, family members approached the Des Plaines History Center and offered to make a donation. Ruth's daughter, Leslie Enders, expressed the sentiments of her family, saying, "She really, really loved the work she did at the Historical Society." An article featuring Ruth's work appeared in the Summer 2014 issue of the *Cobweb*.

Curator Philip Mohr expressed a need to digitize and store current and new historical images and documents in the History Center's growing collection. In recent years, the History Center has been working with the Des Plaines Public Library by providing online digital content to the website Des Plaines Memory.

The new digital storage system will operate within the History Center and will improve access to a broad range of historical materials in the collection. Utilizing technology to archive and preserve the collection is one of the History Center's ongoing strategic initiatives.

The Des Plaines History Center is pleased to establish this fund with this initial gift. Additional donations to the Technology Fund are being accepted at the History Center. All contributions designated to this fund will be used for the purchase of computer hardware and software to run the new digital storage system.

Des Plaines History Center

Officers: Tom Christiansen, President; Rev. Dr. William G. Grice, III, Vice President; Mark Thompson, Treasurer; Ellen Yearwood, Secretary; Elizabeth Makelim, Past President.

Trustees: Agnes Laton, Karen Kozenczak, Elizabeth Makelim, Arnold Miller, Carol Shannon, Juanita Soong, Don Miletic, Des Plaines Park District Liaison, Mike Charewicz, City of Des Plaines Liaison.

Staff: Shari Caine, Executive Director; Philip Mohr, Curator; Sue Fox McGovern, Office Assistant/PR Coordinator.

KINDER HOUSE TOURS

Tuesdays-Fridays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sundays, 1-4 p.m.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Des Plaines History Center collects, preserves, and interprets the history of Des Plaines and its people and provides access to those resources through exhibits, educational programs, and research facilities.

The Des Plaines History Center gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Des Plaines, the Des Plaines Park District, its members, and other contributors.

Shop at the History Center



Drop by to pick up a Des Plaines magnet for yourself. \$1 each.
You'll be glad you did!

Thank You, Business Members!

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Visit the Des Plaines History Center online at www.desplaineshistory.org, and be sure to check our digitization project with the Des Plaines Public Library at www.desplainesmemory.org.

Also see the Des Plaines History Center on Facebook and Twitter. "Conant Tweets" is the online Twitter feed from Augustus Conant's 1830s diary. Go to http://twitter.com/conant_tweets/, and follow @conant_tweets.



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If you enjoyed this issue but aren't yet a History Center member, join today! For more information, call 847-391-5399.

Come out of the cold!
We would love to see you!



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Des Plaines residents Charles and Rose Frisbie and their dog strike a Happy Holiday pose. Photo from 1905.

Happy Holidays to you
from the History Center!

www.desplaineshistory.org