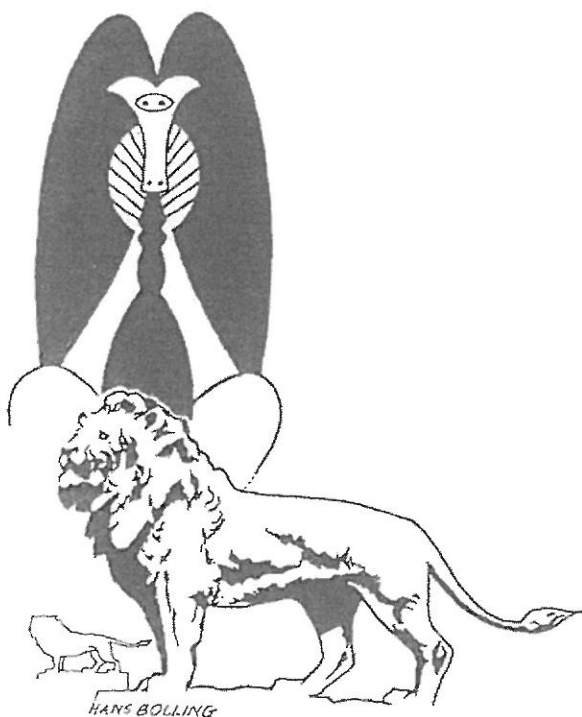




**NORTH
MAYFAIR,
U.S.A.**



VOLUME II



"We are without apology, city people, happy to celebrate a clash of ideas, peoples and lifestyles."

-- Zenos Hawkinson
Professor Emeritus of History
North Park University

From inaugural address as
President of the North River Commission, May 1988

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Cheryl Linker

North Mayfair is a quiet, tree lined community of more than 3,000 households, situated on the northwest side of Chicago in the 39th Ward. Our boundaries are Pulaski Rd., Bryn Mawr, Cicero and Lawrence Avenues. We have good transportation connections and easy access to the Edens and Kennedy Expressways. Good schools and churches of different denominations are close by. Many of our residents grew up here, moved to different locations only to come back to the tranquility of North Mayfair. Other residents are nature lovers and have placed their roots here because of the closeness to the river green belt. The 600 acres in the La Bagh Woods Forest Preserve with its picnic groves, open grasslands, heavy forest and restored prairie savanna are a real asset. Gompers Park continues the open space with a 39 acre green belt that includes an experimental wetland and many recreational facilities.

In the last decade we have experienced improvements and growth and some disappointments. Our fight to save the open land at St. Lucas Cemetery was lost, and we were angry at public officials. We watched Bankers Life move out, leaving 26 parcels of real estate vacant. We supported and worked for a charter high school for our district only to see the plans fade out. The closing of Foster Avenue for deep tunnel work caused havoc and traffic jams on our streets. On the positive side, we now have a handy shopping center at Foster and Pulaski. The renovations and demolitions of various Bankers buildings have brought us: a new, beautiful, larger, up-to-date public library, a medical center, new condominiums and the Mayfair Commons Senior Building at the corner of Elston and Lawrence. The new playground at Gompers Park and the restored wetlands took our energies. We helped prevent the North Park Village Recycling Center from closing. We welcomed Palmer School's new ten room annex, and a new public magnet high school is being built in our district.

The North Mayfair Improvement Association is a strong, solid, well-established civic organization. The first book about our area was the Elston Avenue Opening Celebration printed in 1928. The second book was North Mayfair 76, printed for the bicentennial. The third book was North Mayfair, U.S.A. This book is North Mayfair, U.S.A., Volume Two. Hans and Dale Bolling have been involved in the compilation and art work of all these books except the one about Elston Avenue. Their dedication to this organization and neighborhood have helped keep North Mayfair a strong community.

Come, explore with us North Mayfair's past... through the commonplace to the extraordinary, this is a book about neighbors building our community.

EARLY HISTORY

by Anthony Watrobinski

Long ago this area was a forested prairie on the sides of a slow moving, meandering river. The flood plain was wider than it is today. Indians of various tribes roamed here. Among these were Illini, Miami, Fox, Sauk, Ottawa, Chippewa and Pottawatomi.

Marquette and Joliet, in 1673, are thought to be the first European explorers to visit this area. In 1681 Robert LaSalle came through and explored all the way to Oklahoma, laying claim to the Louisiana Territory for France. LaSalle's aide, Henry DeTonti, roamed around northeastern Illinois and is probably the first explorer to go up the North Branch of the Chicago River through what is now North Mayfair.

Illinois was ceded to England after the French and Indian War of 1763. Then George Rogers Clark wrested it from the British for the Colonies during the Revolutionary War. The Illinois area became part of the Northwest Territory in 1787.

The young United States of America built Fort Dearborn in 1803. At the start of the War of 1812, orders were received to evacuate the fort. Troops and settlers were ambushed near 18th Street. During this Fort Dearborn Massacre, Indian leaders, Black Partridge and Sauganash, ransomed many settlers. Although they fought for Tecumseh and the British, after the war these men became staunch friends of the Americans.

Fort Dearborn was rebuilt in 1816. That same year the Pottawatomis ceded a strip of land 20 miles wide from Ottawa to Lake Michigan. This created the Indian Boundary. It ran along Rogers Avenue and just skirted North Mayfair.

Chief Sauganash was the son of an Irish officer in the British Army, who

was stationed in Detroit and a Pottawatomini princess. The name Sauganash means Indian. He was born about the year 1780. His English name was Billy Caldwell. He was educated in the Jesuit schools in Detroit and learned to speak fluently and write in both French and English. He also acquired the knowledge of a great many Indian dialects. He had two homes, one on the southeast corner of State and Chicago (the present site of the Holy Name Cathedral), and the other north of the Indian Boundary in the Sauganash Community. In 1826, we find Caldwell duly appointed Justice of the Peace for Peoria County. His name appears on the voting lists for 1826 and 1830.

During the Black Hawk War, Sauganash acted as a scout for the government. After the war, under new treaties, in 1833, the government purchased remaining Indian lands in Illinois, and by 1835, the tribes had all gone west across the Mississippi. Caldwell stayed in Chicago for awhile, but later moved his tribe to a reservation near Council Bluffs, Iowa. There he died on September 28, 1841, at the age of 62. Caldwell Avenue and the community of Sauganash were named for him.

At the intersection of Rogers, Kilbourn and Caldwell stood the majestic "Old Treaty Elm." Under its spreading branches, Sauganash and his warriors held council and accepted government payment for their land in the Treaty of 1833. A stone with a plaque to commemorate this event was placed there by the Chicago Historical Society. It is there today.

Illinois became a state on April 13, 1818. On January 15, 1831, the counties were redistricted and ours was named after David P. Cook. As part of Cook County, Jefferson Township came into existence, and what today we call Mayfair was the Village of Montrose.

Just as we have tollroads today, in the middle 1800's, plank roads came into existence. Prairie lands when rained on hold water, and any dirt paths turn into such a muddy mess as to be impassable. Private individuals purchased lands that followed old Indian trails and built roadways of wooden planks, and the farmers paid fees to use them to get their crops to market. The charges typically were 37 1/2 cents for a four horse team, 25 cents for a single team and 12 1/2 cents for a man on horseback. In 1849, the Northwest Plank Road was built. It is now Milwaukee Avenue. Our Elston Avenue was a plank road, and it was built about the same time. Elston Road had tollgates at Division Street, one south of Lawrence and one at the intersection with Milwaukee Avenue. Both the Milwaukee and Elston tollroads were owned by Amos J. Snell.

Chicago was chartered as a city on March 4, 1837. In June 1889, Jefferson Township with our Village of Montrose was annexed to Chicago. Back then, our area was mostly small farms. Most of the buildings we see here today were put up between the turn of the century and the Depression era. (Documentation for this article comes from our earlier three books regarding the North Mayfair area, and "The History of Chicago" and "The History of Cook County," both by Andreas.)

EARLY FAMILIES

by Dale Bolling

THE HARDINGS AND THE SPIKINGS

Early in the 1800's, a sailing ship left England bound for America. On board was William Harding. According to family legend, the ship foundered and William and other passengers were cast adrift. They were starving and were reduced to eating the leather of their shoes. Finally in desperation, as the story goes, they cast lots to select one from among them to be killed for food. William Harding was the unlucky man, but just before he was to be sacrificed, they sighted the coast of Maine. "With all his possessions gone, my great grandfather did odd jobs in Maine and later moved down to New York City where he later set up a hog farm in what is now Central Park," according to Mrs. Alice Ropp, daughter of William H. Spikings and widow of Silas Ropp, a member of an old Irving Park family. Then William Harding came to Chicago and, by 1836, acquired a land grant northwest of Chicago. Harding Avenue is named after him.

His path crossed that of Richard Young Spikings when Spikings left the central area of the frontier town of Chicago in 1840 and went up the North Branch of the Chicago River. Here Richard Spikings became acquainted with Cornelia Harding, daughter of William Harding, and married her.

Richard and Cornelia had a son, William Harding Spikings, who was the first non-Indian to be born in this general area. He was born in a cabin near where Eugene Field Park fieldhouse is today. The year was 1848.

The Spikings family was involved in the building of the Bohemian National Cemetery. Richard Spikings, father of William Harding Spikings, was a veterinary sergeant in the Civil War. Many of the houses in North Mayfair and Albany Park were built by the Spikings including three in the 4900

block of Keystone.

Mrs. William H. Spikings' first name was Minnie. She was from Sweden. She and William built a 16 room home in 1870 that was on the southeast corner of Pulaski and Ainslie. It was torn down in 1941.

Minnie Spikings started a Sunday School for children of Bohemian cemetery workers, that was the start of the Mayfair Presbyterian Church, that beautiful building that is now at Kostner and Ainslie.

The Spikings family grew into a big clan and in later years they would have family picnics with 300 people attending. **(See photo.)**

THE ERICKSONS

The Peter Erickson farmhouse was just north of Palmer School on Kostner Avenue. The Ericksons were immigrants from Vastmanland, Sweden, who crossed the Atlantic on the sailing boat, "The Charlotte," out of Stockholm in the spring of 1846. They were headed for Bishop Hill in western Illinois and were part of a dissident religious group led by Eric Janssen.

When they began the voyage they were a young family with two small children and another baby on the way. The voyage was physically difficult. Their food was mostly black bread, and the water was rationed. After months at sea, they landed in New York on September 15, 1846.

They came west by way of the Erie Canal and then by wagon train to Illinois. Finally they got to the shore of Lake Michigan where the group rested for several days before continuing south to Bishop Hill. But Mrs. Erickson, due to her pregnancy, was utterly exhausted. The others went on to Bishop Hill, but the Ericksons stayed in Chicago. From 1846 to 1860, they lived north of what is now the downtown area of Chicago and where other early Swedes settled. They were charter members of the St. Ansgarius Church where the famous opera singer Jenny Lind sang occasionally.

By 1850, they bought ten acres of land in what is now North Mayfair and for ten long years, every summer, they would cross the prairies by wagon, farm the land and work on building a house. In 1860 they moved in. This house was so sturdily built that, years later, when it was torn down the contractor who was hired to do the job gave up, and they had to get a court order to make him finish. The basement windows each had nine pieces of glass.

The Ericksons had seven children but only one married. Charlotte married the Rev. John Oscar Alven who was pastor of the Forest Glen Methodist Church that stood on Elston Avenue north of Foster on the east side of the street. The Alvens had one son, Wesley Rueben Alven. His wife, Mary, a relative of William Ogden, the first mayor of Chicago, is the source of most of the information in this account. Jennie, one of the Erickson's daughters, taught school for 30 years at the Little Red School House that stood on Kostner and Lawrence where Pontarelli's headquarters is now.

Mr. Peter Erickson came to this country as a skilled craftsman. He was a wood carver and carved altar rails for churches as well as elegant doors for the homes of the wealthy. He bought acreage from Mr. Chilson of Bellingham, Massachusetts, adjacent to his original ten acres, and used it for pasture. This land is now the north section of Gompers Park. At the time of his death, he owned 65 acres in Jefferson Township. His sons later bought 45 more acres in what is now Forest Glen. At one time, the Ericksons built and owned eleven bungalows in what is now North Mayfair. Most of the octagon bungalows in the beautiful 5100 block of Kostner were built by the Ericksons.

The Ericksons are buried in Rosehill Cemetery.

Letters from William M. Chilson to Peter Erickson regarding sale of land that is Gompers Park north of Foster.

Notice that one letter was written in 1869 and the other in 1883. Mrs. Mary Alven gave these letters to Dale Bolling.

Byron Cal Dec 20th 83

Mr Erickson

the Deed is ready for
you at the First
National Bank of Chicago
or should be we want
yesterday and I think
it is all right

you had better take your
lawyer a long with
you as to be share
when you go to get it
please write no soon as
you pay the money
to the Bank I will close
with my regards to you
and family

Willard M. Chilson

J

1869

Bellingham
Bellingham

Bellingham
Oct 21st

Mr. Erickson Dear Sir
I sit down to write
you a few lines to
let you know that
We are all well as
usual and hope this
may find you the
same I received a letter
from you in May ^{there}
and I have not heard from
you since we have had
very good crops this
year except apples
which are rather scarce

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

THE KRENEKS

The Kreneks were immigrants from Bohemia in the late 1800's. Frank Krenek and his wife, Katherine, first settled on the west side of Chicago near 22nd Street where they prospered by operating a tavern.

After they accumulated enough money, they bought property at Ainslie and Keystone. They raised five children and most of them continued to live in North Mayfair after they married.

Mr. Krenek had a well tended garden with white washed trees, an orchard with apple, pear, plum, and cherry trees, lilac bushes, a grape arbor and an ornamental pond with large gold fish. He raised chickens and ducks and had cows. He sold eggs and milk to neighbors.

Frank Krenek rented acreage from the Leiter estate which owned the Fair Store on State Street. He used this land, that included a pond, for vegetable crops and for ducks. This land is now the south section of Gompers Park.

Notice in the accompanying picture of his house at 4857 N. Keystone that he proudly displayed the American flag. Frank was very happy to be in America. This is probably the first flag pole in North Mayfair -- dating back to 1911.

His daughter, Anna, married Joe Brezina. Joe, Breezy was his nickname, was one of the few immigrants of that era who came to America with a college education. He was a graduate of a university in Prague.

Mr. Brezina was a friend of Anton Cermak, the mayor of Chicago. Joe Brezina was gregarious, outgoing and energetic. He became a superintendent of a Cook County Forest Preserve and there is a preserve at Cermak and Mannheim roads called Brezina Woods, named for him. He started the Garden Club in LaGrange and was on the school board of LaGrange for many years. In September of 1943, he was honored at Soldier Field by Henry A. Wallace, the Vice President of the United States, regarding his work with garden clubs.

Brezina's daughter, Blanche, married Edward Gregor who started Investors Savings and Loan. He was the president of that business when the building at Kostner and Lawrence, that is now Pontarelli's, was built.

Edward Gregor had been a student at the Little Red School House that had previously been on that land. In 1950 he organized a reunion of former pupils. This is the school where Jennie Erickson taught for thirty years.

Generations of Krenek children went to Palmer School. (See photo.)

KAPLAN'S GROCERY STORE

In the childhood memories of many longtime neighbors is a grocery store at Ainslie and Pulaski where the laundromat is today. It was called "Kaplan's".

In those bygone days, there were no Jewels or Dominicks. Mr. Kaplan knew his customers one to one. There was little packaging. Most items were sold in bulk. Cookies came in large containers, separated by cardboard strips and protected by see through covers. A kid accompanying his mother would stare longingly at the delicious, marshmallow chocolate cookies with the pecans on top.

An ice cream cone cost a nickel. Part of a summer evening's enjoyment was to beg for a nickel from your father or favorite uncle and run across the street to Kaplan's. A frequent admonition from the grown-ups, in the imperfect English of the day was, "Don't get runned over." Automobiles were coming into use at that time, and children had to be taught to be careful.

Ella Schaller (Chobot) remembers Mr. Kaplan would sell homemade Bohemian sausages in the winter time that would be displayed in his window. He would do this only in the winter, because there was no refrigeration. The price was six for 25 cents. Workers at the Bohemian National Cemetery were frequent customers.

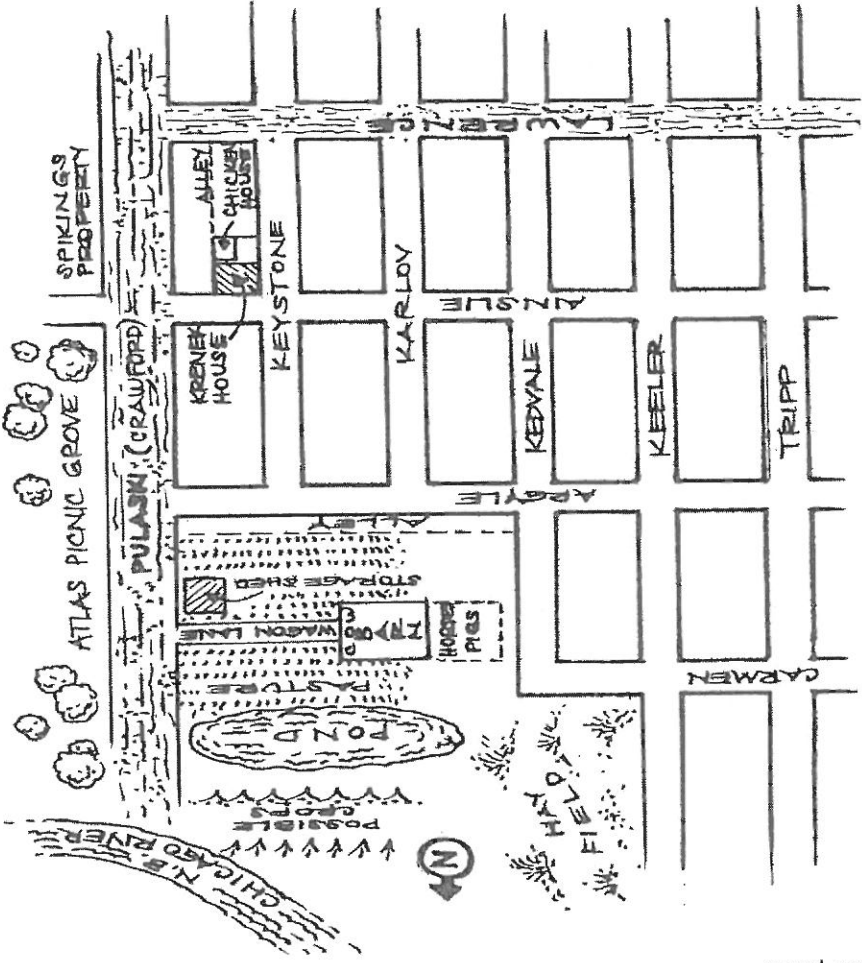
Everyone seems to remember that Kaplan sold a bag of mixed fruit for 25 cents. Nothing was weighed. You got bananas, apples, oranges and fruit in season. 25 cents for the whole shebang.

Someone else remembered that Mr. Kaplan had curly hair and a high pitched voice. He had a finger missing on one hand, and a neighborhood joke was that he ground it up with someone's hamburger.

The following map enhancement and clarification was done by Leo Michael Damask III.

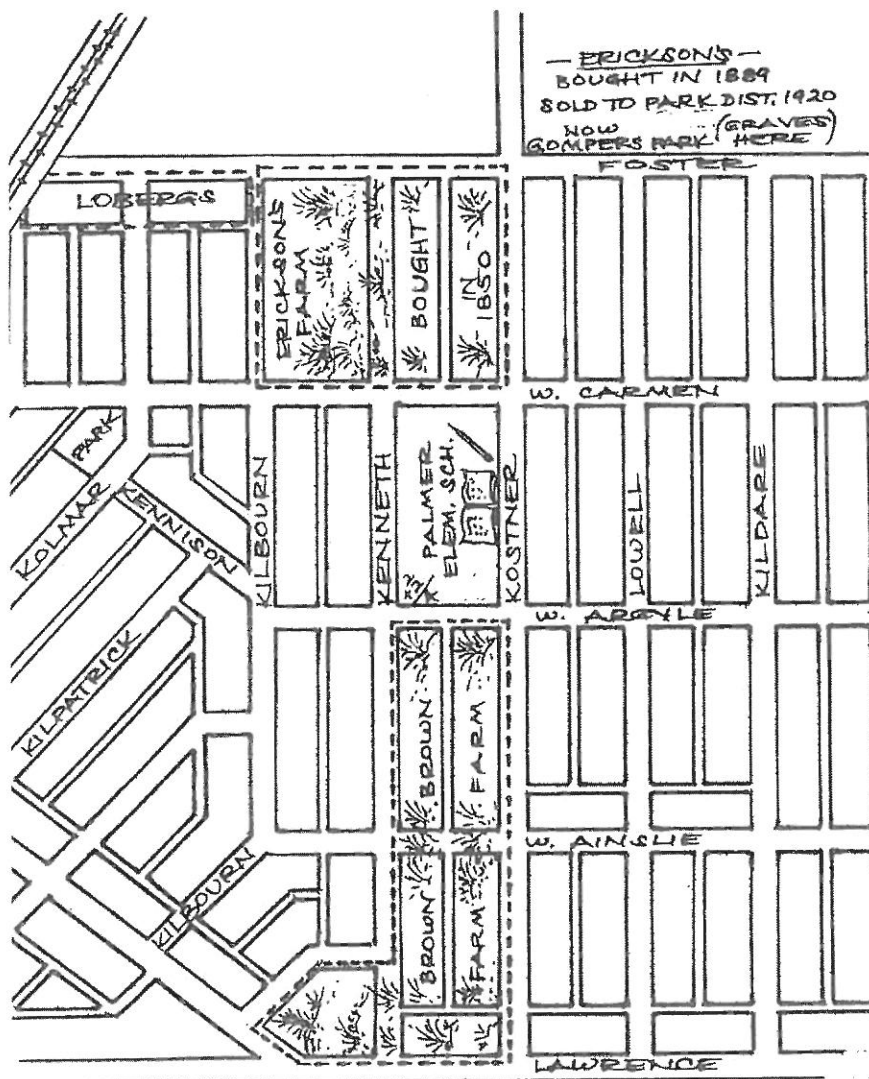
Map of Krenek farm as remembered by Edward Krenek Jr.

The Kreneks had a small farm in the area of Keystone and Ainslie. The house is still standing at 4857 N. Keystone. Frank Krenek rented land from the Leier estate for his crops and cattle. Notice that what is now the Gompers Park Lagoon was a natural pond and was originally closer to Pulaski. When the WPA built Gompers Park on the south side of Foster, they changed the configuration of the pond and made it more central to the park.



The following map enhancement and clarification drawing was done by Leo Michael Damask III.

Map of early North Mayfair drawn from information given Dale Bolling by Mrs. Mary Alven who was the last survivor of the Erickson family to live in North Mayfair. The graves indicated on the map are on the north side of Foster at Kildare.



LETTERS FROM RESIDENTS OF NORTH MAYFAIR

“We do not often think of ourselves as part of history, but the minutiae of our individual lives and community experiences are part of fabric of life in the United States.” D.B.

GOOD NEIGHBORS MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS

by Edward Kuhn

During the celebration of this country's 200th birthday the booklet, A Historical Account of North Mayfair, was compiled, published and distributed to many former residents, the current residents and to new people and families moving into this community. As we approach the 70th anniversary of the founding of the North Mayfair Improvement Association, it is time to pause and update our chronicle.

North Mayfair has involved itself in city, state, national and worldwide issues. Its most important involvement, however, has always been the every day, nitty gritty issues that affect the quality of life in North Mayfair. It has been the constant maintenance of the houses, apartment buildings and commercial buildings and establishments, helped with the encouragement of the NMIA, in our community that makes North Mayfair an inviting neighborhood in which to drive or walk.

Before my family had even moved in, I received a ticket for parking my

plumbing company truck on a residential street overnight. I had arrived at 5:30 a.m. that Saturday morning to work on the many projects that we wanted done before moving in the furniture. About 6:10 a.m., I found the ticket on my windshield. The rage I felt turned to a sense of well-being, knowing that someone cared enough to watch out and call.

The first meeting of the North Mayfair Improvement Association that we attended at Gompers Park field house was to complain about our next door neighbor's 18" tall grass. Others voiced concern. However, when asked if we had talked to our neighbor about the problem, we had to answer no. We were asked to contact our neighbor and report at the next monthly meeting. Our meeting with the neighbor revealed a man who was a long time resident in very bad health and who had distanced himself from his neighbors. After meeting with him we had a new friend. When he decided to sell, he informed us, and soon a lifelong friend and his wife moved into the house.

So many times neighbors became friends and when fortune smiles they become part of our extended family. Our neighbors Bill and Jo Cullerton became one of those special relationships that only a neighborhood can provide. They immediately became friendly neighbors, then close friends, then surrogate parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. They provided a stability every neighborhood must have.

The stability and life long involvement of so many people like the Cullertons have made North Mayfair a place for future generations to want to call home. Two of our daughters and their husbands are raising families here in North Mayfair. Our one son-in-law's mother and father are long time residents also. The ultimate goal is to keep North Mayfair a place you want to call home. (See photo.)

SUNSETS FROM THE BACK PORCH ON HARDING AVENUE

by Robert Carlsen

I have lived in the North Mayfair area most of my life. After Mildred and I were married, we continued to stay in this area.

My father, Christian L. Carlsen, came from Jutland in Denmark in 1897. He learned the bricklaying trade and became a mason and cement contractor. He prospered and owned a 12 apartment building that he

later sold to purchase a dairy farm near Richmond, Illinois. He could not get enough hired help to properly operate the farm, so he sold it and moved back to Chicago.

In 1920, he bought lots from the early settler, William Spikings on the west side of the 4800 block of Harding where my father built seven bungalows.

Right across the dirt alley and to the north was the Spikings estate with its large brick house. There were barns and sheds and a large cornfield and gardens. Mr. William Spikings was the oldest living settler in Chicago for many years until his death in the 1930's. He had obtained a Homestead Land Grant signed by Abraham Lincoln. My father and Bill Spikings spent many a summer evening chatting over the fence, with Spikings smoking his corncob pipe. The Spikings had several children who lived nearby, several in the 4800 and 4900 block of North Harding. There was a William Harding Jr. who was a vocational training school teacher; a daughter married to a Dr. Brown, a son Richard who was a house mover; and a son Frank who made grand floats for summer parades.

Every summer the Spikings hosted a summer festival in their large garden with all kinds of local talent performing. It was a very gala affair with refreshments.

My father prospered until the Depression when he lost everything. In the mid 1920's he did all the concrete work when the Admiral Theatre was built. We had theatre passes for a long time. It was a lovely theatre then, with a full stage and settings for all kinds of vaudeville.

I have vivid memories of the sunsets we viewed from our open back porch, facing west across the prairies. They were absolutely gorgeous. Only Hawaii and the Grand Canyon sunsets exceeds those sunsets viewed from Harding Avenue. (See photo.)

WE HAD A COW

by Alice Tichy Boor

The year was around 1910 when my father, Josef Tichy, was reading the daily Czech newspaper. A real estate ad caught his eye: "Five home lots, 25 feet wide on the 5000 block of Keeler."

At an appointed time, he and three other buyers showed up. They talked the agent into dividing the five lots into four equal ones, and they all bought, then and there. To begin with there was just one outside well to service all four homes, but eventually each home had its own water supply.

My brother, Joe Tichy, was two years old when the family moved in, and Rosie, Tony and I were all born on Keeler. It was prairie, no paved streets or sidewalks. We turned the backyard into a cow pasture going as far as Kildare or beyond. My father insisted that we buy a cow, and I do have a faint memory of her. A neighbor, Mrs. Krebs, begged my mother to sell her some milk for her sick daughter. We drank the rest and grew up healthy.

I was about eight years old when the bungalows on the east side of Keeler were going up, and I always wondered whose basement the turtle ended up in that I saw crawling around.

One day a few of my friends and I went to pick pussy willows in what is now Gompers Park. We came to a shack-like structure and ran to it, intending to play in it. When we were close an arm came out of the opening waving an axe up and down. INDIANS!!! - we thought and ran home fast. When I told my father he went to investigate and found hobos living there. Later they moved under the trestle up the river.

At eight years old I was enrolled in the Sokol organization at Pulaski and Eastwood. It was a Czech gymnastic organization whose motto was, "A healthy mind in a strong body". Sokol still exists in the suburbs and across the country and has competitions and exhibitions annually. I remained a member until I was in my twenties and recall many happy times in competitions, travels and parties. The neighborhood building is still at Pulaski and Eastwood.

Every Memorial Day, the Czechs would have a parade with band music and would march to the Bohemian National Cemetery. In the early years thousands of people would attend. This event was viewed by local residents year after year.

*I guess you might say the area around Foster and Pulaski was originally settled by the Czech people, and I am proud to say I am one of them.
(See photos.)*

ASK ME BEFORE I FORGET

by *Almira Hamachek Behrendt*

I dedicate this to my friend, Dale Bolling, a fellow graduate of Palmer School who is begging me to write some ancient memories before I no longer have a recall of such:

My folks, Joseph and Albina Hamachek, moved to Kolmar Avenue in North Mayfair in December 1927. It seemed we were far out in the country. There were lots of prairies -- muddy unpaved streets and back yards that were yours to seed. (Sod was unheard of then.) My father had to park his car more than three blocks away at Argyle and Kilbourn, then walk the remaining way home.

Dad eventually got a machine shop with a partner. Money didn't come easy. It was the Depression. If someone owed on their car repair, maybe they paid you with service instead of money -- like wallpapering or painting. My uncle, George Spikings, was a carpenter. He helped us out in many ways.

At that time, there were gas lights on some of the streets, and a lamp-lighter would go from pole to pole lighting them in the evening, and in the morning he would snuff out the flames pole by pole. I remember how pretty it looked on a snowy night to see the flicker of the gas lights.

I remember, too, how excitement would come to the neighborhood when a newsboy yelling "EX-TRA PAPER, EX-TRA!" Was a new president elected or what? Was there a catastrophe somewhere? This is how we got late-breaking news before radio and television.

I was in third grade when I came to Palmer School. There was a sidewalk down Carmen. Come winter, the prairie on a block or two before school would be piled high with snow. We loved jumping through the drifts. After school, our mittens, leggings and snow caps were hung by the heat register to dry.

Our house was heated by coal. Everyone had a coal bin in the basement. Several tons were burned every winter. Ashes were used on icy stairs, etc.

Some thoughts of school days -- the Maypole Dance -- how we practiced

-- Arbor Day -- we were so serious about planting a tree. Perhaps we should have planted more. Music appreciation hour with Walter Dam-rhosh. Going to a program in the assembly hall was special. Then, there was the waffle man on the corner. For a penny, we'd get an after-lunch treat, a waffle full of powder sugar. We played a game called "Buck, Buck, how many fingers up." It was a bit rough -- but we girls still played.

I guess when my brother Donald was about ten, Mr. Gulbransen (Harold), organized a drum and bugle corps at Palmer. My brother managed to get a used bugle and was in many programs. He also joined Gulbransen's Boy Scout troop and earned his merit badges under Gulbransen's guidance. Harold's recent death and the article in the Improver sent Donald reminiscing about those days and his classmates. Where are they?

How nice it was to have the forest preserve so close! Spring brought the flowers -- jack in the pulpit, May blossoms, and violets. In summer, the river to walk by -- the rocks and the frogs. In the fall a weenie roast; then winter with ice skating or belly flopping down the hill with our sleds at Gompers Park. My Dad would take us for a walk on Sunday, pointing out the different birds, trees and plants.

Of course we were warned not to be on the railroad trestle or train track if a train was coming. One time, when it was muddy, I had to run down the side of the hill. I was full of mud. Needless to say, I had to come in the basement way when I got home for supper -- and face the "music."

In the hot summer, with no air conditioning then, we would beg to go to Lake Michigan and the beach. It was a long ride by street car, and -- Mother was right -- we were all hot and bothered by the time we got home again. In later years, we had Whealan Pool. We would walk there (quite a hike) to save our seven cents for car fare for something else.

There was a big celebration in the neighborhood when streets were paved -- a parade -- maybe some freebies. It was a big deal when Elston Avenue was paved beyond Lawrence. I remember being there. The parade included a milk man who had a horse and wagon, the ice man, the coal man. Our biggest improvement came when Foster was paved. The city was growing.

Peddlers came through the alleys, calling out their wares. We sometimes bought fruit like strawberries in season. Mom would buy a case and

make jelly. The rags and iron man would come through. You could get a few cents for old newspapers.

My uncle, Dr. S. O. Hamachek, was a dentist at Lawrence and Pulaski until 1963. Another uncle, George Spikings, lived on Keystone and Argyle. His relatives had many bazaars and gatherings at their 16 room residence on Pulaski. I was usually included on some of these occasions going with my cousins, Delores and Ruth Spikings. I remember little colored ribbons decorated a tree. You could buy a chance to win something according to the number on the ribbon.

A warm summer day still reminds me of the times we followed the ice man to get chips of ice to suck on. Or if he brought ice to your ice box, he would have to chip it to get it to fit. It was a good excuse to make lemonade.

It took only a few years after high school at Von Steuben to find out how much we missed old friends and classmates. So we started our "Club." It had no name for a long time -- until we had a treasurer and collected money for outings. We needed a name for the bank account, and we decided unanimously to call it "The Palmer Club" for our alma mater, Palmer School. By then, we were lucky enough to have husbands who joined us on many happy occasions.

We still meet once a month and have eight members. A ninth now lives in Scottsdale, Arizona. Times together have become very precious. We have been meeting for 58 years. An interesting rule we had -- which since went by the wayside -- is that you had to pay 25 cents, if you missed a meeting. You were only excused if you were in the hospital having a baby. One member was excused for that reason five times.

DEEP ROOTS

by Dale Bolling

My roots go deep in this country, this city and this neighborhood.

My maternal great grandfather came to this country as a 12 year old cabin boy on a sailing ship out of Scotland that landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia in the very early 1800's. His son, my great uncle, was decapitated by a cannonball in the Battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War. He lies

buried with the New York infantry twenty feet from the place where Abraham Lincoln gave his Gettysburg Address.

My paternal grandfather, who was an immigrant from Bohemia in the 1800's, had a blacksmith shop on the same DeKoven Street in Chicago where Mrs. O'Leary's cow, as the story goes, kicked over the lantern that started the Chicago Fire.

My step grandfather, also an immigrant from Bohemia, Frank Krenek bought property at Keystone and Ainslie in the early 1900's. His story is told elsewhere in this booklet.

The day Palmer School opened in 1926, I was one of the children who walked through the doors. I got a good primary education there from wonderful, caring teachers.

I have lived on Tripp Avenue most of my life. When my stepfather, Edward Krenek, died, my husband, Hans, and I bought the bungalow from my mother who lived with us for twenty years. Our two daughters, Claire and Valerie, have many precious memories of growing up with a grandmother in the house. 5021 North Tripp is truly a family home for us.

It was there that we weathered the Depression. On the east side of the 5000 block of Tripp seven families lost their homes because they could not make the mortgage payments. We were lucky because my stepfather, despite terrible economic conditions, was able to work every day. For everyone it was a tension-filled time because no one knew what tomorrow would bring.

It was at 5021 that we went through the hardships of World War II. Hans and I were married ten days before he had to report to Camp Grant. After only six weeks training he was sent overseas to the other side of the world, to a South Pacific island that we had never heard of. We did not see or talk to each other for three-and-a-half years. He never got a furlough, and he never got a chance to come home. But when that awful war was over, he did come home. Many did not.

Throughout the years as both a child and an adult I have enjoyed Gompers Park. As a child I was in the gym, dance and drama classes. The ice skating pond in the valley was a wonderful setting for skating -- away from the traffic on Foster and in a winter wonderland of trees next to the river. We played "crack the whip," and the last kid on the hold-hands-

chain would go flying into a snow bank.

Later, as an adult I played volleyball on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the fieldhouse. And tennis -- I think I have spent more time on the tennis courts than anyone else in the neighborhood. I started at age 15.

There was a wonderful crafts teacher at Gompers. Her name was Jessie Novak. She had magic in her fingers. She taught me how to sew, tailor, knit, crochet and make hats. Later my daughters were in her classes. I certainly got my money's worth from Gompers Park.

I have always been interested in the wider world. Hans and I joined NMIA when Joseph Waltz came to our door and told us about it. Later, when I heard about the North River Commission, I attended their meetings on my own and I became an officer, and later president. I consider my involvement with the NRC the most interesting, productive and socially significant work I have done.

My husband, Hans, and I put the North Mayfair Improver together for 13 years. The Improver is an important record of community life in the city of Chicago. (See photo.)

FRONT PAGE OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

by Eleanor Schwarz

I remember... we moved into our brand new brick house at 4759 N. Karlov in the fall of 1921. The street was not paved and there were no alleys. The house was cold and damp. The plaster was still drying out. We had a coal furnace in the basement, and my father had trouble getting the thing started. There were prairies everywhere, and, as yet, there were few houses on the block.

The Kimball "L" station was where the Lawrence Avenue trolley stopped. My mother, sister and I (in a buggy) had to walk toward Kimball to shop. There were many prairies and unpaved patches where there were no sidewalks.

When I was three-and-a-half, my mother enrolled my sister and me in Sunday School at Temple Beth Israel at Bernard and Ainslie. In the summer my mother would take us to a little park at Karlov and Argyle,

where we would play on the swings and slide. We would also walk over to Kenneth and Lawrence to shop at Piggley Wiggly. I loved that name, as you can imagine a child would.

People were pouring into our subdivision. Stores of every kind were opening up. Grocery stores, bakeries, meat markets, kosher and otherwise were appearing. Drugstores sprouted on every corner. Woolworths came, as did dry good stores, a beauty parlor, and paint and wallpaper stores. The Admiral Theater was built in the 20's. Albany Park opened a bank on Lawrence, and I had my first Christmas savings account there. It went bankrupt in the Depression, and I lost my little savings.

Life was turning from rural to urban. We still had our lamplighters, who with their bikes and ladders, came and lit our street lights at dusk and turned them off at dawn. We had a milkman with his horse and buggy deliver our milk and cream every day. The vegetable man called his wares from the alley. Even the call of the "Rags O-loin" men (buyers of paper and metal discards) could be heard. The iceman delivered ice in the summer, and the coal truck dumped tons of coal near our parkway, and big, dirty, powerful men would shovel it into our basement window.

Every summer, a tent was set up on an empty lot at Keystone and Lawrence, and for a week or so, a Christian denomination had revival meetings. My sister and I, forbidden to go, of course, went anyway and watched with fascination as people got religion. Also toward the end of summer, St. Edwards had its annual carnival in the empty lot that is now Dominicks' parking lot.

Every Saturday morning during the summer and fall, my family drove over to the Farmers' Market. It was located where the Butera store stands now at Hamlin and Elston. It was always exciting for me. The block was packed with outdoor stands displaying fruits and vegetables fresh from the farms. The farmers and their wives and children stood behind the stands and patiently waited until you picked out your purchases, and they always threw in extras. They had blueberries, raspberries, currants and gooseberries. In the fall, there were large baskets of blue grapes, bushels of apples, keifer and bartlett pears, peaches, potatoes and big sacks of onions.

On Saturday mornings, the Farmers' Market had a medicine man who would stand on a platform with several Indians in all their ceremonial finery and harangue the audience about the wonderful benefits of his concoctions. The Indians would dance and emit war cries. The crowd

loved it. On Saturday afternoons, we would take our dime and go to the Admiral for a double feature cowboy movie. The movies were in serials and were continued from week to week. They always stopped at the most climactic part. A piano was located under the stage and provided sound effects throughout these silent movies.

One evening during the middle of the week, my sister and I would go to the movies with our parents. It was usually on a dishes or furniture night. Every adult received a dish as he or she left the theater – sometimes it was a piece of a dinner set, other times a piece of carnival glass. On furniture night, they raffled off household items. One night my father won a very nice white wicker chair and pillow which he carried home on his head.

Once in awhile, there would be amateur night and anyone with talent could try his or her luck on the Admiral stage. The performer who got the biggest applause won some money.

Albany Park at this time became a thriving Jewish community. There was a great exodus of Jewish immigrants from the crowded west side moving into this lovely new area. Jewish bakeries were prevalent, kosher meat markets were numerous, delicatessens sprang up, and many small and medium temples and synagogues came into being, from store fronts to beautiful edifices to serve the reform, conservative and orthodox Jews. Living west of Pulaski we were considered heretics.

About this time, the Depression had set across the land like a long-lasting frost. Our neighbors were losing their homes and my playmates were forced to leave. We almost lost our home too, but fortunately the government loaned us the price of our mortgage. We were able to pay it back since my father worked three days a week as a diamond setter in a jewelry company in the Loop. No one really had much of anything. We were just glad to survive. My sister and I never worried about what to wear to school. We had one or two outfits. We had taken music lessons, but we were forced to give them up. No one could pay our rabbi for his membership, and so, for awhile, he worked for nothing.

We lost all of our savings during this time, and I guess they were considerable. My parents had also bought real estate bonds that defaulted, and for years my mother walked around in a house dress and slippers and was mentally depressed. Time went on. People survived somehow. Many moved in with relatives so that every room became a bedroom at

night. We were lucky. The wealthy still had money for jewelry, and my father worked, not full time but enough to provide the essentials. After I graduated from Roosevelt High School, my parents decided that I should be a teacher. I went to the Chicago Teachers' College, at that time called Normal. It was the only available place one could get a four year education for practically nothing. The tuition was \$7 a semester.

Every morning for four years, I walked the mile and a half to the Kimball elevated train to go all the way to 6700 South. I spent four hours a day coming and going. I never took the street car to the "L" because it was a separate seven cent fare. After college, there were no teaching jobs. I worked as a file clerk at Mandel Brothers Department Store. After a year, I married Robert, my high school beau whom I had gone with for five years. We were married in 1941, three months before World War II was declared. My husband's draft number came up early, but he received a 4F rating and applied for work at Motorola. In 1944, we had our first son, David, and like everyone else we stood in line to get scarce items that were rationed. The hardest for me was getting soap for the laundry and jars of baby food. Kosher meat was almost impossible to get. So in desperation, we started to buy regular meat.

When the horrendous war finally ended, there was joy, but chaos. Everyone wanted everything they had been deprived of for so long. Housing was in great demand, and landlords were gouging prospective renters with front-end payments to get an apartment. Temporary housing was erected in LaBagh Woods East.

After living in several other places, we bought a home from Mr. Sebold, located on Tripp, where we still reside. My boys went to Palmer School and I became active in the PTA there. My husband started an advertising agency.

When Steven, our younger son, reached the seventh grade he refused to go to school. We had a conference with his teacher and Mr. Wallschlaeger, the principal, and they allowed him to go directly to Lane Tech High School because grammar school was not challenging enough for him.

When my husband's advertising agency grew to fifteen employees, I stopped my part time teaching and got a Masters degree in Counseling.

The North River Commission had set-up a clinic for troubled children, and I volunteered to diagnose them through psychological testing and then

give recommendations. I worked with the NRC and got excellent results. Unfortunately, the project ended because of lack of funds. Our son, David, graduated from Ripon college, magna cum laude, and won eight fellowships plus a Fulbright scholarship to St. Andrews in Scotland, where he majored in philosophy. Later, he went to Berkeley to earn a doctorate in philosophy, studying for one year at Oxford University in England. Later, David taught at Mt. Holyoke in the East, and Steven registered at the University of Chicago for a doctorate in economics. He came to the attention of Professor Milton Friedman, who gave him a full fellowship for solving a problem that no one else in his classes had been able to solve.

After the University of Chicago, Steven joined a Chicago option clearing-house. In his early thirties, he invented a computer specifically for option traders that was a hundred times faster than the Quotron. It is still used today and is called the Schwarzatron. In 1984, Reuters purchased his company in a deal for seven million dollars that was featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. He retired at age 38.

David, after a stint of college teaching, landed a job in Washington editing the speeches of the Secretary of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as most of their regulations. He is now involved in putting all EPA information on electronic transfer. He is also involved in dealing with Taiwan, helping in their work with Washington to clean up the environment.

My husband and I have had a busy life. Because I cannot handle winters here, we bought a condominium in Florida, but we are delighted to return to North Mayfair each spring. We love to see the flowering trees and green grass, the tulips, and the jonquils. We see many new faces and are saddened by the loss of many old neighbors.

Nevertheless, the community of North Mayfair seems to exert a powerful influence on all newcomers. After awhile they settle in and become indistinguishable from the old residents. The community and the quiet pleasant life it offers seems to persist. May it continue.

MEMORIES OF NORTH MAYFAIR FROM TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA

by Carole Walti (Nelson), Torrance, California

The Fred Walti family of four moved into the first floor of a two story flat on the corner of Kolmar and Carmen avenues in 1943. Across the street was a small park where our family and my playmates such as Betty Burger, Gertrude Von Eiser and Nancy Adkins enjoyed endless hours of boisterous fun, gymnastics and picnics. I didn't live in this neighborhood long, but I learned and experienced the meaning of a community, the closeness of a neighborhood, and what friendship meant in that short period of my life. These significant surroundings and influence remained an integral part of my life's adventure and destiny.

Palmer Elementary School was spiffy and beautiful from the perspective of a seven-year-old girl named Carole Walti. The school looked new and the building and grounds were always clean, organized and well-maintained. It permeated an aura of respect and pride from the faculty to every classroom. The impeccably dressed principal, Mr. Mussehl, demanded excellence from each of us while his persona conveyed confidence and success. He was a role model we did not fear, but one we wanted to follow and emulate. Also, indelibly imprinted in my memory of today (at 61), is Mrs. Cutler who I believe taught either 3rd or 4th grade English and history/geography. She was quite stunning with her attractive white hair perfectly coiffured every day, yet her demeanor was brisk, while delivering a "no-nonsense" attitude. She rarely offered a smile -- unless you did a particularly outstanding job. She taught us well. In contrast, the new math teacher, Marjorie (I can only remember her first name) arrived like a bomb shell with great commotion and excitement for our class -- especially the boys -- because she was young and beautiful, instead of old like the rest. Her math training and knowledge were undoubtedly honorable, but we just loved coming to class to look at her. She mesmerized us with her style and beauty.

The North Mayfair community was unique in so many ways. It didn't make any difference what your last name was, what house you owned or flat you rented, or what shore your ancestors hailed from. What did matter was the sincere feeling of a caring community. We trusted each other, your word was your bond, we united together and at a minimum we tolerated people who were sometimes different. Neighbors talked and

shared with each other and watched out for one another. There were no exclusions or slammed doors. We referred to ethnic groups, but it was not a stigma. Many times my school friends and I would yell, "We'll meet at the Greeks' (Ice Cream Parlor). I actually grew up thinking that was the name of the place. My point is maybe the store's name was Joe's Ice Cream Parlor, yet we knew the name was Greek, so somehow, "The Greeks" became the name among us. It just didn't mean a thing to us, and our parents apparently didn't teach us bigotry. Whether we were Irish, Dutch, German, Swedish, Jewish, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Greek or nondescript backgrounds, it did not affect us. What I do know is, Joe's or the Greeks' ice cream parlor was located at the corner of Elston and Lawrence, and you better believe their ice cream sundaes or banana splits were heavenly!!

I had so much fun growing up in the area. I can still name a dozen classmates' full names off the top of my head to this day. Naturally, we were the famous and renowned Class of 1950 and most certainly the future leaders of our community and (maybe) country -- as we did have a few elitists around: Barbara Henning, who was as beautiful as Elizabeth Taylor (and Henning's sister, Diane), Annette Kaiser, Nancy Kraft, Alice Giankos, Gail Wall, Preston Foster, Jerry Rutherford, Gerald Mellinger, Robert Stuart, Ray Bush, Ray Berringer, Ingvar Franzen... and Roberta and Penelope (whom I dearly adored too, but can't remember their last names). I would give a million hugs to know where one might be today, since following my graduation, my family moved to Indianapolis. Admittedly, it does appear, however, that I had more fun socializing than I can recollect receiving any notable tributes or academic credits of the day... other than a pen set award for answering a math problem correctly on a Roy Rogers Radio Show.

We had fun! In the summer there was Foster Avenue Beach that awaited us after an hour's bus ride. We packed lunches that guaranteed us renewed strength for the full day of activities. Here was magnificent Lake Michigan where Dad insisted my brother, Randy, and I were ready for the big test and plunged us off the rocks. I swam for my life -- passing Dad's vigorous swimming maneuvers, too! If we went later in the day or early evening, we would hear beautiful music softly flowing across the lake from the Edgewater Beach Hotel. It was the era of big and LIVE bands. Whealan Pool was another spot. There we learned how to dive and swim endurance feats up and down the length of the pool. For some reason, I think I should have tried out for a swimming team. At times I also believed I was Esther Williams.

During the war years (WWII), we meticulously tended and cultivated our Victory Gardens. From a young girl's outlook the empty lot looked like a gargantuan prairie where hundreds of families grew their own vegetables and fruits. One must understand here, we didn't eat a variety of vegetables and our only fresh were corn on the cob, carrots and asparagus which only my mother liked. We didn't even eat tomatoes because the seeds bothered father. So the idea of growing vegetables was kind of spooky for us. We didn't like vegetables. However, and with great reluctance, our family felt compelled to help in the war effort. We watched the others in wonderment with their farming implements and abilities. They all appeared confident in contrast to us, the city-dwellers. My folks knew zilch about farming, yet they persevered, copied the tasks of others and somehow reaped a harvest of sorts. Rhubarb must have been easy to grow because we had tons of it! As one might note, Mom was a better cook than farmer -- so she made... rhubarb/pineapple sauce, rhubarb jelly, rhubarb cobbler and pies, pickled rhubarb, rhubarb wine, rhubarb upside down cake, rhubarb right-side up cake, rhubarb bread and muffins... Finally we fed the rhubarb to the dogs and cats. We broke it up for the birds. It melted the snow in the winter. We gave it away to anyone who was begging or not begging for food. We dried it for a flower arrangement. We encouraged others to eat it daily for medicinal purposes (so we said). And when mom finally made meatloaf and rhubarb that was the last straw, and... we got on with the good life... never to eat that stuff again.

In World War II, "black-outs" were common air-raid practices, usually in the evening to prepare us in case we were bombed. The neighborhood would become intensely quiet; we closed our drapes and blinds, turned off all lights and then huddled close to one another until the "all clear siren resounded." I often wondered what we would do if it was the real thing, but I didn't worry. I was so young I couldn't imagine the anxiety and fear my parents and others must have experienced. America was very lucky. Rationing was a part of life. At Elston and Lawrence, our mini-mall of the day, the butcher shop, the bakery, shoe repair and the grocery store all had long lines where people waited to buy meat, sugar, butter, etc. with ration coupons. It was difficult to get leather for our shoes. Our family car was (almost) permanently parked, due to the gasoline and rubber needed for the war effort. We didn't go on vacations and many of us didn't ride our bikes often to conserve our tires.

An independent and very small grocery was Max's located on Elston Avenue between our street, Kolmar, and the main and busy intersection

of Elston and Lawrence. I can still remember, while in Max's store probably buying cigarettes for mom (in those days small kids could do that, and we didn't smoke them either), when Max cried out excitedly, "The war is over." I ran all the way home, three-four blocks, full speed ahead to share the news. Remember this was in 1945, before TV or large communication/broadcasting systems. Everyone yelled and shouted from the doors the great news! People grabbed each other, hugging one another, swinging each other around, demonstrating great joy and exhilaration. (Editor's note: Max Gaca helped many families during the Depression by selling food to them on credit and waiting until they finally got money to pay him back.)

Gompers Park provided fun for every family throughout the calendar year. The North Mayfair community participated in all kinds of summer crafts and sports. The winter was especially my favorite time when they would freeze the football field and create our ice skating rink. The rink was literally open day and night, all weekend long, as long as the weather was freezing. My friends and family gathered there and enjoyed endless fun skating and sledding down the hill. I can still feel the cozy little warming hut where you lace up your ice skates and came in from the freezing cold for warmth and recouped energy. The beaming flood lights in the evening always made skating so romantic. I would fantasize that I was Sonja Heine.

During the summer we also took long walks and hikes through La Bagh Woods, and occasionally planned a picnic with the entire family. Another cherished memory is when we had important family guests, and we would go out for dinner and eat at the Bohemian Restaurant on Pulaski Road. My brother and I thought we were at the Ritz or downtown Chicago at the Palmer House! The only fast foods of the day was Garbage Joe's, a hot dog stand. Once in awhile on a rare evening we could catch Dad in a good mood and we'd walk over to Joe's and indulge in these delicious dogs that I still yearn for today – oh they were so scrumptious!

Another interesting place Dad discovered was an abandoned soldiers' barrack and training/maneuvering camp behind La Bagh Woods. Once there, I'm sure ignoring the "NO TRESPASS" sign, we swung on ropes, crawled through, above and around an obstacle course that the army had constructed, climbed up and down 8' wooden fences, scrambled through hollowed out tree trunks and so much more. This activity provided a magnificent adventure while our imaginations ran wild with make believe escapades and strategies -- all hard at work training for the WAR. We

developed into very tough soldiers. The calisthenics kept us busy, in good shape, and exhausted when we reached home. It definitely was our 1950 version of a health club with cheap membership dues. I looked and acted a lot more like "G.I. Jane" than Jane Russell, the current heart-throb of the time.

North Mayfair was a great place and community. It was a wonderful decade -- the forties and yes, I suspect a different era and time. Not only did we still respect our elders and listen to them with great admiration and awe, they lived with us, too. Surprise, we even honored our parents. It was the time when Crawford Avenue was renamed Pulaski Road. And when, Halloween was a time that your treat was pennies, not candy. Our practical joke for the scary night was to hold a rope across Foster Avenue, and we actually did stop cars. There were no drive-by shootings or carjackers then. It was when Ma Bell collected nickels from each coin box in your home and you could bring your old light bulbs to the Edison Company, and they would give you new bulbs, free of charge. Women still wore gloves and hats when they attended church or got dressed up for a special occasion. It was when everyone knew the dress code appropriateness dictated that white shoes were never worn before Easter or after Labor Day. It was when the Mayfair Presbyterian Church taught religion through Church Service, Sunday School and fellowship. Tom Mix, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans' movies, including various serials, ran all day long on the weekends at the Gateway and Portage Theaters. It was the time when we would devotedly inscribe on the back of personal letters, "S.W.A.K." (sealed with a kiss) and when you had lipstick on, you actually kissed it with your lips leaving the red stuff on the envelope for the mailman to smear. "Kil-roy Was Here" was the first graffiti sprawled across a fence or garage. It was the place and time where one could enroll in piano lessons at the reputable North Park Music College, close to Kedzie and Foster avenues, especially if your father wanted to instill some culture in his daughter. Those were the days pianos still appeared in some living rooms. Subsequently, I got great mileage out of playing ten or fifteen songs whenever I was at a party with a piano. It was a time when "Hubba, Hubba" was blurted out when a cute guy or gal happened to go by. And without doubt, the era was a period when girls waited to be invited out for a date and -- goodness gracious -- she never called her boyfriend on the telephone. She waited for his call.

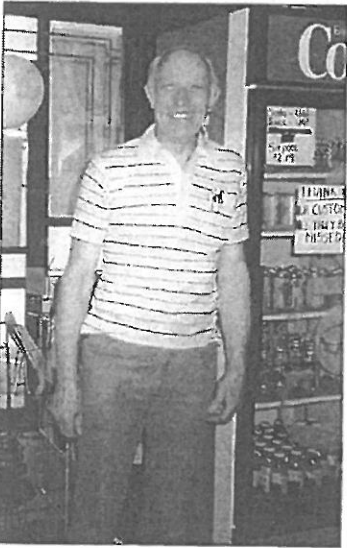
By 7th or 8th grade, we held frequent early evening "Friday Night Parties" that were chaperoned by our parents. Our parents were usually stashed upstairs in the living room while we gathered downstairs in the



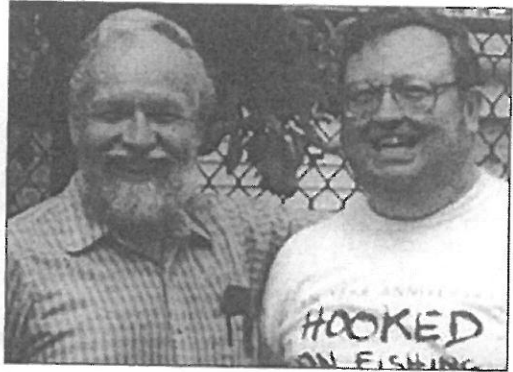
Hans Bolling, artist for Improver and other NMIA publications and Dale Bolling, editor of Improver.



James and Ruth Shouba, long-time residents.



Donald Darby, owner of Darby's Variety.



James Macdonald (left) and Anthony Watrobinski, overseers of Gompers Park.



Rose Kuhn, Improver staff and Edward Kuhn, advertising secretary.



Mary Ellen and Sylvester Quartana, long-time residents.



Marilyn Cicero, Chicago school teacher and Joseph Cicero, Executive Director of North River Commission.



Robert and Mildred Carlsen, long-time residents.



George and Lillian Karavidas, long-time residents and owners of Marie's Pizza.

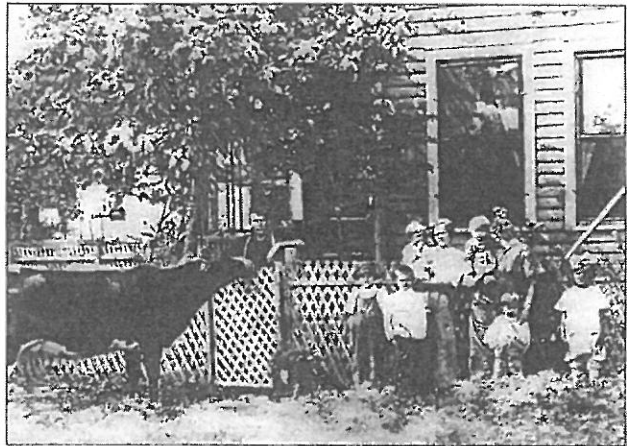


Leo Damask III, activist for trees and animals.



Krenek house at 4857 N. Keystone in about 1914.

Joseph Tichy Sr. House at 5020 N. Keeler. Novotny and Tichy children: Joseph, Mrs. Novotny center) and Mrs. (Tichy (right) in 1919.



Memorial Day Parade at Bohemian National Cemetery in the 1920's.



**William H. Spikings
Home, 4853 N.
Pulaski.**



**Palmer School
after renovation
in 1985-86.**

**Pristine woods that
were brutally clear-
cut for Sauganash
Homes develop-
ment at Bryn Mawr
and the railroad
tracks. Habitat for
deer, birds and
other animals were
destroyed. (Photo
by Leo Damask III.)**



respect for each other. There was only a bit of juvenile mischief from time to time, but we children were too afraid of getting in trouble with the adults to do much. Most of the mothers were at home, watching their children. The old people mingled well with the young people. I was good friends with several of the retired persons on the block. I would talk with them out in their front yards or on their front porches. This was a time of trust and innocence. We generally didn't lock our doors except at night when I was a young girl.

As pre-teens, my sister, Claire, (18 months older than I), some girlfriends on the block, and I put out a block newspaper, which we did all by ourselves. We did this for two years, mostly in the summer. It was called "The Tripune" (a takeoff on the Chicago Tribune and based also on our street's name, Tripp Avenue). We interviewed neighbors, wrote the stories, typed them on a manual typewriter, and made carbon paper copies. Then, we sold the copies for a nickel. We worked very hard on our paper and rarely got in trouble for the information we published.

Twice we organized a talent show in our basement -- complete with typed programs, paid tickets, costumes, a swivel-necked dancer, clowns, singing numbers, comedy acts, curtains and refreshments. We thought we were good! We girls did every part and detail. We filled our basement with children.

We also organized a wonderful outside event one summer with some REAL help from the nice man next door -- Eddie Klafeta. His two little daughters were our playmates. Eddie really took our efforts seriously that year and made us a beautiful hot dog stand out of wood and cardboard for our REAL LIVE FUN FAIR. Again, we sold tickets and acted like grown-ups. We had games and contests -- and prizes. It was great. I still see Eddie and his wife, Lillian, today. They are unforgettable.

Their oldest daughter, Janet, remains one of my closest soul mates in life. We write to each other on e-mail daily. Janet is four years younger than I and was my "little buddy" when we were growing up side by side on Tripp Avenue. Her house next door was so close to mine that I could look out of my bedroom window and see right into her bathroom window -- IF I wanted to. We each heard each other's family spats -- VERY WELL! I have known her since she was two, and I was six.

Eddie also used to make the niftiest snow slide in his backyard each year just for us. He would work really hard to build it high, with stairs and all.

He made it semi-permanent by pouring buckets of water on it and smoothing and shaping it perfectly. It was like a glorified snow fort or an ice tower. It was a frozen rollercoaster to us! We tumbled and slid down it on our bottoms and risked life and limb by bringing our sleds up there to teeter on the brink. Eddie was, and still is, a great daddy.

I am also proud to say that I spent a lot of quality time with the fine Archambault family at their home on Kostner. I was always welcome there. They are terrific people. I never felt that I was in the way, despite the fact that they had seven children, including two sets of twins. I camped with them, loved white washing their basement, and often wished that I lived with them. Their daughter Carol is still my close friend. She lives in New Hampshire today, but we get together weekly on e-mail. I have known her and her family since she and I were both five. Now we are almost fifty. That's hard to believe!

On our block on Tripp Avenue, we lived two blocks from the "busy" street, Foster Avenue and the huge Gompers Park and fieldhouse. The busses to all-over-the-city run past that park. We could also take the bus either east or west to get trains to downtown or elsewhere. We enjoyed Gompers Park and its programs. All were free then. We loved being in OUR park. It was much like our own backyard. We were comfortable there. We fished, skated, biked, sledged, acted in drama classes, immersed ourselves in crafts (with the most wonderful Mrs. Novak), and tried to excel in gymnastics and dancing lessons -- all at that park.

When I was young, the park's playground equipment was way down in the valley, right out of sight of the street. It adjoined the spooky, but very interesting La Bagh Woods Forest Preserve and also bumped up against the north branch of the Chicago River. Janet and I, especially, loved playing on those swings! My family, friends and I enjoyed hiking through the woods and over the train tracks. We often stared through the fence at the green river and wondered how any fish could live in that water. It smelled quite foul then. Today, the slides and swings have been moved up to the street level, and the river is cleaner.

If we walked three blocks in the other direction from our house (south) we found another "busy" street, Lawrence Avenue. When I was REALLY little, this street even had a full-fledged trolley car system, which made sparks overhead. Lawrence leads to downtown via busses and their connecting trains in both directions, just like Foster. In my youth, it had many stores, a public library and two movie theaters. One theater -- the

Gateway -- is the Copernicus Center today. The shows, as we called them were the only air-conditioned places around and also their movies were in living color -- unlike the televisions of the era. These factors were a real draw to us. Our parents would drop us at the doors, or we would walk to the "shows" ourselves. Our favorite films were the big horror movies that were the rage then, such as Edgar Allen Poe's The Pit and the Pendulum. We would hide under our coats, shivering from fear -- and from the air conditioning that was always turned up way too high!

As a girl, I was never idle for long. I was in a variety of clubs and activities throughout grade school and high school and went to summer camp once with several neighborhood girls, my sister and my cousin. The city afforded me opportunities for learning how to swim and play the piano. I also enjoyed singing -- and drama instruction beyond Gompers Park. I took art lessons at three fine schools downtown. I loved the nearness of many schools and parks to North Mayfair via the good transportation to downtown and elsewhere. I credit my dear parents for steering me into good activities and for supporting my choices as I grew up.

We Chicago kids liked to walk long distances as youths, up and down the big city's streets and others. We also roller skated a lot and biked far away. We hung out downtown as teens and enjoyed the free ladies' day at Wrigley Field. We also worked downtown at the Bismark/Palace Theater as usherettes and got to love walking around the Loop.

Like most of the neighborhood's teens, we attended Carl Schurz High School, often taking busses there and walking home. However, many mornings a good, patient neighbor across the alley drove us there. His name was Tony Tichy. He and his family were long time residents in the neighborhood -- just like mine.

After college, I came back to the neighborhood full time to work at the Bryn Mawr Country Club on Pulaski Road, Wolke and Kotler's Department Store at Milwaukee and Lawrence, and Skil Corporation at Elston and Cicero. I took classes at North Park College, Northeastern Illinois University and Moody Bible Institute. I also had two jobs in the art field, which were very enjoyable, in the Loop and on North Michigan Avenue downtown.

I met my husband at the Skil job. He still works for that company which is called S-B Power Tool Company now. We continue to enjoy the city with our family and friends. We try to make it down to the Moody Bible

Institute at least once a year as well as State Street and the lakefront.

When I was growing up, I thought that Chicago was the best city anywhere. I was almost patriotic about it. I could never imagine living anywhere else for long. I was so in love with Chicago that, when I went away to college, I took a recording of Frank Sinatra's "My Kind of Town" with me. I drove my roommates crazy playing it and sniveling over missing MY big city.

However, in 1977, after I married and started a family, I moved to Hoffman Estates, a northwest suburb of Chicago. It took me a long time to adjust to being "way out here." But now, I love its wide-open spaces. Suburban living does have its advantages. I appreciate the great parking especially. BUT my new home will never be the unique place of my youth. I especially miss all of the conveniences and friendliness that I knew in the big city. However, I am very glad that I can still visit Chicago and enjoy it today. Yes, Chicago and North Mayfair are dear memories, but they are also part of my present life too. My husband continues to work very close to North Mayfair, and my parents remain on Tripp Avenue in that same wonderful house. When I visit them, I often walk or drive around the places of my youth and reminisce. Now I am happy to be able to share these special places with my three children. Chicago is still my kind of town!

THE CREEK GLISTENED IN THE SUNLIGHT

by Leo Michael Damask III

I first became aware of the North Mayfair neighborhood as I passed by on the Pulaski bus, taking my mother to the health clinic at North Park Village. Our first impression was the beauty of Gompers Park in the spring, with its ornamental trees in full bloom. We noticed how nicely landscaped it was, and how the creek glistened in the sunlight as it flowed down to the river.

We liked what we saw, and since my mother was nearing 80 and in failing health, I gave up my Lincoln Park apartment to take care of her, her dog Lucky and her six birds. And North Mayfair is where we settled in 1988.

Walking Lucky three times a day, I discovered a charming neighborhood with fine neighbors (many dog lovers like us) who cared about their community by joining NMIA, attending meetings, doing periodic park

clean-ups, planting community gardens, etc.

In several Improve articles I stressed the importance of trees in our lives. I also hand-delivered flyers to homes without trees with information on how to get them. In other articles in the Improve, I urged folks to plant more flower boxes and flower beds. I borrowed a wheelbarrow and mulched many trees in Gompers Park, and I made a wood chip footpath alongside the Gompers Park wetlands.

All in all, North Mayfair is a great place to live, and that is why the community is always striving to keep it that way. (See photo.)

MISS GAFKE'S GIFT

by Claire Bolling Slepicka

A teacher's gift of caring can span generations. More important than teaching the three R's is discovering the natural gifts within each child. Elsie Gafke, a beloved teacher at Palmer School for many decades, relished in finding the talents in her students.

She'd work on lessons with individual students, slipping in creative nudges in music, writing and art. In her gentle yet sure voice, she'd announce a word of praise for students' accomplishments particularly in writing, music and artwork. She was an arts person. The best praises were delivered one-on-one. A word of encouragement from Miss Gafke was pure gold.

Miss Gafke had an aura about her for the arts. Dressed in flowing skirts and colorful neck scarves, Miss Gafke with her wispy blonde hair wrote notes to parents in perfumed ink, notes that made a child feel like a star.

Once in awhile, she'd offer a special treat such as a Saturday visit with a few special students to the Art Institute. One time, among others in her little group were my sister, Valerie, myself, and my mom – all present or former students of hers. In the sunlight of the Art Institute's outside garden we seemed to be part of an impressionist summer scene. We were Miss Gafke's girls. Sampling salads and ladylike delicacies at lunch, we learned manners and sensitivity to her ideas. Creativity was on the tip of our tongues.

I remember my mom's keen interest in Miss Gafke's comments, "Valerie is the artist and Claire's the poet," thus bringing confidence to the budding abilities in my sister and myself. As life moved on, her insights proved true. Today Valerie is the artist and I am the writer.

A special teacher defines each student and leaves a legacy of inspiration. She finds the nugget of talent within each of her students. Thank you, Miss Gafke.

EXTRAORDINARY MEN

by Dale Bolling

The following neighbors have contributed to our common good in varied ways. What follows is a summary of their careers.

HAROLD GULBRANSEN -- SCOUT LEADER

Harold was the dedicated Scoutmaster of the largest Boy Scout troop in Chicago, Troop 876, that met at the Mayfair Presbyterian Church. He also started the very first Cub Scout troop in Chicago. At Palmer School he organized and directed a drum and bugle corps. His brother, Richard, was the school engineer.

For 73 years, Mr. Gulbransen was a member of the Boy Scouts organization, and he was awarded every honor the scouts can bestow. "The guy did an astronomical amount of things in scouting," said Jack Peterson, a friend and Boy Scout colleague. "This was one heck of a patriotic guy." He passed his patriotism on to generations of boys. Harold's parents were Norwegian immigrants who settled in Logan Square. They were charter members of Minnekirken, the quaint Norwegian church that still graces the Square. A stained glass window is dedicated in their memory.

Harold was a big man, six feet three inches tall, and he weighed 250 pounds, every ounce filled with energy and good humor. He had a firm, strong handshake into his nineties. People remembered Harold. He was respected and admired.

He lived in the 5000 block of Keeler and had an open door policy to his

basement. Scouts were welcome to come in and work on their projects after school. He made sure the boys earned their honor badges. He was a stickler for promptness. Every event he had anything to do with started on time. He was a friend, mentor and positive influence on many boys in North Mayfair.

Harold served in both World War I and World War II. In 1943, the troopship he was on was sunk by a Japanese torpedo. He spent two harrowing days in the storm tossed South Pacific. Finally, he was picked up by a United States Navy minesweeper, waterlogged and unable to walk, 75 miles from where his boat sank. Thousands of men died in that ordeal. At 89, Harold was vigorous enough to "pump iron" at a weight training center in Elk Grove Village. When NMA had a 60th anniversary party at North Park Village, Harold joined us in the festivities.

Later, Harold moved to the Veterans' Home in Manteno, Illinois. On June 27, 1997 he would have been 100 years old, but he died on March 11, just before he would have reached the century mark.

As said at his funeral, "Probably no school or park will be named for him, but his life is immortalized in the character of the boys whose lives he imbued with the high ideals of the Boy Scouts of America."

GROVES KILBOURN -- OUTDOORSMAN

Groves Kilbourn lived on Keeler across from the sloping hills of Gompers Park. He had a bird's eye view of the changing of the seasons, lush in the spring, ablaze in autumn and sparkling with winter snow. He loved nature.

Groves had a background in journalism, but he was also a guide in our national parks. Early in his career, he wrote for the Fairbanks Daily News in Alaska, and later he was on the staff of a newspaper in Dallas, Texas. He interviewed famous people such as Will Rogers, Roald Amundsen and people connected with Charles Lindberg's solo flight across the Atlantic.

Groves was born in Texas and was the son of a minister. He was an authority on Glacier National Park in Montana. He hiked every trail in that

beautiful park and climbed many of its peaks. He was a professional guide. A friend described him as an "extraordinary man of the mountains."

He hiked and climbed in the Grand Canyon. He made the very first solo climb up Mount Edith Cavell in the remote Canadian Rockies.

One adventure he had occurred in the Grand Tetons in Wyoming. He was asleep in a teepee supplied by the Colorado Mountain Club when he was awakened and asked to make room for a new arrival, a Mr. Jackson. "I made room for him, and both of us went to sleep immediately. About daylight I was called out for a scheduled climb, and thought no more of Mr. Jackson until at supper when someone asked me if I knew who he was. "No," I answered, only to be informed that I had missed the chance to ask at least a few questions of William Henry Jackson, the photographer of the West whose pictures of Yellowstone helped lead to the formation of our first national park. Jackson lived several years longer, but I never had the luck to have him in my teepee again."*

Groves served in World War I and World War II. During his service in World War II his ability to read the stars led to an assignment to write a navigational manual for the United States Army. He was allowed to use the Vatican Library for research.

It was no accident that, when he retired, he and his wife, Alice, chose a house right across the street from the natural beauty of Gompers Park.

Groves was a regular attendee at our NMIA meetings.

* William Henry Jackson, born April 4, 1843, was noted for his landscape photographs of the American West. He photographed local Indian tribes and the Union Pacific Railroad when it was built. From 1870 to 1878 he was the official photographer for the U.S. Geological Survey of the Territories. His photographs of the wonders of northwestern Wyoming, taken during the survey of 1871, were instrumental in the establishment of our first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872. He photographed the Grand Tetons in 1872 and Mesa Verde in Colorado. Source: *Encyclopedia, Britannica*.

JOSEPH CICERO -- URBAN PLANNER

Joseph Cicero, our neighbor and past President of the NMIA and past Executive Director of the North River Commission, and his wife, Marilyn, have lived in North Mayfair for many years. Marilyn is a high school English teacher in the Chicago Public Schools.

Mr. Cicero has helped renew and uplift deteriorating areas of our community. He has worked hard to preserve open space, like North Park Village, a green treasure in the city, which would have disappeared without the foresight of the North River Commission.

At the Commission, he was at first a dedicated volunteer. The Commission was founded in 1962. Dr. William Frederickson from North Park University, a Fulbright scholar and Professor of Economics, and Joe Cicero were both early workers for the Commission and its planning goals.

Joe's academic background includes a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School. After several years of volunteering for the NRC, he was hired as its executive director, and today, the NRC is a multifaceted organization with separate but allied corporations dealing with commercial revitalization and residential rehabilitation. Among the other groups under his oversight were the North Park Village Advisory Board and the Albany Park Planning Committee.

Cicero and Dr. Frederickson were integrally involved in the establishment of North Park Village. This project was the conversion of the old Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium at Bryn Mawr and Pulaski into low-cost senior housing, a park, quality condominiums, a public/private health center, a recycling center, a much acclaimed nature center and the beautiful new gymnasium center.

Cicero oversaw the Lawrence Avenue Development Corporation that has produced 30 million dollars of investment, 2,000 new jobs and new or rehabbed structures up and down Lawrence Avenue. These include the intersections of Kedzie, Kimball, Pulaski and Elston.

He helped in the conversion of the old Bankers Life headquarters into new and rehabbed buildings, now called the Mayfair Town Center. This project created 800 new jobs, two dozen new companies, a beautiful library, new senior housing, a bank, facade improvements, a Swedish Covenant Hospital facility, new condominiums and more improvements to come.

The development of new hiking and biking trails including a park named for Dr. Frederickson was accomplished by the NRC with the strong involvement of Cicero and Frederickson.

All of these projects involved a lot of savvy, elbow grease and tenacity. Most projects have been complicated. None have been easy. Forces in the communities had to be coalesced. The structures of city government had to be understood. Financial hurdles had to be surmounted. Opposing views had to be heard and compromises made.

Mr. Cicero, urban planner, with the help and support of many, many people over the years in the NRC, has done a great service for our North Mayfair community and the City of Chicago. **(See photo.)**

GEORGE KARAVIDAS -- BUSINESSMAN

Our neighbor, George Karavidas, operates Marie's Pizza located at Kedvale and Lawrence. The business was started by his father, Theodore, in 1940. George and his family moved into North Mayfair in 1947 from the area of the University of Illinois, Chicago Campus. George comes from a family of seven children. The youngest brother graduated from Palmer School and the oldest brother lost his life in World War II.

George married Lillian Galanopoulos in 1951. Their children, Ted and Nadine, graduated from Palmer School. The family business has grown and changed with the community. In 1950, it expanded, adding its delicious pizza and pasta to the menu. It is now a 140 seat restaurant.

George has been an asset to North Mayfair. He has sponsored sports teams, contributed to scholarships and helped in the financing of this history book. Many of his employees are neighborhood people. (cont)

George is a member and past president of the Mayfair Lions Club and a member of the Albany Park Chamber of Commerce. He has been an advertiser in the Improver for many years, and the revenue from advertisements makes it possible to put the Improver at your doorstep, free of charge.

Many of us are familiar with his cozy restaurant, home of his excellent pizza. It's a neighborhood gathering place. Walk in and you are sure to meet someone you know. George has added to the stability and cohesiveness of our neighborhood. (See photo.)

JOHN D. MACARTHUR -- ENTREPRENEUR

John MacArthur was said to be a tight-fisted, wise-cracking billionaire who raked in money -- most of it at Bankers Life and Casualty Company at Elston and Lawrence.

John's father was William Telfer MacArthur, a popular speaker and Bible teacher of his day, often preaching to audiences as large as 6,000. He was a fire and brimstone religious zealot who considered himself an earthly stand-in for God. However, it is said that William abused his wife and seven children, including John. They seldom had adequate food or shelter. He beat them. Frightening visions of hell-fire were indelibly stamped on their psyches. Guilt and sin terrified them.

Before John's father came to the States, he was a Canadian farmer. He was a first cousin of General Douglas MacArthur.

In his childhood, John was very poor, and he developed a driving desire to be very rich. He had only a grammar school education, but he became very shrewd and tough. In business deals, no one got the better of him. No one.

He had skinflint habits, like saving his cigarette butts in his pockets along with half eaten sandwiches. He dressed in rumpled clothing and cared nothing about the accoutrements of wealth, such as fancy clothes and expensive automobiles. His favorite drink was scotch and he owned his own distillery. According to some accounts he always looked unkempt and unwashed.

John bought Bankers Life for \$2,500 in 1935. By 1947, the company expanded into 14 states and had a yearly premium income of 5.5 million dollars. In 1940, he purchased two buildings at Elston and Lawrence. When he started to sell insurance through the mail by newspaper ads, he told his wife, "This is our private Fort Knox." Mail order insurance became very lucrative.

According to one account, his original home offices' interiors resembled weird castles in Boris Karloff movies and were a network of dimly lit corridors. Because he did not want anyone else to have the concessions, he operated a restaurant and a tavern on the premises. Every working day he had the tenant of his Libertyville farm sell produce and eggs outside the company's main exit.

At a Bankers Life annual picnic he ordained himself the head chef and proceeded to burn the baked beans. The following night after a meeting of the Bankers Board of Directors, he invited the executives to dinner in his apartment. The main dish was burnt baked beans.

He hired handicapped people because he learned they could efficiently handle desk jobs and would work for a salary far below that of the average employee. At one time, 26 percent of the employees were handicapped. He never claimed noble motives for hiring the handicapped. He said, "Hell, I was just trying to save some money."

He came to the Florida scene in 1950. At one time he owned 100,000 acres of land including the 32,000 acre winter quarters of the Barnum and Bailey Circus in Sarasota.

He owned the Colonnades Beach Hotel in Palm Beach Shores, Florida, and he lived in an apartment above the hotel. Like his property in North Mayfair, the hotel was makeshift. He had no regard for building permits or blueprints and things of that nature. He hired the cheapest labor. MacArthur thought laws were for someone else.

John was the youngest son of a success-oriented family. His brother, Charles, was co-author of the hit play, "The Front Page" and the husband of actress Helen Hayes, whose son James MacArthur is also an actor. His brother Alfred was a Chicago insurance tycoon, and his brother Telfer was a newspaper publisher.

He owned the Citizen's Bank and Trust Company of Park Ridge, at that time the second largest bank in Illinois. Instead of paying his employees by check, he paid them with a deposit slip to a checking account in their name. That way he could hold onto the money a little longer.

At the time of his death in 1978, John owned 45 companies and employed 15,000 people. He owned 61 buildings in New York City, the 100,000 acres of Florida property, hotels, golf courses, papermills, farms, utility firms, oil wells, real estate firms, restaurants, a car rental agency, an advertising agency and a liquor company.

The truly significant part of the MacArthur story is that when he died in 1978, according to his wishes, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation was established. This is a private, independent, grant-making entity set up for charitable and public purposes. It finances help for education, literacy, media (including many WTTW programs) and programs for peace and international cooperation, population studies and the world environment. All of these endeavors are attempts to improve the human condition.

Many people from North Mayfair worked at Bankers. Because of the 24-hour schedule, housewives could go to work after taking care of the cooking and cleaning and children during the day, when the husbands came home from their jobs. This double income helped pay many mortgages in the community.

Conversely, North Mayfair played a significant role in the accumulation of this wealth and subsequently contributed to the philanthropy it engendered.

The big question is -- why did a penny pinching, cigarette-butt-in-the-pocket man establish this philanthropic foundation? Could it be that his fire and brimstone evangelistic preacher father put the fear of God in him? He once told John, "I prayed that God would make you rich, so you could help people, and now that He has done it, don't you forget it." Or, was he simply trying to avoid paying taxes?

Sources: John D. MacArthur - A View from the Bar
 Sanford
 The Stockholder William Hoffman

JAMES SHOUBA -- SOLID CITIZEN

Jim Shouba came to Chicago from Flatbrush, New York as a young boy. He has lived in the Mayfair area since 1919, first south of Lawrence, and later as a married man at 5042 N. Kedvale. As he tells it, he has been around as long as George Karavidas has been flipping pizzas. (Not exactly.)

He has early memories of our neighborhood. He fished in the river, but he won't admit to eating the fish, ice skated on the Little Gompers pond, and played baseball on the Salvation Army land.

Early in his working career, he got a job with the architectural firm of Edwin H. Clark -- formerly called Otis and Clark. Mr. Clarke was a graduate of Yale University and was well connected financially and socially. Jim started as an office boy, later he learned how to prepare building specifications, advanced to drafting, and then supervised construction.

The firm of Otis and Clark had built many buildings on the campus of the Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium. Most of these fine buildings have been recycled into our great neighborhood asset now called North Park Village.

A friend of Jim's had done some consulting work for the Field Museum of Natural History. Mr. Stanley Field mentioned to Jim's friend that the museum was seeking a young man to help the aging superintendent. Jim applied for the job and was interviewed personally by Mr. Field. As Jim said, "My scanty formal academic record might have looked minor league compared to the scholarly staff of PhD's. But my knowledge of construction and work experience plus a big boost by a high recommendation from Mr. Clark got me the job." He was 31 at the time.

It is at the Museum that Jim made a significant contribution to the cultural life of Chicago. The mission of the Museum is to research the earth and its people. Its major areas of interest are anthropology, zoology, geology and botany. It has extensive collections in all these areas and a capable scientific staff who prepare the exhibits. Visitors come from all over the world.

The building, itself, is a masterpiece. It contains 800,000 sq. ft. of space on four floors. Its exterior surface is marble. It is so huge that the roof surface measures five acres.

During his career, Jim's main responsibility was the maintenance of this building, and he directed a staff of 40 men and women. He also had the responsibility for laying out plans for temporary exhibits.

A major travelling exhibit was the Masada. The exhibit came from the Jewish Museum in Upper Manhattan, New York. Jim went to New York to photograph and measure its various components. It was a large and important exhibit with artifacts dating back to 66 A.D. when Jewish zealots refused to surrender to the Romans. When they found their situation hopeless they killed each other, and the last man committed suicide. It is an ancient, sad story. In 1960, the ruins of Masada were excavated and became the basis of this exhibit.

Simultaneously with his career at the Museum was his everyday life in North Mayfair as a husband, father to Michael and Ann Marie, citizen and neighbor. Jim and his wife, Ruth, joined the NMIA when the dues were \$2 per year. He was the advertising secretary after Joseph Waltz died. He was involved in defeating the Salvation Army's plans to build a high rise building on their property on Pulaski. He helped in the work to get the flea market and Princess Electra Restaurant demolished and Dominicks built at Lawrence and Pulaski.

Throughout the years he has been generous with his carpentry skills. He built an impressive cross for the Mayfair Lutheran Church. He made useful tripods for the North River Commission, and he taught neighborhood boys crafts and how to handle a hammer.

He is known affectionately on his block by little kids, who call him "Uncle Jim." He has helped elderly neighbors go to doctors and to grocery stores, including Mr. Groves Kilbourn, our outdoorsman, described earlier.

He votes. He reads. He and Ruth have attended more than 40 Elderhostels at colleges all over the country. He is a solid citizen.. He is 90 years old. **(See photo.)**

CHRONOLOGICAL STORY OF NORTH MAYFAIR FROM PAGES OF THE "IMPROVER"

by Dale Bolling

(See Centennial and North Mayfair, U.S.A. booklets for
years prior to 1987)

1987

January -- Executive Board members **Dale Bolling, James Shouba, Sylvester Quartana, Harold Miskin** and **Joesph B. Cicero** and the NMIA itself are targets of lawsuits brought by NMIA member **Marlene Brown**. Ms. Brown alleges that her professional standing and character have been harmed by actions taken by the Executive Board when it reprimanded her for failing to communicate to it matters of importance to the Association in connection with incidents and meetings about crime in and around homes near La Bagh Woods. As a Vice President of NMIA, she should have brought the problems to our Board, but she took unilateral action. Our Association had no choice but to defend itself. Alzheimer and Gray will be our legal counsel.

February -- Japanese-American Service Committee purchased 2.5 acres east of the river on south side of Foster. Plans for 150 bed nursing home in a four story building were discussed.

A suggestion to use tape recorders as an aid to our secretary in taking minutes was voted down.

It was reported that the first Tot Lot program was held at the fieldhouse on January 7. Tot Lot is a cooperative operated by parents, for parents

and their children.

April -- Money for legal defense fund in **Marlene Brown's** suit against NMIA will be raised through donations, spaghetti dinners, a picnic and sale of North Mayfair, U.S.A. booklets.

June -- Three college scholarships awarded. One through the generosity of **Edward Kuhn** in memory of his father, the other two through the generosity of **Barbara Iverson** and **George Karavidas**.

September -- **Marlene Brown's** defamation suit has been resolved. The judge found that the officers were carrying out the Association's business and there were no grounds for such a lawsuit. The case was dismissed.

Dominicks at Lawrence and Pulaski is under construction.

The North River Commission (NRC) celebrates 25th year anniversary with a dinner and ceremony at North Park Village

November -- Need for recycling was highlighted. Within five years it is predicted the city will begin to run out of landfills for solid waste. Please use the recycling center at North Park Village.

1988

January -- **Bob Carlsen**, Membership Chairman, lists advantages to homeowners in NMIA membership. He says, "If you have complaints that the NMIA is not doing enough or is making mistakes, please attend meetings and do *your* part to make things better. Keeping our community a desirable place to live is everyone's responsibility.

February -- Article by **Joseph B. Cicero** suggesting the real solution to traffic problems is to improve mass transit.

March -- The Chicago Historical Society was given "Improvers" from 1936 when first published to current date. (They are now mailed every month to the Society.)

April -- Our Association backed by **Alderman Anthony Laurino** and the NRC appeared before the Chicago Plan Commission regarding commercial development at St. Lucas Cemetery. We won that round. **David Mosen** of the city's Department of Economic Development called the developer's plans an unwarranted intrusion.

Play lot at Kolmar and Carmen renovated. **Fran Horner** leads effort.

Dominicks is scheduled to open soon. "Rev up your shopping carts and get on your mark."

Mrs. Ann Mayers volunteered to fill the fieldhouse planting tubs with red geraniums.

June -- Proposed manufacturing plant and rezoning of Montrose Cemetery by the Alter Group was voted down by the Chicago Plan Commission. **Alderman Anthony Laurino**, the Brynford Park Association, the NRC and our own doggedly devoted cemetery committee worked together to defeat this project.

Illinois Department of Transportation changes in Kennedy/Edens junction were monitored by **Kirk Maier**. NMIA picnic planned for Gompers Park on June 26.

September -- **Mary Ellen Quartana** works hard establishing Block Watches.

October -- Campaign starts against illegal apartments in single family homes and two-flats. **Alderman Anthony Laurino's** office assists in this project.

November -- Attendance at NMIA Tot Lot has been fantastic. **Debbie Buschbacher** leads the effort.

1989

January -- It was reported that on December 14, a group of about 20 teens and five adults met at the Beat-Rep. office to discuss needs of teens in North Mayfair. A social-recreational counselor from Northwest Youth Outreach contacted through the NRC will work with the teens.

March -- Local School Council bill passed in state legislature. Palmer School will have a council starting July 1, 1989.

May -- NMIA has 60 year "bash" at North Park Village.

June -- Seven representatives from NMIA attend Cook County Court session regarding rowdy behavior at La Bagh Woods. Forest Preserve police have been very cooperative.

September -- Article about TAXES/PROTEST/SCHOOL REFORM/ACCOUNTABILITY written by **Joseph B. Cicero**, Executive Director of NRC.

October -- Urge residents to vote for Local School Council Representatives.

Circuit Judge **Robert Skolodowski** ruled that the St. Lucas Cemetery Association can sell their property at the northwest corner of Pulaski and Foster.

November -- The Corporation counsel for the City of Chicago filed an appeal on behalf of NMIA on **Judge Skolodowski's** decision. The law firm of Mayer, Brown and Platt agreed to represent NMIA free of charge.

December -- **Pat Centeno**, librarian of the Mayfair Library, informs NMIA that she is forming a "Friends of the Library" group.

Alderman Anthony Laurino says he will support us in our fight against the shopping center at Foster and Pulaski.

1990

January -- St. Lucas Cemetery Committee reports that churches that support the cemetery have been leafletted by going to the congregations and handing out flyers.

February -- Members urged to write to **Mayor Richard M. Daley** opposing Jewel development at Pulaski and Foster.

March -- 1200 signatures collected by volunteers **Toni Hemle, Ann Mayer, Ann Varas, Darlene Shue, Bob Moroney, Billie Andrews, Stu Archambault** and others opposing development at St. Lucas.

April -- Alderman **Anthony Laurino** accompanied NMIA members to **Mayor Richard M. Daley's** office to present the 1200 petitions.

May -- Nature walks scheduled for Gompers Park. Lagoon naturalization committee seeks to upgrade the wetlands in Gompers Park. **Barbara Iverson** leads effort.

September -- Request for help in keeping Gompers Park beautiful. Our 39 acre park is the focal point in our community. Use the park. Three times around the lagoon is a mile. Walk -- pick up litter.

October -- Plans for a traffic payment center at North Park Village opposed. **Alderman Anthony Laurino** will not support us. He says **Mayor Daley** wants it there.

"Denver boot" crews start to immobilize scofflaw cars in North Mayfair.

NMIA gives \$1,000 donation to tornado victims in the Plainfield, Illinois area through the Salvation Army.

November -- Marie's Pizza, owned by our neighbor, **George Karavidas**, celebrates 50 years in the business.

1991

January -- NMIA, Peterson Park Association and Northeastern Illinois University are sponsoring an aldermanic debate for candidates in the 39th Ward.

February -- NRC receives Friends of the Park award for advocating the removal of the parking ticket service office from North Park Village.

March -- Debate at Northeastern went well. **Alderman Anthony Laurino** did not attend.

Dr. Duff, Commissioner of the Chicago Libraries announces plans to merge our Mayfair Branch with the Independence Branch. **Cheryl Flood** urges us to use the library more and write letters against the consolidation to **Mayor Daley** and **Alderman Anthony Laurino**.

April -- A new principal, **Frank Allocco**, has been selected by the Local School Council.

Play lot at Gompers will be moved from the valley to high ground on the hill.

May -- Illinois Appellate Court denies our appeal on St. Lucas Cemetery development. In talking to the developer, it has been noted that land that borders Gompers Park and La Bagh Woods is dedicated or set aside as a right of way to extend Kostner northward. This roadway would be undesirable so close to the park. **Alderman Anthony Laurino** is setting up a meeting with NMIA representatives and traffic planners to discuss this problem.

September -- Cost of moving and improving Gompers Play lot will include \$40,000 in equipment improvements.

City wants to close North Park Village Recycling Center and replace it with a Waste Management facility that would accept only newspaper. Members urged to fight this proposal by signing petitions.

NMIA fights zoning changes for a church at 4142 W. Lawrence. We oppose because a religious use in the midst of the commercial properties is inappropriate and could cause disinvestment by businesses.

October -- New Harold Washington Library Center opens at 400 S. State. This is the largest public library in the western hemisphere.

1992

February -- Question of potential extension of Kostner from Foster to Peterson discussed. Motion passed to oppose extension.

March -- Petitions regarding extension of Kostner collected. Both St. Lucas and Montrose Cemeteries have considerable acreage to be developed.

April -- President **Barbara Iverson** resigned because she is moving.

Alderman Anthony Laurino promised to introduce an ordinance in the City Council undedicating Kostner on March 26.

Twelve acres of North Park Village, corner of Pulaski and Bryn Mawr are for sale or lease. Two dates set for community hearings on this project.

May -- **Sylvester Quartana** to finish President term of **Barbara Iverson**.

Bridge at Foster and Pulaski will be widened.
Deep Tunnel project will begin.

North Mayfair celebrates 50 years of service of the Mayfair Library.
There will be a parade and other festivities.

Alderman Anthony Laurino did introduce an ordinance to undedicate Kostner. We were told it would take six to eight weeks to go through the committee process.

Leo Damask III urges residents to call city hall with requests that trees be planted in the parkways. He also urged people to plant more flowers in front of their homes.

June -- Gompers Park Advisory Council requests concrete ballards in parkway along Foster.

Concerns voiced about safety issues when Deep Tunnel work is underway with 500 children playing in park during summer.

September -- Library Commemorative issues of "Improver" with list of events August 1 - October 31.

October -- **Pat Centeno**, Mayfair Branch head librarian thanks NMIA for its help in the 50th anniversary celebration, the special issue of the Improver and the beautiful bookmarks.

November -- Plan to close 17th District Police Station actively opposed.

A meeting was held at North Park Village. Representatives from the Swedish Covenant Hospital, North Park College, Albany Park Community Center, Palmer School and NMIA attended. A candle light vigil was held on October 12. Hundreds of people attended.

Family Day on Oct 3 of the Mayfair Library's 50th year celebration drew about 400 children.

December -- Palumbo Asphalt Manufacturing Company plans to build a processing plant at Berteau and Kolmar. We plan to fight this source of pollution from high smoke stacks of heavy industry which will foul our air as well as Old Irving Park's where it is located. First it was the traffic ticket office at North Park Village. Then it was the closing of the 17th District Station and now a stinking asphalt plant. Why do we have to fight so many battles when our common good should be protected by our aldermen?

Effective November 9, 1992, Conesco, Inc. of Carmel, Indiana purchased controlling interest in Banker's Life.

1993

January -- Palumbo Company withdrew its request to construct an asphalt plant in Old Irving Park. City Hall finally listened to us. Furthermore, the Mayor's office agreed with the combined neighborhoods under the NRC banner to change the ordinance for manufacturing zoning so groups will not be threatened with inappropriate, unhealthy uses again.

NRC requests the ICH Companies (Bankers) give us input into the disposition of their soon to be vacated properties.

February -- On January 29 the North Park Village Advisory Council voted in favor of Pontarelli Builders for the development of the 11.9 acres of Bryn Mawr and Pulaski.

Announcement was made that the 17th District Police Station will remain open. Our vigil and advocacy worked.

March -- Alderman Anthony Laurino supports plan to erect honorary brown signs designating Lawrence Avenue in certain sections as Seoul Drive.

Building at 4115 W. Lawrence that warehouses hundreds of cats has been an unsanitary nuisance for some time. The stench is reported to be unbearable. NMIA represented by **Bob Carlsen, Sylvester Quartana** and **Nardine Di Cristina** from **Alderman Anthony Laurino's** office attended a court session to get rid of this nuisance.

April -- Do you believe there is an illegal business in your area? Report suspected violations.

Seoul Drive street signs sponsored by **Aldermen Mell** and **Anthony Laurino** in the City Council.

May -- Members urged to call **Mayor Richard M. Daley** to get Seoul Drive street sign ordinance rescinded.

On May 15, the new play lot on the hill at Kildare was dedicated.

June -- Executive Board of NMIA expresses concern that **Alderman Anthony Laurino** refused to communicate with our organization regarding Seoul Drive street signs. Finally, Laurino called a meeting with five NMIA members and an array of non-North Mayfair people led by **Alderman Mell**. Three were representatives from small civics in favor of the signs and others were Korean businesspeople who did not live in the area. Alderman Mell who we did not elect was allowed to dictate policy for the 39th Ward. A sack of June "Improvers" explaining this situation was stolen by unknown persons before they could be delivered.

Mr. **Frank Allocco**, principal of Palmer School, has been awarded the Outstanding School Leadership Award for 1993 from the Citizens' School Committee.

Bridge over Chicago River on Pulaski in Gompers Park is scheduled for reconstruction.

October -- Norwood Builders proposal for the St. Lucas Cemetery was discussed at NMIA and voted down.

November -- Bankers Life and Casualty is beginning to move out of

buildings in North Mayfair.

Norwood Builders downsizes their project from 325 condos to 260 and single family homes from 31 to 20.

December -- The NRC will draft a good community plan and solicit to developers whose impact will be favorable to our residential and commercial climate.

1994

January -- Nature Conservancy, a national organization, has identified the St. Lucas Cemetery land that Norwood Builders wants to develop as an important part of open land in the northeast corner of Illinois. Land should be put in the public domain.

Joseph B. Cicero appeared on Channel 11 program, "Chicago Tonight," hosted by John Callaway regarding the "Moving Out" series in the Tribune.

Norwood Builders submits an article telling why their St. Lucas project is a good idea.

February -- **Alderman Anthony Laurino** could not be reached regarding St. Lucas/Norwood project. We finally resort to sending him a telegram.

March -- "What's Going On, Alderman Laurino?" article written by the Executive Board asked Laurino why he did not support us before the Chicago Plan Commission. Twenty-five neighbors went to City Hall on a below zero day and were denied time to talk. They brought petitions with 1,000 signatures. They were made to wait through a lengthy agenda on other matters and then denied time to present their views on a very important matter. Our 928 member Association was denied our rights as citizens by the Plan Commission. A sack of March "Improvers" explaining this situation was stolen by unknown persons before they could be delivered.

April -- Garden Club will be started on April 10.

Alderman Anthony Laurino did not respond to the Executive Board's March article, although he had been invited to.

May -- Reestablishment of wetlands in Gompers Park underway led by **Debbie Buschbacher, Jim Macdonald and Tony Watrobinski.**

People urged to write to U.S. Senators **Carol Mosely-Braun** and **Paul Simon** in opposition to Norwood/St. Lucas project.

June -- Pontarelli has invested \$3.8 million in our community. They bought Bankers' properties. This redevelopment will result in greater stability and improved property values for all of us.

Dale Bolling, past President of NMIA and current editor of the "Improver" was given a plaque at the NRC Community Congress in recognition of decades of public service as an activist and visionary.

October -- City issues a building permit to Norwood Builders for St. Lucas development. Despite a thousand people who signed petitions, despite informational talks at Palmer and St. Edwards schools, despite articles in the Sun Times, The Reader, Nadig Press, Lerner Press and the Chicago Tribune and despite radio coverage by WBBM and WLS, we were not able to stop this ill-advised project. However, we did cause Norwood to be more environmentally sensitive to the river and to reduce the height of the buildings, and we did point out the need for better laws regarding flood plains. It was a sad day. The developers, the politicians and behind the scenes fat-cat lawyers have won. Even worse, the long range and big picture for our common good and that of future generations was stamped out by the profit motive.

December -- We did it. You did it. We reached our goal of 1,000 members. **Don Croeger**, our membership chairman, spearheaded the effort.

1995

January -- Some residents of the 5100 blocks of Keeler, Tripp and Kildare have reported damage to their homes due to the Deep Tunnel blasting. A committee will be formed to assist these homeowners in

dealing with their claims.

March -- Members urged to write to **Congressman Michael Patrick Flanagan** regarding federal cutbacks in the "Contract for America" program that will harm the social progress in urban areas like Chicago.

May -- A speaker from the zoning board of the City of Chicago will talk about illegal conversions in the housing stock and how to report them.

Leo Damask urges us to get more trees and flowers planted. **Jackie Kostrzewa** continues to supply us with monthly crime statistics from the 17th District Police.

June -- The NRC is the sponsor and Pontarelli Builders is the co-managing general partners in the construction and operation of 97 units of moderate income senior citizen apartments to be built at Elston and Lawrence. Funding for this project was not easy to obtain. One hundred eight groups citywide competed for only 12 sites. Rarely does a neighborhood have an opportunity to undo its past and create a new future. But that is what we are doing with the help of the NRC.

September -- In February 1996, Palmer School will switch to a split shift policy due to overcrowding. A new supervisor comes to Gompers Park. His name is **Randy Ernst**.

October -- Report from NRC regarding projects by civic groups given by **Joseph B. Cicero**, Executive Director. Highlights are: Old Irving Park -- 66 units of single family homes on Berteau between Kenneth and Kolmar. Plans to build 70,000 sq. ft. Jewel/Osco at Six Corners. North Mayfair -- Plans to build hospital facility at Elston and Lawrence, upscale Mexican restaurant, Laz Cazuelas, completed. Construction proceeds on 36 condo units on Elston. Norwood Builders building condos at St. Lucas Cemetery. Mayfair Civics -- A once dormant group has re-activated itself with a kick-off meeting at the Irish Heritage Center. Jensen -- 45 unit total rehab project at Sunnyside and Central Park opened. Hollywood North Park -- WTTW adds new studio to its layout. Pontarelli puts finishing touches to 160 condo units in North Park Village. Peterson Park -- The old Inerand Manufacturing plant at Peterson and the river transformed to Jewish Day School for girls. Neighborhood Improvement Committee -- Friends of the Chicago River and the NRC are looking forward to the opening of a new park crafted from Water Reclamation land on the river near the Lawrence Avenue bridge. Albany Park -- Work to recreate the

utility of the transit terminal at Kimball and Lawrence continues. All over the area thousands of residents are putting money into improvements.

December -- Palmer School will have a new classroom addition. This will eliminate the need for a split shift.

Gompers Park Wetlands Restoration project has a celebration at the fieldhouse.

1996

January -- On November 30, the Gompers Park Wetlands project was visited by Mr. **Jia Feng** and **Ms. Yien**, his interpreter from China's Environmental Project Administration. A tour was conducted by Barbara Wood of the Chicago Park District and **Laurene Von Klan** of Friends of the Chicago River. North Mayfair was represented by **Jim Macdonald** and **Tony Watrobinski**.

At the December meeting, two way traffic on Kenneth from Lawrence to Gunnison was discussed. A committee was formed to study the subject.

Starting January 1996, a membership contest will begin. Each 200th NMIA membership processed will win \$20. New people who move into North Mayfair will be given a plant and two free memberships as our way of saying "Welcome to North Mayfair."

February -- **Randy Ernst** received the Park District Community Collaboration award for extraordinary response and interaction with our community.

March -- **Alderman Margaret Laurino** asked that we consider having the toilet facilities at La Bagh Woods East demolished, as they are a source of constant problems.

The Executive Board unanimously voted to recommend that traffic on Kenneth Avenue be changed to two-way from Lawrence to Gunnison as proposed by Pontarelli Builders. The membership voted to approve the Executive Board's action.

April -- Steve Buschbacher, President of the Palmer School Council, was the speaker at our March meeting.

Plans are underway for a Fourth of July parade chaired by **Eric Davis**.

Membership voted on two proposals presented by **Alderman Margaret Laurino**. The plan to demolish the outhouses in La Bagh Woods East and the proposal to turn the Deep Tunnel work site into a parking lot were defeated.

May -- On April 20, the Mayfair Branch Library closed in preparation for the move to larger quarters at 4400 W. Lawrence.

The Membership Council of the NRC appointed **Dale Bolling** interim President due to the resignation of **Margaret Schrempf**.

September -- Pat Bland, President of the Garden Club, reported on a busy and fulfilled summer. The community garden at Kedvale and Carmen now has a sign donated by **George and Lucille Bland** of Crivitz, Wisconsin. Trips were taken to the Chicago Botanical Gardens and to Cantigny in Wheaton. The first Garden walk was held on August 13.

Led by teacher **Mikel Bresee**, students of Amundsen High School painted a colorful mural of the Gompers Park lagoon and wetlands.

The second annual Fourth of July parade organized by **Eric Davis, Tony Watrobinski, John Yarish** and **Cheryl Linker** was a big success.

The opening of our New Mayfair Branch Library was held on June 29. There were two celebrations due to the fact that the Chicago Library Administration was not willing to acknowledge the significant role the North River Commission had in accomplishing this project and denied them a chance to speak. The outside parking lot speakers were **Dale Bolling, Donald Hodginson, Mary Ann Callaghan, Jim Smith** and **Tony Watrobinski**. The inside speakers were **Michael Flanagan, Alderman Margaret Laurino** and officials from the Chicago Public Library. Marie's Pizza, owned by **George Karavidis**, supplied pizzas and soft drinks at the outside ceremony. The organization Friends of the Mayfair Library, headed by **Cheryl Flood**, helped in the physical move of books and materials.

November -- John R. Thomas appointed as commander of 17th District Police.

Cheryl Linker continues to keep us informed with her monthly "On With Palmer" school report. **Julie Newfeld** becomes Editor-in-Chief of the "Improver".

December -- Dale Bolling thanked for her service to the community as Palmer PTA President, NMIA President, NRC President and Editor of the "Improver" for 13 years.

Groundbreaking for 97 units of senior housing and Swedish Covenant Medical Facility at Elston and Lawrence was held on October 25. An overflow crowd of 400-500 people filled tent.

Work has begun on renovation of old auditorium building at North Park Village to convert it into a gymnasium. Plans for charter school at North Park Village meet opposition.

1997

January -- On Monday, December 9th, **Mayor Daley, Paul S. Grogan**, President of Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and **William Goodyear**, Chairman and C.E.O. of the Bank of America, attended a ceremony at the site of our Mayfair Commons 97 unit senior housing at Elston and Lawrence.

The North River Commission is sponsoring a charter school at North Park Village. Residents are asked to write to Gery Chico, President of the Reform Trustees of the Chicago Public Schools, supporting this charter school.

February -- President **Anthony Watrobinski** welcomes our new neighbors in the Rivers Edge development and announces we will deliver the "Improver" to the project each month. An amendment to the bylaws was proposed to extend our boundaries to the south side of Bryn Mawr on the north.

May -- Alderman **Margaret Laurino** was thanked for the time and effort she spent arguing our case before the Cook County Board regarding La Bagh Woods Picnic Grove No. 5. This grove is now changed to a non-permit family picnic area. No large picnics, which were such a headache to nearby neighbors, will be permitted.

June -- **Pat Centeno**, head librarian at our Mayfair Branch, announces the start of a book discussion group. All adults are invited to join.

September -- Complaints received about new bike path on Elston Avenue.

Report made about 81 upscale single family residences on 17 acres of land just west of the Montrose Cemetery and south of Bryn Mawr.

Mayfair Lions Club celebrates 50 years of service.

October -- **Julie Newfeld**, Editor of the "Improver" wishes to resign due to her work schedule. Members requested to submit articles for our upcoming history of North Mayfair booklet.

November -- Alderman **Margaret Laurino** announces that the "paper" street -- Kostner Avenue on maps between Foster and Bryn Mawr -- has been eliminated and that this 30 foot wide strip was divided between the Chicago Park District and the Cook County Forest Preserve.

Joseph Cicero calls for a plan to lease the La Bagh East land to the Chicago Park District to make more football, baseball and soccer areas for organized leagues. This would permanently eliminate the rowdy picnics that have plagued our neighbors in that area.

December -- **Steven Buschbacher** stresses the need for more safety for children along Foster. The children of this neighborhood are at risk from the traffic on Foster. He proposes new parking lots at the old tennis courts in the valley in north Gompers and at the site of the Deep Tunnel project just east of the fieldhouse.

1998

January -- Harvey A. Chaplik, a new resident at the River's Edge condominium development, writes that he is against the loss of "green space" in Gompers Park. He commends **Steve Buschbackers'** concern for the children's safety on Foster, but he says pollution from the traffic causes us all to breathe impure air. Foster Avenue remains a truck route. We all have to be educated about the environment.

March -- Mr. Joseph B. Cicero, in order to recover more fully from his recent back surgery, found it necessary to resign as Executive Director of the North River Commission. Mr. **Joel Bookman** will serve as Acting Director until a permanent replacement is selected by the North River Commission Board.

April -- An article written by **Anthony Watrobinski** emphasizes our community's strong commitment to environmental issues. **James Macdonald**, a vice president of NMIA, is a Professor of Anthropology at Northeastern Illinois University. Jim has contacts with: The Friends of the Chicago River, The Nature Conservancy, the naturalists for both the Park District and the Cook County Forest Preserve, The Chicago Academy of Sciences, Field Museum, U.S. Forest Service, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago Audubon Society and Chicago Wilderness. He is on the Board of the Chicago Recycling Coalition.

May -- State Representative John Fritchey met with 70 leaders in a joint meeting at the North River Commission for promotion of improvements at the CTA's Kimball station.

June -- Announcement made that the history book project is delayed because of lack of funding.

Announcement was made at the upcoming Fourth of July parade.

Announcement made that the Mayfair Commons Senior building will open with a ribbon cutting ceremony on July 9th. Crain's Chicago Business highlighted the Mayfair Town Center's success in an article in their May 4, 1998 issue saying that the "whole project was a super human task."

ANECDOTES AND EXCERPTS ABOUT THE PAST

by Dale Bolling

In the passing of the years, from native prairies to the city scenes we know today, many events have happened and many people have crossed the stage in North Mayfair. The following tales are what I have learned from research or have been told by individuals.

- An Indian woman called Mrs. Crowfoot lived for many years in the late 1800's in a shack across from the Milwaukee railroad tracks between Sunnyside and Wilson. She had a son who was a doctor in Jackson, Michigan. Every winter, Mrs. Crowfoot would move into the basement of the George Haberer's house to get out of the severe weather. She was described as being "thin, straight and beautiful."
- There is a burial place at the top of the hill at Gompers Park at Kildare Avenue. Early farm family members, perhaps victims of cholera, including the Smith and Loberg families, and perhaps some Indians, were buried there.
- An early farmer, Charles Brown, sold his land to the Mermigas family. One week later, he discovered he could have sold it for much more money. He was so upset that he committed suicide. The Mermigas family operated a soda fountain and a candy store at the northwest corner of Elston and Lawrence on this land for years. Later they sold out to Bankers Life and Casualty.
- Amos Snell, owner of Snell's Tollgate on the Elston Plank Road lived where Wilson Park is now, on Milwaukee Avenue. He was wealthy and had servants and carriages.

He went back to England to visit, and when he returned, he brought a

in one room, and Miss Erickson taught them all.”

To the west of the school was an ever-flowing artesian well with water-cress spreading into the road. Each evening the farmers came to fill their barrels. It took but a few minutes to fill a barrel placed under the over-head sprout.

- A young boy named Marty Porter had his leg and part of his hand severed by a freight train on the tracks between Elston and LaBagh Woods. Marty and two friends were playing on the trains, flipping from one car to another. Two jumped off safely, but Marty missed. The train stopped, and it took a long while to get help, as there were no telephones nearby. An eyewitness reported that Marty just lay there probably in a state of shock. “He didn’t whimper. He didn’t cry. I talked to him.”
- William Grant Edens was a pioneer advocate for good roads in Illinois. He was a native of Indiana. He was a vice president of the Central Trust Company of Illinois and president of the Illinois Highway Improvement Association. Edens Highway was named for him, and a bronze plaque was placed at Cicero and Peterson in his honor.
- The boys in the neighborhood in the 1920’s and 30’s swam in the river. Their favorite spot was called “Bare Ass Beach” and was midway between Gompers and the trestle on the southside of the river.
- During the Depression, meals were supplemented by rabbit hunting in the woods.
- When the Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium was in full swing, many neighborhood people were employed there.
- There was a firehouse at Lawrence and Knox where the city’s streets and sanitation facilities are now. Horse drawn fire wagons would respond to calls.
- Baseball games were played on the east side on the 5000 block of Kedvale on what is now built up with Salvation Army homes. This went on for many years. This area for some unknown reason was called Harding’s Field. Later in World War II the land was used for victory gardens.
- There was a big picnic grove at Pulaski and Argyle where Aldi’s is now,

relative with him who was deformed. In those days handicapped people were outcasts. Snell built a cabin for this relative in what is now LaBagh Woods near the river's edge, and this man lived there alone for many years. Every month, he would walk across the prairie to the Jefferson Post Office to get a check from England. The Erickson farm family gave him food from their farm. Snell provided him with other essentials.

One month, this handicapped man started out for the post office and disappeared. A search was conducted including the river bed, but he was never found. The Jeffersonian, a newspaper of that time, had an article about his disappearance.

- During the three decades after Amos J. Snell built a log cabin near the southwest corner of the original boundary of Niles Centre (Skokie) in 1857, he was a busy man. Snell acquired hundreds of acres of land and made a fortune selling timber for the new railroads.

Snell bought the Northwest Plank Road (Milwaukee Avenue) from a settler named Gould. He improved the road and added tollgates, including those at Fullerton, Belmont, Jefferson and Leland avenues. Each of these tollgates would take in \$400 or more on a busy day. On some Sundays, the gate at Fullerton collected more than \$700. Its coffers swelled with tolls from picnickers and visitors to the new cemeteries. In these days these amounts of money were considerable.

One night in 1888, Snell was murdered in his home. Clues were few and suspicions many. A nephew, Willie Tascott, became a suspect. Detective work spread through the nation and trails were picked up in Europe.

The motive for the crime was never discovered. At one time the tollgate at Jefferson was burned down by angry farmers. The murder was never solved, and it probably took place in his home.

- The Erickson farm in the 5100 block of Kostner Avenue was used as a setting for filming cowboy and Indian movies.

- The Little Red School House at Kostner and Lawrence, where Pontarelli's office is now, was one of the first schools in our area. Jennie Erickson of the Erickson farm family was a teacher there for many years. Pupils sat at long desks. "On the old time organ, in the corner, rested a bunch of willow branches tied into a switch. The very fact of its presence was a quieting influence. The pupils were all ages, and all classes were

extending east to Springfield. It was called Atlas Grove. Joseph Tichy, Jr. and Joe Novotny, two young men from the neighborhood, cleaned the grove every Monday morning.

- Pehr Peterson, for whom Peterson Park is named, had various horticultural experiences in Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Canada and California before founding the nursery, in 1856, that is now North Park Village. Mr. Peterson supplied trees and shrubbery to the Chicago Park District when Jackson Park, Washington Park and other large parks in Chicago were artistically laid out and developed. He gave generously to finance the building of a statue of Carl Von Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist, that was in Lincoln Park for years but later was moved to the Midway of the University of Chicago. His son, William Peterson, is said to have an unsurpassed collection of artifacts from the Pottawatomie Indians and mementos of this fathers' world travels.
- Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Bohemian National Cemetery on October 2, 1933 to place a wreath at the Anton Cermak Mausoleum. Mayor Anton Cermak was fatally wounded while in the company of President Franklin Roosevelt. This was during an assassination attempt on Roosevelt.
- When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, there was an impressive memorial service at the Bohemian National Cemetery. On short notice, 600 to 700 people showed up at the chapel. A four-member color guard was provided by the U.S. Fifth Army.
- The main gate of the Bohemian National Cemetery is designated as a Chicago landmark.
- The 4900 block of Kostner could be called "Presidents' Row." Six presidents of our Association live or have lived on this one block. They are Joseph Waltz, John Huska, Stewart Archambault, Victor Nuzzo, William Jones and Robert Der Avedisian.
- During World War II, there was a military camp in LaBagh Woods east of the railroad tracks. First, it was a recreational camp. Then in January 1942, it was converted to use of the 763rd Military Police Battalion and was called Camp Foster. Later, the name was changed to Camp Sauganash. After the war, the area was used for veterans' housing and called the Sauganash Homes Project. The homes were torn down in 1955 and the land was returned to the Forest Preserve District.

- For many years there was a hot dog stand on the southeast side of Lowell and Foster across the street from the park. Dr. Arthur Peterson, a graduate of Palmer School and a staff doctor at the Swedish Covenant Hospital, likes to joke about how he sold the hot dogs.

- During the 39th Ward aldermanic election in 1947 the Republican candidate, Einer Larsen, was found dead in his home in the 5100 block of Kildare, by his wife. His Democratic opponent was Hyman L. Brody whose brother was the Cook County Coroner who conducted the inquest.

Mr. Larsen was shot four times around the heart, but the death was ruled a suicide. His wife who was in the home with him testified there was no one else present and that Einer had been despondent about the nastiness of the campaign. Two physicians testified after examining the wounds that it was possible to commit suicide by shooting yourself four times. (Source: *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, March 31, 1947.)

- Walter Harold Scott who lived at 4904 N. Tripp designed and invented an amusement ride for the Chicago 1933-34 World's Fair. Later this ride was called the Flying Turns and was used for years at the Riverview Amusement Park.

- Can anyone who went to Palmer School when Mr. Theodore Wallscheaeger was principal ever forget the way he had the kids practicing for the Christmas program? Every year he stood on a chair and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" with its turtle doves and laying hens, etc. was repeated again, again and again, and again.

- During the Depression, Max Gaca operated a grocery store on Elston near Kilpatrick. Because of the "hard times" many families had to struggle to find money to buy food. Max would give his regular customers the food and keep a record on a ledger.

Because of the severity of the Depression, and the uncertainty of the times, this was a high risk thing for him to do. But he did it out of the goodness of his heart. His kindness pulled many families through.

When prosperity returned most people paid him back. He remained in business for many years.

- Darby's Variety (Five and Ten) was a neighborhood store for years. It was located next to Merlin's Muffler and close to Bankers Life, whose

employees would go there during their office breaks.

Probably everyone who has lived in North Mayfair for a long while can look around their kitchen or basement today and spot something he bought at Darby's. It was a well stocked store, and it wasn't unusual to find an item you couldn't find elsewhere, at Darby's.



Mothers with strollers could bring their toddlers to Darby's and the kids would get a thrill from riding "Sandy," the mechanical horse in the entrance way. Older kids would pop in after school because there was a candy counter. High school kids found employment there. Don Darby and his mother were very much part of North Mayfair. **(See photo.)**

- Bob Rosenau is a second generation resident of North Mayfair. His mother and father were regular attendees at NMIA meetings.

Now that Bob is retired from the United States Marines where he was a captain, he helps our community in many ways. He lives near the tennis courts on Keeler, and he keeps an eye on what goes on in the park. He paints out graffiti on the benches, picks up litter and cleans debris out of the lagoon. He bought and paid for special garbage cans for around the lagoon, but unfortunately they were destroyed by vandals. He has participated in every organized clean-up that the NMIA organized in the past several years.

Captain Robert Rosenau, U.S.M.C., Veteran of Vietnam, the people of North Mayfair salute you.

- The Vydra family operated a grocery store on Pulaski near Lawrence. Later their son, Joseph, had a printing business and photography shop in the 4600 block of Lawrence.

Their daughter, Bess, started her career at the Chicago Tribune in 1936. Later she became "girl Friday" to Phil Maxwell and under his guidance directed the Annual Chicagoland Music Festival at Soldier Field and other big projects with the Chicago Public Schools.

From time to time Bess would help out in Colonel Robert McCormick's office. He was the publisher and owner of the Tribune. Later she became his secretary. She was flown many times in his private plane to Cantigny, his estate in Wheaton, when he was not well enough to come to Chicago. She remained his secretary until his death in 1955.

Later Bess was asked to be the director of the Cantigny Mansion which was opened to the public. The mansion, the war museum and the formal gardens are interesting to see. Bess remained director of the Cantigny Mansion and its public tours until she retired.

- All the way from the U.S. Army in Japan, via the Internet, Elaine Archambault Lombardi writes, "Remember when Mr. Joseph Waltz gave his wife the Japanese Garden. I swear we had field trips into it from every possible source. I must have been four or five when it opened and I went on tours with Palmer, with Sunday School and the Girl Scouts. At that age I thought it was beautiful and I remember taking every opportunity to walk through the alley, so I could peek through the bamboo fence." (*Editor's note: This unusual garden was in the 4900 block of Kostner.*)

- Neal Gabler is a graduate of Palmer School. He was a movie critic on Channel 11. He has written several books. One is titled, Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity. Another is An Empire of their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood. Neal's mother, Eleanor, was a president of the Palmer PTA.

- Before the Salvation Army building became their Metropolitan Headquarters, it was a hospital for unwed mothers. Sometimes the pregnant women would go for a supervised walk in Gompers Park. It was an unusual sight to see a group of 20 or more pregnant women strolling through the park. The little kids would wonder who all the "fat" ladies were.

- Palmer School nurtured at least three doctors whom we are aware of: Dr. Walter Smykal who practices in Wisconsin, Dr. Arthur Peterson from the Swedish Covenant Hospital, and Dr. Kerry Swensen who practices at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

NORTH MAYFAIR IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

by Dale Bolling

In 1929, Gustav Reich and 23 of his neighbors started our Association. The first meetings were held in the first building erected in Gompers Park, the old band shell that was in the valley where the football field is now. Later meetings were held in Park District bungalows at Kolmar and Carmen next to where the tot-lot is now. When the fieldhouse was built the meetings were held there.

In April of 1936, when Mr. Alex Rochow was president, the first issue of the Improver, our neighborhood newsletter, was published. 1998 marks our 62nd year of continuous -- uninterrupted -- publication, all by volunteer efforts. The editors have been Alex Rochow, Ruth Melson, Dale Bolling, Julie Newfeld and Dale Bolling, who resumed the post when Julie could not continue.

The Chicago Historical Society has recognized the value of the Improver and past and current issues are part of the permanent record of the City of Chicago.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by Dale Bolling

For many years the building called The Little Red School House stood at the corner of Kostner and Lawrence where Pontarelli's headquarters are now. Miss Jennie Erickson of the pioneer farm family taught there for thirty years.

Another early school was on the northeast corner of Lawrence and Pulaski. Oddly enough, that building still survives. It was converted into a home when it was moved to the northeast side of Harding and Ainslie, the second building from the actual corner.

At times there were portables at various locations, but in 1925 Palmer School was built. However it did not actually open until September, 1926. It was named for John M. Palmer, a Civil War hero and the 13th governor of Illinois.

Palmer's first principal, Arvey Wolfram, was there for less than a year. The next principal was Frederick Mussehl. When he retired, Theodore Wallschlaeger took over. When Mr. Wallschlaeger was transferred, the only woman to hold that post, Mary Jean Spillane-Barth, became principal. Our current principal is Frank Allocco.

In 1980, Palmer was slated for closing due to low enrollment. The North Mayfair residents rallied to keep it open. In 1985-86, the Board of Education renovated the building at a cost of \$800,000.

The Local School Council Act created by the state legislature caused Palmer to form its local school council. The L.S.C. is made up of parents, community residents and teachers who volunteer their time to ensure a good learning environment. Later, the school became overcrowded and an annex with ten more classrooms was opened in September 1997.
(See photo.)

MAYFAIR LIBRARY

by Dale Bolling

The first library in North Mayfair was dedicated on October 3, 1942, after four years of efforts by the North Mayfair Improvement Association and the Palmer PTA. The first person to borrow a book from the library was Edward L. Barr, the president of NMIA. This small sub-branch was located at 4750 North Kenneth. Again, after efforts of concerned parents and community groups, the library was moved to larger quarters at Keeler and Lawrence. This happened in September of 1974. Marlene Brown worked hard to accomplish this move. When Bankers sold their property, the North River Commission devised a plan for the 26 parcels of real estate they left behind. This Mayfair Town Center concept included a new library. The Chicago Public Library system pays rent for the use of the building.

GOMPERS PARK

by James Macdonald

North Gompers Park dates from the 1920's. South Gompers was built as a WPA project in 1938. The lagoon was excavated from a natural pond that was to the east of where the lagoon is now. Longtime residents of North Mayfair remember skating there in the 1920's. People have strong memories of days in the park: 4th of July community picnics, learning to dance with a portable Victrola and memories of the World War I cannon that was melted for scrap metal in World War II.

North Mayfair takes pride in our major park, as well as the playlot at Carmen and Kolmar. Twice yearly, volunteers clean Gompers, and the North Mayfair Garden Club plants two garden beds, one at Kedvale and Carmen, the other at Foster and Pulaski. Gompers is the main recreational area for North Mayfair. Baseball, football and soccer leagues attract large members of participants and their families. The friendly staff run diverse programs to appeal to all ages. North Mayfair is lucky -- Gompers Park has few of the problems facing many city parks. It is a safe place for children to play and for people to stroll. Like North Mayfair

itself, the park is free of the baleful influence of street gangs. There is occasional drinking to excess, minor vandalism and more rarely a low level drug use.

Recently, another national urban problem reached us -- homeless people have set up a shelter under the Foster and Pulaski bridges. This is an ongoing problem whose solution is unclear, but will obviously require cooperation between city and county agencies and our community. The NMIA will remain active in improving the quality of life in North Mayfair. Gompers Park has been part of North Mayfair life for seventy years and will continue to be a real asset to our community for the future. (See photo.)

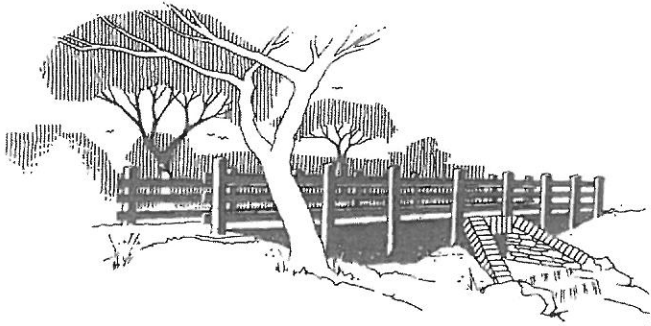
NORTH RIVER COMMISSION

by Dale Bolling

The North Mayfair Improvement Association is a member of the Commission that was started in 1962 by the Swedish Covenant Hospital, North Park University, Al Bank and the Hollywood Park Improvement Association. The Commission has grown to more than 100 civic, business, institution, school and religious organizations all concerned with keeping this area as a good place to live and work.

Through the NRC we bring community representatives together for greater impact on problems such as preservation of green space, better housing, better education, stronger anti-crime efforts and economic viability. Committed people work, plan and fight for what is needed to maintain a high quality of life. For instance, it is because of the NRC that we have North Park Village. The city was ready and eager to turn this pristine 165 acres vacated by the Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium over to shopping center developers. The organized efforts of the Commission forced the city to abandon the shopping center plans, and instead we have a park, a nature center, senior housing, a school, a health center and thousands of oxygen producing trees.

Because of the NRC, the buildings left by Bankers Life and Casualty Company, properties that could have been sold at auction, are instead being developed as the Mayfair Town Center, providing senior housing, a new library, a Swedish Covenant Hospital satellite facility, a bank, condominiums and headquarters for Pontarelli Builders.



NATURE'S LEGACY

H.B.

by Dale Bolling

A river runs through this gently contoured valley. Home to the Pottawatomis, later to the Swedish farmer Erickson, dropout from the trail to Bishop Hill.

The city grows. Matson Park is born. Renamed Gompers in recognition of Sam's struggle for rights of working people. South of Foster, the WPA adds acres, the rustic bridge, the tennis courts, the pine trees.

In the childhood memories of many, an ice skating pond near the river in a winter wonderland of trees in gently falling snow. Sledding on the hill.

Whistles blown, lines marked, teams chosen, order kept. Myers, Broda, Schultz, Marchese, Kreutzer, Bramlett and Ernst, Supervisors all.

Pigskins fly, the ping of a tennis ball, the crack of a bat. Balls dunked. Balls spiked. A hundred thousand games played. Generation after generation.

Despoiled by political patronage. The lagoon a floating garbage dump. Every drinking fountain broken. Cries of despair. Park committees formed. Cleanups. Oversight. A wetlands restored with native plants and habitat. Trees hugged.

Mother Nature parades the crabapple blossoms in the spring, the blaze of autumn and the dazzle of winter white.

Gompers Park, our legacy.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN NORTH MAYFAIR

by James MacDonald

This has been a decade of gains and losses for our environment. The NMIA fought hard to preserve the open space at Foster and Pulaski when the owner, St. Lucas Cemetery, sold the land to developers. This overgrown meadow was a favorite haunt of deer, fox, coyote and many birds, and its open space was a symbol of our community. Barbara Iverson, our president at the time, led the effort.

After a long court battle, money and clout won out over community concerns, and the meadow was bulldozed, landfilled and asphalted. Deer and fox still visit occasionally, but the parking lots are haunted by more dangerous predators now.

Shortly after this environmental loss, St. Lucas Cemetery sold off the wooded meadow west of the plaza for residential development. NMIA opposed the loss of still more natural land, enlisting environmental, civic and governmental groups, including Friends of the Chicago River, Cook County Forest Preserve, the Sierra Club and the Army Corps of Engineers. Dale Bolling from NMIA and the Laurene Von Klan from Friends of the Chicago River and Donald Hodgkinson from the North River Commission led the effort. But again money and clout won out over community concerns. However, our cooperative efforts did reduce the number of units and improved the development's impact on water runoff and drainage. Some River's Edge residents have joined the NMIA, and we extended our northern boundary to the south side of Byrn Mawr.

In another project, shafts to the Deep Tunnel where storm runoff can be held and gradually released were sunk along the river with one in Gompers Park, just east of the fieldhouse, closing Foster between Tripp and Keeler. Blasting this shaft damaged several homes nearby, and the routing of traffic through North Mayfair created our own rush hour for several months. Sometimes our response to nature creates unforeseen problems!

In 1997, the proposed industrial park near Bryn Mawr and the railroad tracks was abandoned, and this overgrown oak savanna with wetland drainage was sold to a developer to build 81 expensive homes. Despite assurances to NMIA of a careful tree survey and the retention of as many

trees as possible, this savanna was clearcut, the largest trees were logged and the smaller ones woodchipped. This brutal action was made worse because it was done at a time when nestling birds and baby animals could not escape. The native vegetation was bulldozed indiscriminately. This is the most ecologically damaging project in our community for a long time.

Together two residential developments and the Mayfair Commons Plaza eliminated more than 30 acres of open space. The ecological effects of this "development" will be felt well into the next century.

But there have been good environmental events in the nineties, too. A growing number of North Mayfair residents are interested and involved in nature projects, ranging from their backyards to our public parks. The Improver carries a nature column. Our community leader in tree planting is Leo Damask III, who can be seen striding through North Mayfair on his daily rounds to feed birds and squirrels.

In La Bagh Woods, the North Branch Prairie Restoration Project has begun rehabilitation of a rare habitat, a perched wetland and an associated oak savanna. Although work has been halted because of a dispute between restoration activists and some northwest communities, NMIA continues to support appropriate restoration work in La Bagh.

Spring and fall cleanups in Gompers Park attracted a number of volunteers, including Cub and Girl Scout troops and the North Mayfair Garden Club. These cleanups were coordinated by Mary Ellen Quartana and Jackie Kostrzewa. Friends of the Chicago River cleanups in La Bagh Woods and Gompers Park were led by Steve and Debra Buschbacher, Anthony Watrobinski and Jim Macdonald with many residents participating.

A significant change in Gompers Park has been the reestablishment of the wetland along the "crick" from the lagoon to the river. This carefully planned project is a fine example of cooperation between a community group (the NMIA), not-for-profit environmental groups (such as Friends of the Chicago River), local government agencies (Chicago Park District) and federal agencies (U.S. Forest Service) working to expand natural areas within cities. Many volunteers helped plant, weed and protect the wetland.

Our wetland project was also a test to see if nature could be restored in a

city park. It has been so successful that the Park District is re-establishing natural areas in several more city parks.

In 1900, North Gompers was a meadow on the Erickson farm; much of south Gompers was wetland. The Chicago River had no real banks and was a ten foot wide shallow stream in the summer, which simply rose to cover the surrounding low ground after heavy rains. (See photos in 1976 North Mayfair history book). All along the North Branch, the ground gradually absorbed and released water, preventing raging floods. Some low-lying areas were wetlands, capable of holding water longer, like the "crick" in South Gompers. Wetlands are the most productive habitats on earth, supporting more species and more individuals than tropical forests or coral reefs.

By the 1930's the low-lying land that held flood water and released it slowly had been so built up that it could no longer control the river flow. When heavy rains came, the river became a torrent, cutting steep banks, washing away retaining walls and flooding homes. The fast-moving water did not allow enough plants to take root to filter and cleanse the water, so pollution spread more quickly. Without habitat to allow their predators to breed, noxious insects like mosquitoes increased to plague proportions. The ecological system had become unbalanced.

By the 1950's and 60's mosquitoes were out of control. To reduce their numbers communities filled in most of the remaining wetlands including Gompers Park, leaving a wet grassy area. The landfill did not reduce the mosquitoes which can breed in wet grass, but it did destroy the remaining fragment of Gompers wetlands.

In 1995, this landfill was removed, exposing the former seed bed. Because wetland soils contain very little oxygen, organic material like seeds decompose very slowly. Some of the wetland plants now growing grew from seeds of plants that lived there in the 50's and 60's which were buried deep underground in "suspended animation." The area was carefully contoured, with several ecological zones from underwater to prairie. This provides microhabitats for many different plants and animals. To control the water level, a low earth dam was built near the river. Inside it are two corrugated metal tubes to let the water flow into the wetland when the river rises; flaps prevent the water from running back out with the river drops. Also inside is an outlet tube; inside it are boards which can be raised or lowered to keep water in the wetland at appropriate levels.

Planted by professionals and volunteers in 1995, the wetlands were ready to attract inhabitants. As plants grew, insects and frogs, birds and muskrats, turtles and fish came and flourished. We now have a real wetland in Gompers Park again which can foster the water, hold a little of it during floods (it is less than two acres, after all), and keep unpleasant insects in balance, because they and their predators are at home there. Muskrats live there and more than thirty species of birds have passed through, including three species of heron who feed there regularly. These are thriving communities of aquatic, crawling and flying insects, but none are out of control. Because of their numbers and visibility, this area has been nicknamed "Dragonfly Slough".

To the unaware, wetlands seem wastelands, swampy smelly squishy places where bad things live. But wetlands are the most valuable real estate of all. They are home to many beneficial species, they control what happens to our rivers and even influence Lake Michigan levels. Wetlands benefit our lives in many unseen ways and are a valuable natural resource. **(See photos.)**

NORTH PARK VILLAGE

by Dale Bolling

Since the early 1970's, the North River Commission has planned and coordinated development of the 160 acres of land at Bryn Mawr and Pulaski that was once the Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium. Instead of another shopping center, we have a nature center, senior housing, Pehr Peterson park, community gardens, a health center, a public school for the trainable mentally handicapped and a gymnasium.

Many people from North Mayfair were active in formulating the plans for North Park Village from its very beginning. They are Joseph Cicero, Dale Bolling, Edward Kuhn, Marlene Brown and others.

Today we are represented on the North Park Village Advisory Council. North Mayfair has two votes on any decisions made regarding the village.

NORTH MAYFAIR GARDEN CLUB

by Patricia Bland

North Mayfair started a garden club sometime in the 1950's that was active for only a few years. Not much is known about the club activities back then, but gardens have had a strong presence here ever since.

After a forty year hiatus, the North Mayfair Garden Club was reestablished in 1993 by Patrick Martinez, Leo Damask, Judy and Jim Macdonald, Tony Watrobinski and Patricia Bland. During the first year, the club had just a few members, but we were able to establish a community garden at Carmen and Kedvale.

Now after five years, membership has more than tripled, and we have established four additional garden sites throughout the neighborhood. In addition to holding monthly discussion meetings, we go on field trips, exchange plants and have held two very successful community garden walks.

It is not necessary to know anything about gardening to become a member of the club -- just have an interest in gardens. We have novices as well as experienced gardeners. We all work well together and have a great time meeting new people.

Since there are so many "lovely" gardens in North Mayfair, we would like to see more interest in our club. Everyone is welcome.

MAYFAIR TOWN CENTER

by Dale Bolling

When Bankers Life and Casualty announced in 1992 that it was moving its offices to the Merchandise Mart, it was a blow to North Mayfair. The company had been located at Elston and Lawrence for over 40 years.

Not only was the giant insurer taking 1,000 jobs downtown, it was vacating more than 600,000 square feet of office space in more than two dozen buildings.

But instead of wringing our hands, the neighborhood residents got busy implementing the “Mayfair Town Center Plan,” devised by the Bankers Life Planning Committee formed by the Executive Director of the North River Commission, Joseph Cicero. This resulted in the \$30 million redevelopment project including housing, offices, a bank, a Swedish Swedish Covenant Hospital clinic, retail space, a library and a 97-unit senior housing building.

The project illustrates how neighborhood groups can influence development projects in their backyards. It also shows what can result when three entities that don’t always see eye-to-eye -- community groups, private businesses and government -- manage to collaborate.

The redevelopment area encompassed a mishmash of structures and properties that Bankers Life brought over the years to accommodate its growth.

The move to redevelop the complex began in 1993. Later, the North River Commission got a \$35,000 grant from the City of Chicago to help the area’s redevelopment.

Although the committee received 14 responses to the request for proposals, only one developer offered to buy all the properties, the North Mayfair Development Corporation (Pontarelli), which paid \$3.8 million for the entire package.

Financing included a loan from nearby Al Bank and Trust Company, low income tax credits, and a second mortgage for the senior building from the City of Chicago.

As stated by Dale Bolling, chairman of one of the neighborhood committees, in an article in Crain’s Chicago Business, “When you consider what the vacated Bankers Life Properties would have been, the result is amazing.”

PAST PRESIDENTS

The following is a list of the past presidents of our Association. All of these men and women have given outstanding service to our community. They have given unselfishly of their time, organizational abilities and efforts. The North Mayfair Improvement Association's continued success and continuity is the direct result of their efforts and of countless others who supported their work.

1929	Gustav Reich
1930	Benjamin A. Toleson
1931	Earle J. Orther
1932	Gustav Bjurnstrom
1933	Edward L. Barr
1934	Irwin C. Reiff
1935	Arthur C. Bruns
1936	Alex C. Rochow
1937	Charles C. Porter
1938	John C. Benson
1939	Sidney S. Doe
1940	Samuel M. Sopocy
1941	Paul A. Pape
1942	George Dalacker
1943	Walter C. Regard
1944	R. Chase Phipps
1945	Henry G. Kelly
1946	Karl Sauer
1947	Jack G. Dinschel
1948	Harry H. Larkner
1949	Harold V. Jacobs
1950	Arthur F. Krohn
1951	Arthur C. Schultz
1952	James R. Adkins
1953	Max Haack
1954	Matt Schiller
1955	Ray Kirchwehm
1956	Joseph E. Hammer

1957	Herman Uding
1958	Roy Lundin
1959	Joseph Waltz
1960	Russell E. Johnson
1961	Joseph Traum
1962	John Huska
1963	Stewart Archambault
1964	D. Victor Nuzzo
1965	Rudolph Amrich
1966	Harry Sehlhorst
1967	Peter Auler
1968	Edward Lawdan
1969	William C. Jones
1970	Ronald Pryer
1971	Edward A. Klipo
1972	Nick Altintop
1973	Joseph Cicero
1974	Ruth Melson
1975	Edward Kuhn
1976	James McCarthy
1977	Harold Mishkin
1978	Andrew Weiszmann
1979	Bernard Trandel
1980	Robert der Avedisian
1981	Alex Wambach
1982	Alex Wambach
1983	Sylvester Quartana
1984	Vito Benigno
1985	Dale Bolling
1986	Dale Bolling
1987	Barbara Iverson
1988	Barbara Iverson
1989	Kirk Maier
1990	Kirk Maier
1991	Barbara Iverson
1992	Barbara Iverson
*	Sylvester Quartana
1993	Debbie Buschbacher
1994	Debbie Buschbacher
1995	Margot Dry
1996	Anthony Watrobinski
1997	Anthony Watrobinski
1998	Cheryl Linker

* *finished term after Iverson's resignation.*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by Anthony Watrobinski

The area that is now Mayfair Civic, south of Lawrence Avenue, was developed before the north of Lawrence was developed. So we became North Mayfair simply because we were north of Mayfair.

In 1929, the NMIA was organized, but in 1932, it combined with the Albany Park West End Improvement Association. The merger used the North Mayfair name and dropped the Albany Park connection.

Early on, the Mayfair area was called Montrose for a place in Scotland. The name "Mayfair" came from a novel about a fashionable residential district in the west end of London near Buckingham Palace.

Some of this information is from a book printed in 1908 by the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company, titled, A History of the Origins of Place Names in Nine Northwestern States. We thank the C & NW Ry. Historical Society for its assistance.



*

INFORMATION FROM THE OFFICIAL UNITED STATES CENSUS OF 1990 REGARDING NORTH MAYFAIR

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1980</u>
Total Population	5,479	5,467
Median Family Income	\$41,219	\$25,160
Median Family Income above \$50,000	39 %	33 %
Median Family Income below poverty line	2 %	1 %
White collar workers	61 %	60 %
Ride to work by auto	76 %	70 %
Population per household	2.7	2.6
Total housing units	2,164	2,203
Owner occupied	68 %	66 %
Median value owner occupied	\$109,100	\$62,500
Median rent	\$493	\$262

The area of North Mayfair in 1990 was bounded by Pulaski Road on the east, Lawrence Avenue on the south, Cicero Avenue on the west and Foster Avenue on the north.

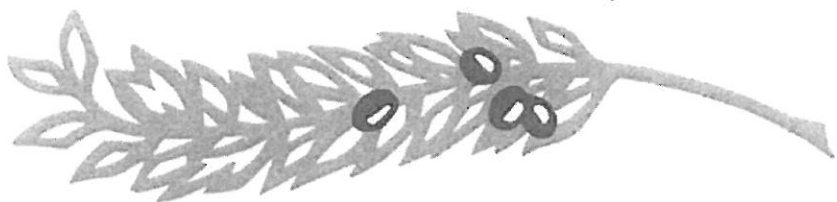
We do not often think of ourselves as part of history, but the minutiae of our individual lives and community experiences are part of the fabric of life in the United States.

The contents of this book are an attempt to record for future generations what life was like in North Mayfair.

Most of us are grandchildren or children of immigrants or, perhaps, immigrants ourselves. By one path or another, we found our way to North Mayfair. Let us continue to accept the responsibility to care about our neighborhood, our city, our country and our Mother Earth.

Onward! together, as we cross the threshold into the Twenty First Century.

-- Dale Bolling



*

NORTH MAYFAIR, U.S.A. VOLUME II

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Research, interviews and compilation by Dale Bolling.

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DONORS

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- George and Lillian Kararidas, Marie's Pizza, \$2,000
- Edward and Rose Kuhn, Kuhn's Plumbing, \$1,000
 - Swedish Covenant Hospital, \$500
 - Active Electric, \$250
 - Bankers Life and Casualty, \$200

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