



## Bad to the Bone!

*“Tale of the Tombstones” Cemetery Walk returns October 20 with dark tales of mob murders, tragic disasters and more*



Doug Deuchler will reprise his role as Adolph Luetgert, a.k.a. the Sausage Vat Murderer

Every community has those stories told in hushed tones, perhaps not suited for the ears of more sensitive listeners. This year’s *Tale of the Tombstones* walking tour of Forest Home Cemetery features tales of the bad guys—and good people hurt by the careless or selfish acts of others.

Visitors will meet Adolph Luetgert, a butcher whose wife mysteriously disappeared; Adam Heyer, gunned down in the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre; lonely hearts murderer Belle Gunness; Chicago tavern owner and political insider John Righeimer; and some victims of two notorious Chicago disasters that left hundreds dead: the Iroquois Theater fire and the capsizing of the *Eastland* in the Chicago River.

Themed *Bad to the Bone*, this year’s walk puts a spotlight on the intersection of evil acts, carelessness, tragic accidents, greed and gangsters. Unlike many years when we have focused on heroes and community builders, this year is a walk on the darker side of life.

The walk begins on Sunday Oct. 20 at noon inside the main gates of Forest Home Cemetery at 863 Desplaines in Forest Park, just south of the CTA Blue Line station and the Eisenhower Expressway. This is an hour earlier than in the

*(Continued on page 2)*

## OPRF Museum Store Gets Ready for the Holidays

It’s not too early to start thinking about holiday shopping...and the Oak Park River Forest Museum Store is ready to help. You’ll find unique offerings for everyone on your list, from tote bags and kitchen towels to coffee mugs and toys. Plus, this year you’ll find some brand-new offerings, including holiday cards and limited-edition

Christmas ornaments. Everything is available online as well as in our brick-and-mortar firehouse.

Even in this age of electronic media, sending holiday cards is a much-loved tradition for many families. For the very first time, OPRF Museum is offering holiday cards, each featuring a winter scene from our extensive photography archives. Cards are available in single-design packets of six cards, or a mixed pack with one of each design. Each card includes a seasonal wish appropriate for anyone on your list.



The vintage Santa image on this ornament brings a touch of Christmas Past to any tree



One of the six holiday cards featuring photos from our extensive collection

*(continued on page 3)*



## Cemetery Walk (continued from page 1)

past, with the last tour leaving no later than 1:30 p.m. to accommodate the cemetery's 4 p.m. closing time.


In addition to costumed actors at selected gravesites re-telling the story of people interred there, trained docents will point out remarkable monuments and share the

fascinating history of Forest Home Cemetery as they guide tour groups from grave to grave.

This is the 28<sup>th</sup> year that Forest Home Cemetery has come alive in October with the sounds of the dearly departed.

This signature event organized by staff and volunteers of The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest has exposed the general public to many average folk and community leaders who are too often forgotten—and led to an award-winning guidebook to the cemetery and its history.

Cost is \$10 for members, \$15 for others. For more information or tickets, call 708-848-6755 or [www.oprfmuseum.org](http://www.oprfmuseum.org). No advanced reservations required but can be made on our website.

We are grateful that each year the tour is sponsored by Drechsler, Brown and Williams Funeral Home and American Wilbert Vault Corporation. 

## OPRF Museum Participates in National Diversity Initiative

OPRF Museum has been selected by the American Alliance of Museums to participate in "Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion." This unprecedented national initiative--backed by \$4 million in grants from three foundations (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Alice L. Walton Foundation, and Ford Foundation)-- is designed to help museums diversify their boards and leadership. OPRF Museum is one of 13 participating institutions in the Chicago area, including Chicago History Museum, DuSable Museum of African American History, and Chicago Botanic Gardens.


Friday, January 1, 1994

### **OAK PARK WEEPS**

*For the Sad Death of Its Children in the Iroquois Theater Fire.*

*New Year's Day 1904 brought a somber story to the front page of Oak Leaves.*

*Learn the tale of one young man who paid the ultimate price while trying to save others.*

"We believe this program is exactly what our organization needs to ensure we serve all the residents of our diverse communities, as well as the growing number of visitors to our new facility," said Peggy Tuck Sinko, president of The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest, which operates OPRF Museum. "In the past few years, we have reinvented ourselves, and are acutely aware of our need to continue to diversify our board and staff to ensure that the stories we tell include all of the varied experiences in our communities." 

## New exhibit looks back on 30 years of OPALGA


A new exhibit opening on Nov. 6 puts the spotlight on the community organization that came together 30 years ago to support an open, active community of gay and lesbian residents and end discrimination based on sexual orientation in our villages.

In its first year of existence, the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association spurred the



village board to amend the Oak Park Human Rights Ordinance to include a ban on discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodation based on sexual orientation. And in the 1990s, OPALGA successfully pushed for Oak Park village officials to establish a Domestic Partnership Ordinance and later a Domestic Partnership Registry.

OPRF Museum was gifted with the organizational records of OPALGA in 2014, which includes memorabilia, photos and other archival material that will be used to help tell this story. The exhibit will examine OPALGA's impact in the community and offer context on the national struggle for rights for all regardless of a person's sexual orientation.

The exhibit *Proud Oak Parkers: OPALGA at 30* runs until Feb. 29, 2020. 



*Museum Store Gets Ready (continued from page 1)*

Connect with your loved ones and share your interest in history as you support OPRF Museum.

If you're looking for a something special, consider giving one of the very first OPRF Museum limited-edition porcelain ornaments. Two designs are available—a snow baby and a Santa Claus; each is boxed individually, with a decorative ribbon so it's ready for hanging. The designs are taken from antique



(above) Another of our new holiday cards designs.

(below) The snow baby ornament.



holiday postcards in the Joe May Postcard Collection at the Museum. They're just the sparkle to grace your tree.

OPRF Museum also has presents for under the tree. How about an "I ♥ Oak Park" or "I ♥ River Forest" tea towel? Coffee and tea drinkers will appreciate a pottery mug decorated with their favorite village (Oak Park or River Forest) and settlement date.

Pair a jar of jam or jelly, salsa or dip mix with an Oak Park or River Forest pottery serving jar.

Wrap kitchen tools in a pottery canister or deliver a

holiday plant in a pottery jar.

The stylish black-and-white Oak Park River Forest Museum canvas tote bag complements any shopping trip, and works just as well on the beach as in the mall. Its front pocket is a handy place for cell phones and shopping lists, and the broad straps make it easy to carry.



Each ornament has our Museum logo on the back and comes with a ribbon ready to hang on your tree

Art lovers will enjoy our watercolor prints of local landmarks, ranging from Cheney Mansion in bloom to Petersen's Ice Cream shop to the Lake Theater festooned for the holidays. (No digital marquee!) Or consider combining fine art and architecture with one of the Chris Ware posters, designed expressly for the OPRF Museum. Readers can settle down with one of the many local histories available.

Finally, because Christmas is for the children, consider bringing home one of the unique hand-made wooden toys for the tots in your family. Among the options available are a floating tugboat, a jumping frog pull toy, a Model T car, and an alphabet snake puzzle.

See everything online at [www.oprfmuseum.org/](http://www.oprfmuseum.org/) store.

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## History Matters

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We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at:  
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# Recent Oak Park River Forest Museum Events

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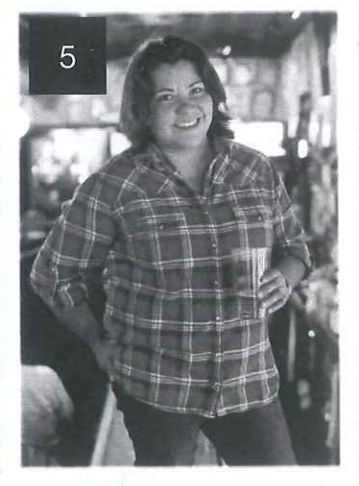
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3



6



7



1) Museum Executive Director Frank Lipo (left) led a walking tour of Art Deco architecture on Lake Street, one of several neighborhood walks this year; 2) The Museum created an exhibit in River Forest's Willard School honor of their 90th anniversary; 3) Museum archivist Elizabeth Nichols (center) gave a presentation on preserving family heirlooms and photos; 4) The Chicago-area chapter of the Edgar Rice Burroughs fan club, The Muckers, donated additional Burroughs memorabilia to the Museum collection; 5) Historian Liz Garibay gave a lecture on the history of brewing in Chicago in conjunction with the grand opening of the new OneLake Brewing brewpub; 6) A 2nd grade class from Beye School was one of several that visited to learn about local history; 7) Museum volunteer and former Cook County Forest Preserve District naturalist John Elliott led a walking tour of Evans Field Forest Preserve



## Whatever We Can Dig Up

by Rachel Berlinski, Museum Operations Manager

When you're building a tree house, normally your eyes are focused on the sky above. But sometimes it's what is below your feet that will stop you in your tracks. That's what happened to two young River Forest neighbors who found history in their own backyard.

While using a post-hole digger, Fletcher Neri and George Summy came across a few rusted pieces of metal buried in



Fletcher's backyard in the 700 block of Forest Avenue. After a thorough cleaning, one piece was found to be a WWII-era dog tag inscribed with the name "Wayland Cedarquist."

People often come to the museum with memorabilia that they have found buried in their yards. These artifacts tell a lot about the families who used to live there. Our first thought was that the Cedarquist family must have lived in this house back in the day. George's mother, Carrie Summy, and the boys did some online research and were surprised to find that the Cedarquist family did once live in River Forest, but nowhere near their house.

Thanks to George and Fletcher's curiosity, as well as Carrie's, the boys laid out all of the information they could find in a timeline for Wayland's family, who lived in various houses and apartments in both River Forest and Oak Park while Wayland was young. They also plotted their information on the family of Wayland's wife Lois and the extended family of his sister Jean. My heart goes out to these young history buffs, who made homework for themselves even during their summer vacation. They found that Wayland became a lawyer in Lake Forest and, in the 1970s even assisted in the trial of the police officers accused in the shooting death of two members of the Black Panthers.

But our researchers' question was, how did Wayland's dog tag get in Fletcher's backyard?


Our budding archeologists came to OPRF Museum to try to find the answer. They were armed with the dog tag as well and their timeline, written on packing paper stretching about ten feet long. We looked at Sanborn Fire Insurance maps to better understand the layout of the backyard over time, seeing how the area where the boys found the dog tag overlapped with the house next door. Using city directories, we were able to verify and add to the list of addresses in the area where these family members lived. But still nothing that made sense of how the dog tag came to rest underground. The Cedarquists were nowhere near the scene.

Reverse directories—listings organized by street and house number that give the name of the residents of each house—became the only tool I could think of. So we looked through books around that time period and read over the listings for that block of Forest. And as we pored over the pages, we came across the name O'Brien, living



Wayland's senior photo from the 1934 OPRF High School Tabula.

at the house next door to Fletcher's. "That name sounds familiar," Carrie said, looking back over the boy's timeline. Familiar indeed; it was the maiden name of Wayland's wife Lois. After looking at a few newspaper articles in the museum's files and Carrie's quick search through online resources, we found out that Lois grew up in the house on the other side of Fletcher's yard, near where the new tree house will soon stand. Wayland's in-laws lived there until 1959, so Wayland's dog tag had been in the ground for at least sixty years! Who knew plain old dirt could preserve something so well?

Thanks to the young detectives' dedication in researching these families, we finally found the connection. There are still many questions; perhaps most importantly, how exactly did Wayland's dog tag end up in the ground? We may never know, or maybe the boys will need to do just a bit more digging. 



# “America’s Sweethearts of the Air” Called Oak Park Home

by Peggy Tuck Sinko, President of Oak Park River Forest Museum

Music in many forms has been an important feature of life in Oak Park and River Forest for over 150 years. Musical organizations like the Symphony of Oak Park and River Forest established in 1933; famous musicians like Adolph “Bud” Herseth, principal trumpet in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and performances such as the outstanding musicals produced at Oak Park River Forest High School are but a few examples of the many ways in which music informs and enriches our villages.

Yet, when one thinks of music and Oak Park, country music does not immediately leap to mind. The recent Ken Burns documentary series, “Country Music,” reminded us, though, that for fifteen years, from 1942 to 1958, Oak Park was home to Lulu Belle and Scotty Wiseman, “America’s Sweethearts of the Air” and the best loved country music duo of this era. How did these two North Carolina natives find their way to Oak Park?

They were brought together at the National Barn Dance radio program which aired on WLS from 1924 until 1960. Pre-dating the Grand Old Opry show in Nashville by one year, the National Barn Dance, with its quirky blend of country, folk, and gospel songs along with folksy patter and cornball comedy, was not to be missed by its growing number of fans. The live Saturday night broadcasts from downtown Chicago sold out every performance from March 1932 to August 1957. Featuring performers like Gene Autry, the Hoosier Hot Shots, Patsy Montana, George Gobel, Pat Buttram, and the Prairie Ramblers, the Barn Dance radio audience reached across a major swath of the upper Midwest and southern Canada. By 1945 the National Barn Dance reached

over 3.5 million homes in just Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin; and was being aired on many stations in Canada, and on Armed Forces Radio from 1942 to 1948. The Barn Dance even made a brief appearance as a weekly television show in 1949 with the Wisemans as featured members of the cast.

Lulu Belle (born Myrtle Cooper in 1913), was living in Chicago with her family when she auditioned for the Barn Dance in 1932. She appeared as the girlfriend of Red Foley and quickly became an audience favorite. In 1936 she was voted “National

Radio Queen”—the most popular woman on radio—by readers of *Radio Guide* magazine. Scotty, born in 1909, loved Appalachian folk music and played banjo, guitar, and harmonica. He was also an active songwriter; his most famous song, co-credited with Lulu Belle, is “Have I Told You Lately That I Love You?” recorded by numerous country and pop artists. Scotty joined the Barn Dance in 1933 as a solo act, but was soon paired with Lulu Belle whom he married in 1934. At first many listeners were upset that Scotty had “stolen” Lulu Belle away from Red Foley, but the couple

quickly won over listeners and went on to star on the show for the next 25 years. From the beginning Lulu Belle played the homespun, spunky, mischievous gal—dressed in calico and gingham with old fashioned high-top shoes. Scotty was the shy, serious foil to Lulu Belle’s exuberance. One writer described them as the hillbilly version of George Burns and Gracie Allen, or Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez.

The Wisemans were hard-working entertainers. In addition to their weekly appearances on the Barn





Dance, they made personal appearances nearly every weekend. They also made dozens of recordings on the London, Mercury and other record labels. The duo found time to appear in eight Hollywood films including *Swing, Swing Your Partner* (1943); *The National Barn Dance* (1944); and *Under Western Skies* (1945). In the 1950s, they appeared regularly on WNBQ-TV in Chicago.

For a couple of years in the late 1930s, several Barn Dance regulars, including Lulu Belle and Scotty, relocated to Cincinnati and the *Brown County Jamboree* program on radio station WLW. The Wiseman's son, Steven, was born in Cincinnati in 1940. Not long after their return to Chicago and WLS, they moved to River Forest in 1942. The Wiseman's lived at 750 Park, where daughter Linda Lou, born in 1936, attended Lincoln School and Lulu Belle assisted as a volunteer teacher.



They lived in River Forest only a short while, and in August 1944 the family moved to 403 N. Scoville in Oak Park, where they remained until their retirement and return to North Carolina in 1958, near the end of the Barn Dance era.

In the 1940s and 1950s, a number of radio personalities called our villages home. Oak Parkers Cliff and Luella Johnson and their children hosted the popular *Breakfast with the Johnsons* program from 1947 to 1957 on WBBM and WLS. River Forest residents Paul and Angel Harvey were well-known around town. Nationally famous for his *Rest of the Story* segments, Harvey's program aired from 1952 to 2008 and was carried by over 1200 radio stations. But Lulu Belle and Scotty came from quite different backgrounds than the Johnsons and Harveys.

How was this couple regarded by their neighbors in town? Very well, it appears. Their local social

activities were frequently reported in the *Oak Leaves*. They were active members of the Oak Park Club where they were high-scoring members of the bowling league.

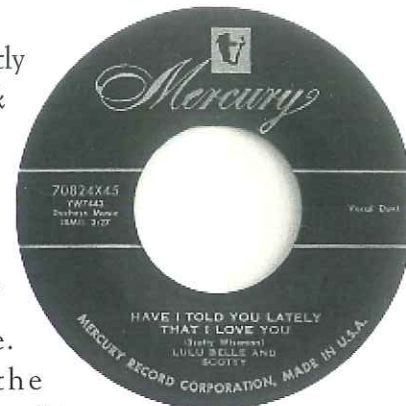
Lulu Belle won the Ladies' Club Championship

in 1953. She helped plan and modeled at the annual women's style show and card party, and also served on the Oak Park Club Women's Board.

While the Wisemans appear to have appreciated separating their domestic life from their professional life, at certain points their celebrity status came into play. In November 1944 the Wisemans were guests of honor at the Oak Park Club's "Hill-Billy Nite," with live music for "round, square, circle and robber dances", with prizes for best costumes.

One notable event involved the October 1950 grand opening of Wieboldt's new parking structure with its capacity for 500 autos. The department store celebrated this occasion with the "first square dance jamboree ever staged in the western suburbs." Complete with a live band, famous square dance caller, and WLS Barn Dance stars including Lulu Belle and Scotty, the event featured dancing on the upper level under the stars, with ample parking on the lower level. Their children, Linda Lou and Steven, attended Beye School and both graduated from OPRF. They were involved in typical children's activities—Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts, YMCA Camp, and piano lessons.

After their move to North Carolina in 1958, the couple made only occasional musical appearances. Scotty took up teaching and farming, and Lulu Belle served two terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives. In 1971 Scotty Wiseman was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. He died in 1981 and Lulu Belle in 1999. While none of their movies are currently available, fans can enjoy listening to them sing many of their signature songs on YouTube.





## Hemingway, Agassiz, and the Loon on the Bookcase

By Elizabeth Nichols, OPRF Museum Archivist

Visitors to Jeanette S. and Ellis K. Fields Research Center at Oak Park River Forest Museum stop short at the sight of the taxidermied loon sitting atop cabinets full of old local directories. Inevitably, they ask, "What is that?"

*Gavia immer*: the common loon. A long-bodied, low-slung diving bird that inhabits the north woods in the summer, and coastal waters and southern lakes in the winter. The loon's signature is its famous moaning call. This endangered bird is a symbol of the wilderness.

The loon came to the Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest in the organization's nascent days, donated by Mrs George Meyer. The 1973 deed of gift makes a stunning claim about the loon's provenance: "Bird is reported to have been stuffed by Ernest Hemingway."

For many years, our loon was on loan to the Ernest Hemingway Foundation. They added an accompanying display caption that reads, "Taxidermy enabled father and son to combine their passions for hunting and natural sciences. This striking loon was stuffed and mounted by Ed [Dr. Clarence E. Hemingway], reportedly with assistance from Ernest [Hemingway], c.1910."

While no concrete direct link exists to prove that our loon was mounted and stuffed by Dr. Hemingway with assistance from Ernest, I did find contextual evidence that connects our loon to the Hemingways.

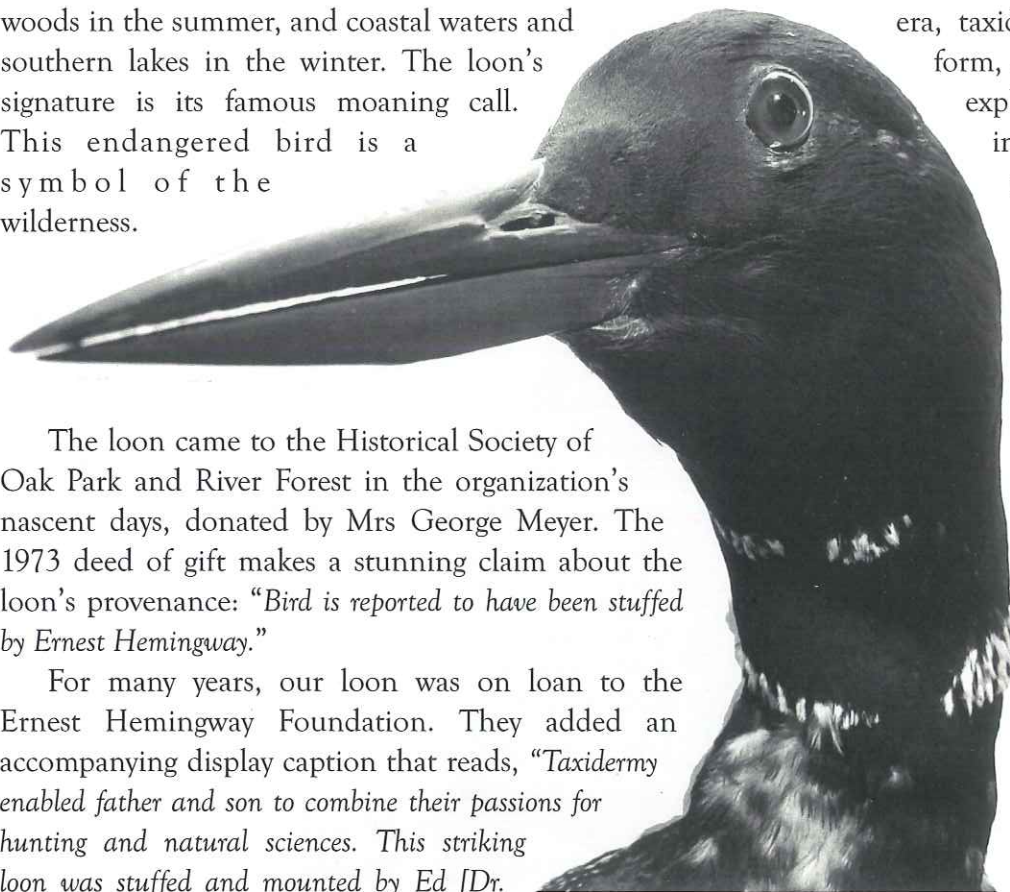
Dr. Hemingway was a hunter, fisherman, and natural science enthusiast. Remnants of his pursuits are still extant. Two stuffed owls, known as the Honeymoon Owls, are in the collection of Ernest Hemingway's Birthplace Museum. While on their honeymoon, Dr. Hemingway and his new bride's

nighttime peace was shattered by the owls' incessant noise. Irritated, Dr. Hemingway left the cabin with gun in hand to "make an example of them." The resulting Honeymoon Owls are proof of Dr. Hemingway's skill in taxidermy.

Born in 1871, Dr. Hemingway was a rigid Midwestern Victorian. During the Victorian era, taxidermy emerged as a science, art form, and all-consuming fad. Scientific exploration and discovery exploded in the 19th century and driving taxidermy became a means of bringing the natural world into the civilized sphere. This embarrassment of stuffed riches fueled the expansion and rise of museums in the United States. Taxidermy also put private collectors and hunters' status, worldliness, masculinity, and brawn on display.

Our loon is an example of the "manly" pursuits that Dr. Hemingway championed, and later passed onto Ernest. Taxidermy was a marriage of Dr. Hemingway's love of nature and his medical profession. He could combine all the precision and knowledge of a physician with his passion for wildlife. And taxidermy, unlike his medical practice, let the Dr. exert some control over death.

Not long after Ernest was born, Dr. Hemingway and his wife Grace Hall Hemingway purchased land in Michigan on Walloon Lake, and there built the family cottage, Windemere. It was an environment suited to manly endeavors. As a young boy, the lake and forest fueled Ernest's interest in nature. Dr. Hemingway gave Ernest his first fishing rod at age three and his first shotgun at age ten. In time, Ernest became an adept wing shot.





*Hemingway Loon (continued from page 8)*

Our loon was stuffed and mounted circa 1910 when Ernest was ten years old. The date fits neatly into Ernest's formative years at Walloon Lake under the tutelage of his father in fishing, hunting, and the natural world. The loon's predecessors-- the Honeymoon Owls-- set the stage for Dr. Hemingway to hunt the loon, mount it, and stuff it with his young son's help. In doing so, Dr. Hemingway would pass on another masculine pursuit to his son while also fostering Ernest's interest in wildlife and natural science. I picture Dr. Hemingway stuffing the loon with a wide-eyed Ernest at his side, demonstrating to his son the fad of his Victorian youth, and instilling in the boy a love of nature that would be with Ernest for the rest of his life.

Dr. Hemingway's tutelage did not end at Walloon Lake. In winter, he took Ernest and his sisters to Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History where fine examples of taxidermy were housed. At 339 Oak Park Avenue-- where Ernest Hemingway was born-- Dr. Hemingway kept a collection of snakes, toads, and salamanders bleached with alcohol in Ball jars. At a young age, Ernest could read all the names on his father's specimen jars.


In a letter to his father dated September 11, 1910, Ernest wrote, "I can get an albatross foot here [Nantucket] for two dollars for the Agassiz [sic]. Is it worth it?" Dr. Hemingway founded the Oak Park chapter of the Agassiz Association, a nature study organization for boys and girls named after naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873). (Each chapter could write its own bylaws, though, and it appears that Dr. Hemingway restricted the Oak Park chapter to boys only. A handwritten 1897 note invites "all boys interested in the study of nature" to attend. No girls' names appear on the membership rolls.) In his response of September 13, 1910, Dr. Hemingway cautioned his son to ask questions before buying the specimen. He also reported to Ernest the results of an Agassiz election naming him as president and Ernest as assistant curator of the club. Oak Park's Agassiz Club specimens-- our loon included-- were later donated to OPRF High School and Holmes School.

It seems the assistant curator of the Oak Park Agassiz Club did not just content himself with an

albatross foot. One of adolescent Ernest's favorite spots was the Wallace Evans Game Farm, once located near North Avenue and the Des Plaines River, now part of the Cook County Forest Preserve District. The Evans family raised pheasants, ducks, and other exotic game birds. Ernest claimed he poached a pheasant at Evans Game Farm. Coincidentally, OPRF Museum has a display on the Evans Game Farm that includes a taxidermied golden pheasant; visitors can find it on display in the Hunt Gallery on the Museum's first floor.

Agassiz Chapter Notice  
Beginning Feb. 7, 1897 the  
Oak Park Agassiz Chapter will  
hold, on Thurs days at 4:15 P.M.  
in the Committed Room, week-  
ly meetings.  
All boys interested in the  
study of Nature are cordial-  
ly invited to attend.  
C. E. Hemingway, M.D.  
Pres.

This handwritten note by Dr. Hemingway, believed to have been posted in the Scoville Institute-- Oak Park's first library-- invited only boys to join Oak Park's Agassiz Association chapter.

Today, the Hemingway loon stands alert, looking back over its wings at some intangible point in the distance. It is as if the loon's unseeing, red glass eyes are staring back into the past: a past where father and son were both alive with filled with wonder at nature. Our loon is a link to the Victorian era, the history of museums, the art and science of taxidermy, and the lives of the Hemingways. 

Want to help preserve the Hemingway Loon? Oak Park River Forest Museum is accepting donations to fund the cleaning, repair, and purchase of a glass display case for the Hemingway Loon. Contact us at (708) 848-6755 or visit <http://oprfmuseum.org/donate>.



## Museum Gala on November 21st Celebrates the Legacy of Two Remarkable Women

The second annual Museum Gala will be held on Thursday Nov. 21 at the Carleton Hotel, kicking off at 6:30.

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the second annual *Heart of Our Villages Award* to Sherlynn Reid and Chatka Ruggiero, who have made Oak Park and River Forest better places to live and work with their volunteerism, activism and community spirit.

Ruggiero grew up in Oak Park and graduated from Oak Park River Forest High School and has lived for decades in River Forest with her husband Tony. She has been an active community volunteer and philanthropist supporting a wide number of causes and organizations including the Animal Care League, the Infant Welfare Clinic, and The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest. She owns the Oak Park Arts Center, located in a former Christian Science Church and once the home to the Hemingway Museum. She was co-founder of the Oak Park Building and Owners' Association.

Sherlynn Reid moved to Oak Park in 1968 with her husband Henry and three young daughters and immediately became a leading community volunteer and activist. She joined the League of Woman Voters and the Nineteenth Century Club, rising to



*Chatka Ruggiero*



*Sherlynn Reid*

become president of both organizations. She soon took a job in the Village of Oak Park Community Relations Department, helping to implement the community's commitment to Fair Housing. She rose to become the department's director and earned a reputation as a woman with a fierce determination to make the village a place where all people are welcomed and valued.

"We are delighted to honor these two women who have left such a positive legacy in our community," said Frank Lipo, OPRF Museum executive director. "Their spirit of community service is an example for all of us and they truly are at the heart of our two villages."

The Historical Society, which was founded in 1968 and located in Pleasant Home from 1970-2016, raised more than \$1 million to transform a vacant and dilapidated former firehouse at 129 Lake St. in Oak Park to create Oak Park and River Forest Museum in 2017. The museum was named "Small Museum of the Year" in October 2018 by the Illinois Association of Museums.

Proceeds from the Gala fund operating costs and future exhibits at Oak Park River Forest Museum and the event includes cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. For more information or to purchase tickets for \$125, call 708-848-6755 or go to [oprfmuseum.org](http://oprfmuseum.org).






## Other Great Events Coming to You from OPRF Museum

### Sunday, December 8, 1 to 4 p.m. Free Holiday Open House!

Oak Park River Forest Museum will be decorated in its holiday finery and its doors will be opened for a Holiday Open House on Sunday December 8 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The Open House will include refreshments, historical games and toys for the kids, and a display of some holiday-themed items collected by local residents and members.

This is also a great opportunity to browse our gift shop for unusual gifts and mementos with a special Oak Park-River Forest flavor.

This is a free event for all, so bring your family and friends and help us celebrate the holidays. 



### Saturday, January 18, 3 p.m. The Strange History of a Brilliant Woman and a Lost Statue

At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, a monumental statue and its sculptor drew both great acclaim and great disapproval. Many critics raved that the work was brilliant and hailed it as the most impressive sculpture in the show, but some thought it shocking and repellent.

The sculpture was *The Death of Cleopatra* and its creator was Edmonia Lewis, an American woman of



Edmonia Lewis

African and Native American descent who spent much of her life as an expatriate in Rome and London.


*The Death of Cleopatra* came to Chicago in 1878 to be exhibited at the Interstate Exposition. Shortly after that it was acquired by a local gambler and then it disappeared, presumed lost forever. It was almost a century before it was rediscovered. For much of that time it had sat abandoned and forgotten in a field in Forest Park and later in a salvage yard in Cicero.

John Rice, a writer, private investigator, and long-time resident of Forest Park, has been fascinated by Edmonia Lewis and *The Death of Cleopatra* for over 25 years. Please join us to hear Rice share the life story of this remarkable woman and the strange journey of her greatest creation.

Rice is the co-author, along with Gail Tanzer of *The Ghost of Cleopatra*, a work of historical fiction that tells the story of Edmonia Lewis and her masterpiece. It's an epic tale that spans centuries and continents and tells how the spirit of the Queen of the Nile inspired Lewis to create her likeness in marble. The story is told through the eyes of Lewis, her statue and Cleopatra herself.

It is a story that celebrates the achievements of women, immigrants and minorities. Tracing her life from her humble early years living with her mother's Ojibwe people to her life of sculpting world-renowned works of art, the book shows the indomitable spirit of Edmonia Lewis, who overcame terrible hardship to become one of the celebrated sculptors of her time.

Copies of *The Ghost of Cleopatra* will be available for purchase at the event.

This event is free to OPRF Museum members. Admission for non-members is \$5 for Oak Park and River Forest residents and \$7 for non-residents. 



John Rice





OAK PARK  
RIVER FOREST  
MUSEUM

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## West Suburban Medical Center *Serving Our Community for Over a Century*

A group of Oak Park and Austin physicians saw a need in the community for improved medical care on Chicago's west side and its growing inner ring suburbs and they banded together to do something about it. In 1914, the new West Suburban Hospital opened its distinctive main building on Austin Boulevard at Erie, designed by Oak Park's own architect E.E. Roberts. A lot has changed in our community and in medical care since then, but historic West Suburban has remained an institutional anchor and major employer for Oak Park. The academic community hospital has adapted and modernized as medical care has evolved and even expanded to form a three building medical campus in River Forest. Now owned by for-profit company Pipeline Health, West Sub also pays major property taxes to our local taxing bodies. The teaching hospital has numerous certifications and accreditations and achieved straight "A's" for patient safety from The Leapfrog Group for 2012-18, one of only 49 hospitals in the nation to earn this distinction. As a nearby neighbor to West Suburban, Oak Park River Forest Museum plans to tell some of the hospital's stories in a future exhibit.

Do you have a West Suburban story to tell? Were you or your children born there? Did you attend the nursing school or complete your residency in their internal medicine or family medicine programs? Were you employed as a West Sub doctor, nurse or staff member? Visited their emergency room for a scrape or had your tonsils removed there? Send in any stories or offers of loaning or donating materials to [oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net](mailto:oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net)

*This issue of History Matters is sponsored by West Suburban Medical Center. You or your organization or business can sponsor an edition of History Matters. By paying for the printing and mailing costs for an issue, the sponsor will receive a half-page ad, telling the story of an Oak Park or River Forest business or family. Is it a milestone anniversary for your business? Do you want a special way to celebrate your golden wedding anniversary or a 75<sup>th</sup> birthday? Contact Rachel Berlinski at 708-848-6755 or at [oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net](mailto:oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net) if you would like to sponsor the next issue, due to be mailed in mid-January 2020.*