



New Online Exhibit Examines History of Discriminatory Housing Practices

Learning about the history of our nation or hometown is often fun and fascinating and may evoke warm memories and spark curiosity about other stories that need to be told. But other times, finding out about lesser known history can be challenging, disconcerting, and painful, particularly when it involves discrimination and exclusion. So when The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest has examined discrimination in our own community in the past, whether it was collaboratively researching, writing and publishing the award-winning book *Suburban Promised Land: The Emerging Black Community in Oak Park, Illinois, 1880-1980* or the ongoing 2018 exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, staff, board, and volunteers have worked to tell stories that are true and multi-faceted and include the voices of a wide range of perspectives and lived experiences. The goal has been to challenge ourselves so that our shared history is truly a story that has many chapters and many narrators.

In this spirit, OPRF Museum joined with five other history museums and cultural organizations from across the country to research and present their community's history of exclusion. The result is an online exhibit entitled *Unvarnished: Housing Discrimination in the Northern and Western United States*. The project was conceived, developed, and directed by Naper Settlement, an outdoor

history museum in Naperville, Illinois, that is administered by the Naperville Heritage Society. Supported through an Institute of Museum and Library Services Museum Leadership Grant and the Healing Illinois Grant Program, the project began in 2017 and took nearly five years to complete.

This online exhibit project was undertaken during a time when cultural institutions were being challenged to tell a deeper story of their community's diversity (or lack thereof) and historical and ongoing race-based barriers to full inclusion in our society, particularly in the wake of the 2020 racial reckoning sparked in part by the murder of George Floyd. Over the course of the project, facing the political climate of the last five years and the country's greater challenge of confronting racism, this story is ever more pertinent. The project members needed to ask themselves serious and sometimes uncomfortable questions. Why did it seem like only communities in the South were challenged to account for legacies of racism? What would it look like if a group of organizations from the Midwest and both coasts worked closely together to uncover their own histories of systemic exclusionary real estate practices and sundown town legacies?



Unvarnished (Continued from page 1)

Oak Park River Forest Museum's commitment to telling stories related to our own community's imperfect struggle toward racial inclusion in the last few years has been multifaceted, including hosting school field trips and outreach related to our original exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, the development of the Black History Bike Tour in 2021, assisting researchers interested in this topic through our important Fair Housing collection, and the development of a traveling version of the *Open*



Members of the Unvarnished consortium at Naper Settlement for the project's unveiling this May. Left to right: Dennis Cremin; Frank Lipo, Jeanne Schultz Angel, Donna Sack, Andrea Field, Sarah Doherty

House exhibit before it closes at the end of 2022. All of these efforts shed light on discriminatory real estate practices and discrimination visible in Oak Park and the efforts by many to work to increase and support more community diversity over time.

Yet all these efforts primarily used a more narrow, local lens that did not seek to place many of these stories in a national perspective. *Unvarnished* looks deeper into aspects of our local story already told in *Open House* and *Suburban Promised Land* and provides context within regional and national stories.

Online visitors to UnvarnishedHistory.org will learn how housing discrimination, often based on race, ethnicity, or religion, was a large-scale system that resulted in segregation patterns across the Northern and Western United States that intensified through the twentieth century. Nearly two dozen interactive articles, accompanied by videos, photos, interviews, and other primary sources, showcase how formal systems of segregation developed through individual practices and expanded through local

ordinances and federal policies, sustained over time, and continue to affect today's communities.

In addition to the national context, visitors may examine how institutionalized discrimination shaped six communities in the Northern and Western United States. Each of these six communities is represented in the project's consortium - Appleton, WI (African Heritage Incorporated.); Brea, CA (Brea Museum and Historical Society); Columbus, OH (Ohio History Connection); Naperville, IL (Naper Settlement and the Naperville Heritage Society); Oak Park, IL (The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest); and West Hartford, CT (Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society). By examining communities in these regions, the project educates visitors and encourages every community to look at their own histories.

The online exhibition includes teacher resources for middle and high school students. In four inquiry modules, students explore compelling questions to help them discover and share the local dimensions of national segregation patterns and see them through the wide lens of American history.

Explore *Unvarnished: Housing Discrimination in the Northern and Western United States* online at UnvarnishedHistory.org or scan this QR code with your phone or tablet. There is also a link on our home page at OPRFMuseum.org.



A Special Thank You to Sarah Doherty

OPRF Museum Board member Sarah Doherty played an integral part in the *Unvarnished* project. Her role began as a contributor representing OPRF Museum but grew to serving as a lead content expert for the entire project and working with three staffers from Naper Settlement to form the core website editorial team. She dedicated a huge amount of time to bring *Unvarnished* to fruition. We are grateful for the commitment, expertise, and professionalism she brought to the project.

Sarah is Associate Professor of History at North Park University. She holds a Ph.D. in U.S. and Public History from Loyola University- Chicago.

OPRF Museum Welcomes the Return of Field Trips After a Two-Year Absence

We love hosting students at OPRF Museum. In fact, we think helping children in our communities learn about the history of their home town is one of the most important things we do. But the Covid pandemic put a stop to class museum visits- at least for a while.

For over two years we were unable to host school field trips because of restrictions on indoor gatherings. But, thankfully, that is finally changing. May saw a flurry of field trips come to the Museum for the first time since March 2020. Following are a few photos that illustrate the range of students we served during the month of May.



Students from Seed Montessori's After School Classroom

Are you an educator who would like to schedule a class visit or plan a local history program or project? Or perhaps you would just like to learn more about the educational resources OPRF Museum can offer your students. Please call Rachel Berlinski, Operations Manager, at (708) 848-6755 or email her at oprffhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net or check out the Teacher Resource page on our website at oprffmuseum.org/teacher-tools.



Tyrone Williams' AP History class from OPRF High School



Fourth Grade class from Beye School

When Historians Travel, It's a Small World After All

In April, each of our museum staff members was able to get away for a long weekend trip. But they didn't realize until the last minute that their trips would overlap for part of the weekend in Nashville, TN! To top it off, they bumped into each other while touring the city's historic

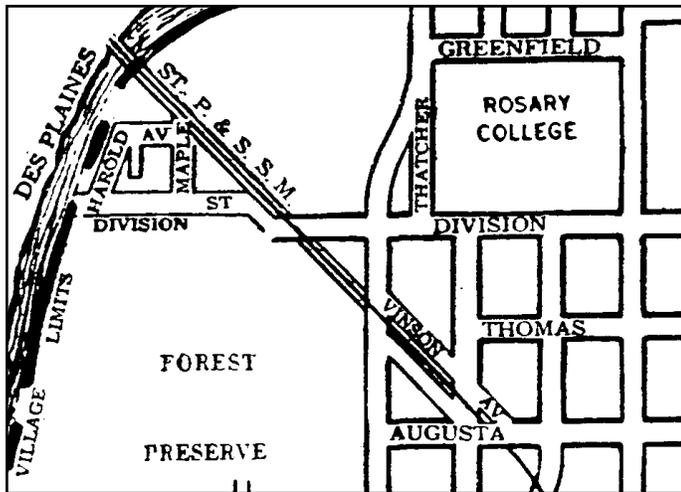


Centennial Park. Here, Rachel Berlinski and Frank Lipo are seen in front of the monument dedicated to James Robertson, the city's founder.

The Curious Case of the Mysterious Vinson Highway

By Frank R. Fiorito

By 1928, a western highway extending from St. Charles to Elmhurst had been completed along the line of North Avenue. It ended at 1st Avenue. Augusta Boulevard was eyed as a means of providing quick transport into Chicago's commercial center from the city limits at Austin Boulevard. Planners realized that for efficient traffic flow from points west into the city center the gap between Austin and the western highway needed to be completed. Oak Park



Excerpt from an Oak Leaves map showing Vinson Ave., which was to be extended along the north side of the railroad tracks to North Avenue. (Note the Edgewater Subdivision in the upper left quadrant of the map. Frank Fiorito shared the story of Edgewater in our Fall 2021 edition.)

and River Forest stood in the way. A fight was brewing.

Traveling along Augusta into Oak Park where "boulevard" reverts to "street," a driver's pace eases. A calmer disposition comes from experiencing the canopy of trees, the well-kept lawns, and the varied architecture of the homes. This tranquility was almost lost forever due to a little River Forest street that few residents knew existed.

As Lake Michigan provides a deterrent to eastbound travelers, the Des Plaines River sets the bounds for those headed west. After the 1871 fire, Chicago's growth pushed population westward and that growth would eventually press upon Oak Park and River Forest only to be constrained by the Des Plaines.

In the 1930s, as the country entered the Great Depression, government put money into getting the

unemployed back to work by funding public works projects to further the expansion of the city and suburbs. This expansion depended upon crossing the Des Plaines.

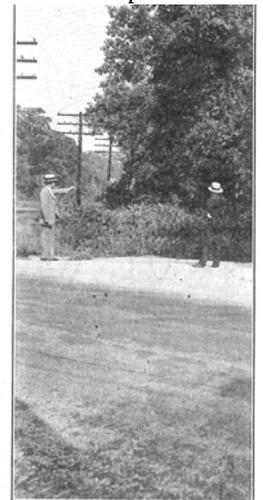
Established by the State of Illinois in 1869, The West Park Commission was charged with developing a system of parks and boulevards to foster growth while preserving residents' needs for recreation and access to nature. Much of Chicago's "Green Necklace", the city's system of boulevards and parks, was developed by the Commission's work.

In September of 1928, the West Park Commission took control of Chicago's Augusta Street with the intention to develop it into a boulevard and improve the commute between the Chicago city center and points west. The five-line article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* was probably missed by most readers, especially those in neighboring Oak Park and River Forest. It was regarded as a Chicago matter and Chicago stopped at Austin.

Augusta was ideal for development because, unlike North Avenue and Lake Street, it had no street cars operating on it. Streetcars with their rails and frequent stops were an obstacle to rapid auto transportation.

When Chicago residents living along Augusta objected to plans that seemed assured for approval, careful readers could see that this proposal would not confine itself to city limits. After spending \$700,000 to build the western highway, momentum was increasing to complete the route east. Looking at the map, to see the obvious route, one simply drew a line through Oak Park and River Forest.

The Des Plaines River could be crossed via bridges at Lake Street or North Avenue but, this presented travelers with a distance of over a mile with no river crossing in between. More



VINSON AVENUE

River Forest commissioner F. H. French (left) points down the overgrown dirt road that was Vinson Avenue. The pavement in the foreground is Augusta Ave. The telephone poles parallel Vinson. (Oak Leaves, Sept 4, 1931)

(Continued on Page 5)

Vinson Avenue (continued from page 4)

river crossings would be required. In the path of urban growth, the Forest Preserves and local residents would have to yield to the needs of drivers.

Plans were soon drawn up to cut through the Forest Preserves and cross the river with bridges at Chicago, Augusta, and Division. The speed of development was such that, within a matter of months, the bridge at Chicago was proposed, funded, and completed in 1931.

While this new river crossing helped, it wasn't considered enough. Another crossing would be required and though Division had potential, planners saw Augusta as offering more because it intersected with a little street that primarily had served the Soo Line's Thatcher Park Station. The street? Vinson Avenue.

In 1930, Vinson Avenue was probably as well known to residents of River Forest as it is today; that is to say, not at all. It consisted of a somewhat insignificant swath of land appearing on real estate plats as early as 1890, but never used for more than a wagon trail servicing the Thatcher Park Train Station at Keystone and Augusta. Running northwest along both sides of the Soo Line tracks from Augusta to Thatcher, it measured 40 feet wide on the north side and 60 feet wide on the south side of the tracks. The county's plan was to widen the north side to a width of 100 feet and turn it into a major roadway.

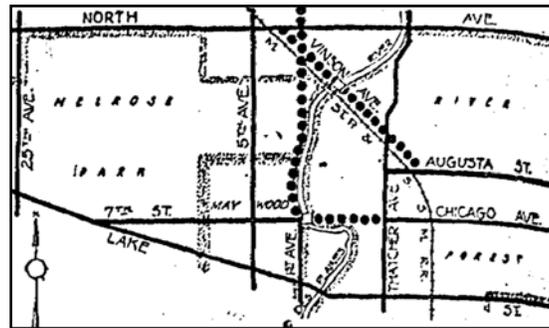
A widened Vinson Avenue would be extended across Thatcher and cut through the Forest Preserve to cross the river parallel to the railroad bridge. It would continue on to connect to 1st Avenue. The bridge across the river, the expansion of Vinson Avenue, and the widening of what was now a sedate Augusta Street promised to result in a very heavily traveled and renamed Augusta Boulevard.

Awakening from three years of complacency, Oak Park and River Forest residents were galvanized and

determined to fight the county's plan. Vinson Avenue was no longer a forgotten little street.

Citizens united in their opposition. When the county's committee on roads and bridges held its meeting to discuss the Vinson Highway on September 18, 1931, residents from both communities packed the room with a boisterous but respectful group.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Major George Quinlan, county engineer, who with diagrams and maps patiently explained to the befuddled local residents where exactly Vinson Avenue was.



The Chicago Tribune published this sketch map produced by the Chicago Motor Club on June 7, 1931 to illustrate the proposed changes to improve traffic flow over the Des Plaines River. The dotted lines show the three phases of the plan: 1) extending Chicago Avenue, which ended at Thatcher, west and over the Des Plaines River; 2) extending First Avenue, which ended at Chicago Avenue, north to Grand Avenue; and 3) extending Vinson Avenue northwest along the railroad line across the Des Plaines to connect with North Avenue. Only the first two phases were completed.

Petitions were submitted calling for the abandonment of the Vinson Highway plan citing the devastating changes that cutting down 140 trees for the widening effort and resultant heavy traffic would have on quality of life and property values. Summed up by resident William S. Johnston, "We have done enough for the motorists, it's about time the rights of the dear public ought to be considered".

Their pleas worked! The committee unanimously voted to reject the Vinson Highway plan. It also helped that by the time of the meeting, the county road funds were already exhausted for 1931.

For a while, Vinson Avenue remained municipal land, thick with weeds. Over the next decade, the property was vacated and sold to the residents whose property abutted it.

In May of 1941, Augusta was once again being considered for widening and a bridge across the Des Plaines River. Opposition to this proposal was met by no less energy than that exhibited ten years previously. By December, the United States would be at war and this new attempt would be forgotten.

Ominously, another more ambitious road plan was gaining support. If approved, the Austin-Kinzie Highway's effect on Oak Park would have dwarfed the impact posed by Vinson. But that is another story worth its own telling.

Field Trip: Tales from the Fields Research Center

New Mystery Novel Explores 1920s Oak Park

by Rachel Berlinski

Early this year author Jeanne M. Dams released *Murder in the Park*, the first book in her new series of mystery novels. And— gasp! —the park to which the title refers is Oak Park.

Set in the 1920s, the story follows the saga of Elizabeth Fairchild, a young socialite whose life up until this point has been anchored in privilege but stained with heartache. When she personally takes on the investigation of a local murder, much is revealed about the ins and outs of this “quiet” town.

Dams notes in the book’s acknowledgements that “the Oak Park of my story...may have sheltered a good many unpleasant people,” but that the people she encountered here during her research were “unfailingly kind and helpful.” Many members of the Historical Society who are also heavily involved with other local organizations—including Marilyn Wardle, who is the volunteer archivist at Grace Episcopal Church; Don Giannetti, the institutional memory of St. Edmund Church; and Theresa Czarnik, who leads and helps create tours at Pleasant Home—helped in the making of this book. I am also honored to have lent a hand and shared the Museum’s resources.

I first met Dams in the summer of 2020 when she visited from her home in Indiana to begin preparations for capturing the world of her book. But what made the author choose Oak Park of the 1920s as her setting? According to Dams, “It was my discovery online of [Historical Society board member] Sarah Doherty’s dissertation about the Walosas Club [the local chapter of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan]

that led me to Oak Park. I was planning a book set in Chicago during Prohibition, but the more I learned about Oak Park the more I realized that it held far richer possibilities...And of course when I came for a visit, I fell in love with your village!”

Dams looked diligently for context on the story’s setting, paging through issues of the *Oak Leaves* in order to immerse herself in the time period. While

Dams acknowledges that the story dramatizes and fictionalizes Oak Park, the town in her story comes to life so vividly that as a reader I had to remind myself that, for example, although Grace Hall Hemingway was active in the community, giving music lessons to local children and helping with local charities, she probably didn’t really chase down mobsters in her spare time as she does in this story. And while some details like this are more fictionalized, the setting remains informed, realistic, and recognizable to those who have either studied Oak Park’s cultural past or have personal ties to and memories of the

community.

You’ll certainly want to read *Murder in the Park*, as it is the first in Dams’ new series exploring this character and setting. And just a small spoiler: no story set in Oak Park could be complete without a trip to Petersen’s Ice Cream Parlor, and this book is no exception!



Meet Jeanne M. Dams on Sunday, July 24, at Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore, 7419 Madison Street in Forest Park. Dams will appear from 2 to 4 p.m. to discuss her book and autograph copies.

Gilmore's Closes Its Doors After Sixty Years in Oak Park

by Mary Ann Porucznik

On May 19, 1917, a new retailer moved to Oak Park. William Y. Gilmore purchased the Avenue Dry Good Store at the corner of Lake Street and Oak Park Avenue. The store occupied a space 42' by 58' at the southwest corner of the intersection. Over the next 60 years, Gilmore and his sons expanded not only the size of the store, but also the number and types of items for sale. Gilmore's, as it became known, grew to be a shopping tradition, celebrated for its special events, customer service, and quality merchandise.

William Gilmore was well-suited to serve the growing community of Oak Park. He had been with Carson, Pirie, Scott for 22 years and knew the business from the ground up—wholesale and retail, domestic and foreign. According to the *Oak Leaves*, "In this hour of economic struggle [World War I], he expects his knowledge of markets to benefit his customers, and promises an up-to-date store and the most dependable merchandise."

Gilmore delivered on that promise. A savvy merchandiser, he frequently bought up stock from stores that were going out of business and sold the items at a discount in his own establishment. He used a variety of promotions to attract customers—from semi-annual "Dollar Days" to specialty sales and cash refunds. As businesses around him—a florist, a tailor, a men's shop—closed or moved, he took over the space, enlarging his own store. Within ten years, he had expanded four times, even adding a mezzanine within the store to display more merchandise.

His semi-annual buying trips to New York and vacations in Florida were excuses to acquire the latest fashions and colors, ensuring that his customers

would be among the stylish wherever they went. As the local paper noted, "He and Mrs. Gilmore have been wintering along America's Riviera and are certain that what is popular there will be popular in Oak Park this spring and summer."

When his sons joined him in the business after graduating from college (one with a degree in commerce and advertising and the other with a degree in retailing), the Avenue Dry Goods Store became Gilmore's Department Store. It offered cosmetics, women's accessories, women's dresses, women's coats, hosiery, foundations, men's clothing, men's furnishings and men's suits, as well as women's shoes. A tea room occupied the second floor. Many employees stayed with the company for years, and many families had two or three generations working at the store.

Service was stressed by the store's founder and his sons broadened this philosophy to include the community at large, working with Oak Park civic, academic and cultural leaders for the improvement

of the community. The store provided fashions for the annual Infant Welfare Society's fundraising event, and donated 10 percent of sales to support the society.

By the 1970s, however, shopping habits had changed. Large suburban malls were drawing shoppers away from local stores. Gilmore's began to lose money and fell behind in payments to creditors. Despite efforts to reorganize under a court-supervised bankruptcy plan, Gilmore's found itself unable to carry on business as usual. The store's last day was December 31, 1976.

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SAVE 30% TO 50% AND MORE

FAMOUS QUALITY FAMOUS NAME BRANDS FOR MEN & WOMEN



Permit # 15043 Exp. Dec. 19th 1976

STORE HOURS
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Mon., Thurs., 10:00-8:30
Sat., 10:00-5:00
Sun. Noon-4:00



GILMORE'S
Phone 383-2300
Corner of Lake St. and Oak Park Ave.
Oak Park

Use Your 30 Day Layaway BankAmericard Master Charge

from Oak Leaves, December 22, 1976

for men

| SUIITS | SPORTCOATS |
|-----------|-------------|
| REG. NOW | REG. NOW |
| \$110 '58 | \$69.95 '39 |
| \$155 '68 | \$77.95 '49 |
| \$155 '78 | \$89.95 '59 |
| \$150 '88 | |

| SLACKS | RAINFOATS |
|-------------|-----------|
| REG. NOW | REG. NOW |
| \$22.50 '12 | \$29 |
| \$25.00 '15 | |

Outerwear 30% OFF

| Leisure Suits | Sport SHIRTS |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1/2 OFF | Reg. \$16.00 |
| | *10⁰⁰ |

| Carrigan Sweaters | TIES |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Reg. \$22.50 | Reg. \$6.50-7.50 |
| *12⁰⁰ | *3⁰⁰ |

for women

| COATS | PANTSUITS |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Long, wool, winter Vel. to 88C | as low as |
| *59⁰⁰ | *10⁰⁰ |

| Long Genuine Leather COATS | SWEATERS |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Reg. \$116 | 1/3 to 1/2 OFF |
| *99 | |

| DRESSES | JUMPSUITS |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bargain Rack | as low as |
| *9⁰⁰ | *10⁰⁰ |

| CO-ORDINATED SPORTSWEAR | Long Occasion DRESSES |
|---|-------------------------|
| Jackets, Parka, Snow Suits Reg. \$22 to \$58 | as low as |
| *11⁰⁰ - *29⁰⁰ | *11⁰⁰ |

| Sweater VESTS | SHELLS |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| as low as | as low as |
| *5⁰⁰ | *4⁵⁰ |

Harlem Avenue: “Main Street of Cook County”

By Frank Lipo

Harlem Avenue has always separated the sister villages of Oak Park and River Forest, a boundary first placed on the map in the 1830s when federal government surveyors were preparing to carve the territory up into what would become Proviso Township west of Harlem and Cicero Township to the east.

But 100 years ago, a civic and regional coalition came together to transform the road; from a narrow, discontinuous and often unpaved route, they saw a new economic engine and physical connection to the rest of Cook County. A coordinated state and regional effort sparked by local leaders began in summer 1923 and over a five-year period transformed Harlem Avenue into an “outer belt highway,” laying some of the groundwork for the development of large-capacity highways that would connect the entire nation after World War II.

The history of Harlem Avenue was on my mind earlier this summer as I waited through two traffic light cycles to cross the street on my way from my home on Ridgeland in Oak Park to the forest preserves that form the west boundary of River Forest. This summer’s \$5.7 million resurfacing of Harlem Avenue between the villages and stretching 4.5 miles from North Avenue south to 26th Street in Berwyn is not that unusual, of course. In 1997 and 2012, similar resurfacing projects snarled traffic for a few months.

But in my musings I remembered a photo taken by Philander Barclay (shown above) that reveal Harlem as a narrow dirt road and when I delved into the archives I discovered that we are approaching the 100th anniversary of the mostly successful effort to

transform Harlem into the important (and traffic-clogged) arterial of 2022.

A front-page article on July 14, 1923 in *Oak Leaves* said it all: “For Harlem Avenue: Neglected Thorofare Destined to Be Greatest Outer Belt Highway.” Previously that week, the article stated, “prominent men” from six municipalities had met at the Oak Park Municipal Building at Lake and Euclid to plan a federation that would soon be called the Greater Harlem Avenue Association. The goal: to create a continuous 40-mile road for street cars, heavy traffic, and automobiles “along the rim of the metropolitan district” paving what was “for long stretches just a patch of weeds,” funded by the county and state (and eventually becoming today’s Illinois Route 43.)

In an editorial in the same issue, *Oak Leaves* opined: “If those now living do nothing whatever to promote Harlem Avenue....time will force others to do the work. At present Oak Park and River Forest are on a sort of peninsula, cut off from the north and from the south, because there is no

thorofare. Berwyn, with greater vision, has laid all plans to improve its part on the basis of a hundred-foot highway.”

Describing Harlem between Oak Park and River Forest as only 38-foot wide, the editorial called for a 48-mile-long continuous highway from Wilmette to the south border of Cook County and for Oak Park and River Forest officials to consider forcing landowners to sell a strip to allow the road’s widening. Officials in Oak Park, Berwyn and other towns had agreed to the widening and paving of Harlem from



Philander Barclay captured this image of Harlem Avenue looking north from Lake Street in 1902

Harlem Avenue (Continued from page 8)

Madison Street south to Pershing Road. The widening and paving north of River Forest through Elmwood Park and Norwood Park was also being investigated.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported on this new initiative on July 22, 1923 under the headline “Harlem Avenue to be ‘Main St.’ of Cook County.” It humanized the need for the road improvement with the story of Chester H. Bragg, a realtor serving Berwyn, Riverside and La Grange who recounted his “zig-zag trip” on a stormy day while attempting to travel from Oak Park to Berwyn. While it looked easy on the map, when he arrived in Berwyn “several hours later” he decided that a modern through street was needed to avoid “a grand tour of Cicero, Niagara Falls, Washington D.C., Crown Point and Stickney.”

The *Tribune* lauded Berwyn’s leadership in the effort. “Ald. Kinney of Berwyn stated that his city could pave the three and a fraction miles along its western boundary before winter if necessary. At present there are stretches of road so buried in mud no one would ever suspect there had ever been a street there. In several places there is nothing but greensward, not even a wagon track.”



Late 1920s view along Harlem north toward Chicago Avenue, showing the roadway with its new brick surface along this stretch.

One of the biggest hurdles was the need for a Harlem Avenue bridge over the “drainage canal” or what we call the Sanitary and Ship Canal and which was already under discussion, along with bridges on Cicero and today’s Pulaski. Of course, bridges at those approximate locations also are necessary to span the nearby Stevenson Expressway, not yet on any



Harlem Avenue. June 2022. Construction (and congestion) continues.

planning wish list. Like all large, disruptive and costly public works projects, it takes time from vision to reality. But on Dec. 24, 1927, *Oak Leaves* reported that earlier that week, the predecessor of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago had approved the expenditure of millions of dollars to build the Harlem Avenue bridge over that waterway. At the meeting were members of the Greater Harlem Avenue Association and Cook County Board President Anton J. Cermak, who had spearheaded the improvement.

The bridge was set for completion in 1928 and *Oak Leaves* reported only a few “missing links” in the new roadway, set to be paved even prior to the completion of the bridge. It was described as the “final step in plans to complete the super Harlem highway from Lincoln highway south thru Oak Park and the western suburbs 26 miles northwest.”

So while the acrid smell of asphalt, the proliferation of orange cones, and the shifting lane configurations will likely linger into the fall of 2022, the contractors hired by the Illinois Department of Transportation will leave behind a smooth driving surface, new ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps, new curb sections, and improvements to the deck of the bridge over the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290).

And of course, the next big Harlem project will be in the works a decade or more from now. 

Coming Events from Oak Park River Forest Museum

Saturday, August 27, 1 pm & 3:30 pm An Afternoon of Family Fun and Hands-On History at Wonder Works Children's Museum



OPRF Museum partners with Wonder Works Children's Museum for a hands-on history event just for children and their parents, grandparents, or care-givers. Kids (of any age) can try their hand at old-

time games like marbles, shoot the moon, and hoop rolling, from an era before toys required batteries or Wi-Fi.

This event will be held at Wonder Works Children's Museum, 6445 North Avenue in Oak Park. There will be two sessions: one from 1:00 to 2:30 pm and another from 3:30 to 5:00 pm. Tickets are \$5 each and may be purchased through Wonder Works website at <https://wonder-works.org/history-of-play>. Space is limited so please order your tickets soon! 

Sunday, September 11, 3 pm The Great American Labor Song: Classic Songs of Workers' Protest



Bucky Halker

Live music shares the stage with history when Bucky Halker performs at OPRF Museum to honor the contributions of workers to American society. Halker will present a variety of songs that grew

from the labor movement's struggles to improve working conditions in Illinois and the rest of the nation in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Clark "Bucky" Halker is a songwriter, performer, and historian with 15 albums to his credit, including *Anywhere But Utah: Songs of Joe Hill* and *The Ghost of*

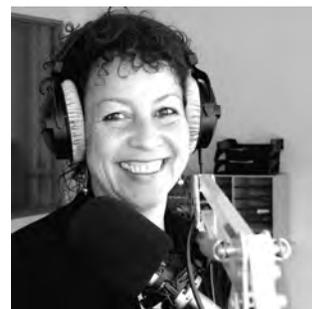
Woody Guthrie, an original music tribute to the legendary folksinger. Halker is the scholar-producer of the five-volume *Folksongs of Illinois* CD series and author of the book *For Democracy, Workers, and God: Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest, 1865-1895*. Halker holds a Ph.D. in American History and received the prestigious Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress American Folklife Center in 2012.

Tickets for this event are \$8 for OPRF Museum members or \$10 for non-members and may be ordered online at oprfmuseum.org or by phone at (708) 848-6755. 

Saturday, September 17, 3 pm Music as Cultural History: The Latino Community in Illinois and the U.S.

Music can be viewed and "read" as a tool to share the cultural values, roots, and history of a community. Numerous musical genres have shared the concerns of the Latino community throughout the years.

Please join us as Catalina Maria Johnson presents an overview of music in the U.S. Latino community from the last 75 years as a way to understand the history, roots, and concerns of Latinx



Catalina Maria Johnson

Americans, with a special emphasis on Mexican and Puerto Rican musicians in Illinois who have profoundly marked our state's culture and music.

Catalina Maria Johnson, Ph.D., is a Chicago-based journalist. She hosts and produces *Beat Latino*, which airs in Chicago on Vocalo Radio 91.1 FM (Chicago Public Media). She is a regular contributor to National Public Radio, Bandcamp, Downbeat, and other media outlets. She also serves on the editorial board of *Revista Contratiempo*.

This event is made possible through the Road Scholars Speaker Bureau of Illinois Humanities, the Illinois affiliate of the National Endowment for Humanities. Although the event is free to all, space is limited so reserve your place soon. 

Neighborhood Walking Tours Offered Through October

Our popular neighborhood walking tours continue with walks at 10 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturday of each month through October. Each walk examines the history of a neighborhood and shares stories about some of its former residents. Here is our schedule for the rest of this season:

West Side Stories– July 23

Learn about the early history of River Forest and view some amazing homes as we stroll up Edgewood and down Thatcher between Lake Street and Oak Avenue.

Women’s History Walk– August 13

Hear stories of women from our community who broke down barriers in government, cultural affairs, and social services on this tour along Lake Street.

Keystone Avenue: Street of Dreams– August 27

A walk up and down Keystone Avenue from Lake Street to Chicago Avenue shares some surprising stories and showcases some remarkable homes.

[Please note: **On this date only**, the walk will begin at **2 p.m.** to tie in with the River Forest Park District’s Food Truck Rally in Keystone Park]

Growing with the Gundersons– September 10

A look at the history of the Gunderson Historic District, some of its former residents, and Seward Gunderson who built a community, not just houses.

Keystone Avenue: Street of Dreams– September 24

A 10 a.m. repeat of our August 27 walk.

Ridgeland Ramble– October 8

Starting and ending at OPRF Museum, this walk shares stories of Oak Park’s east side, beginning with the history of the unincorporated village of Ridgeland before it merged with Oak Park.

Evans Field Forest Preserve Walk– October 22

Hear stories about the Wallace Evans Game Farm; a Depression Era CCC Camp; the Cook County Forest Preserve District; and even Ernest Hemingway!

These walks each take about 90 minutes and start at 10 a.m., (with the exception of *Street of Dreams* on August 27, as noted above.) Visit our website for more information and to order tickets.



“Ask the Historians” and “Inside OPRF Museum” now on YouTube

Each month, OPRF Museum presents a half-hour program online, either *Ask the Historians* or *Inside OPRF Museum*. But if you can’t join us for the live broadcast, now you can catch up on these programs anytime you’d like on YouTube. Simply go to YouTube.com and enter OPRFHistSociety in the search box. You can even subscribe to new episodes by clicking the “Subscribe” button on our YouTube page.

The latest episode of *Ask the Historians* focuses on the history of the Farmer’s Market Band that has been entertaining shoppers at the Oak Park Farmer’s Market for over forty years. OPRF Museum volunteer



Bob Messer interviews Ben Stark and Geoff Tillotson, two long-time band members, about the history of the band and how it became an integral part of the Farmer’s Market experience. Ben and Geoff even shared a song with us at the end of the program!



History Matters

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The Quarterly Newsletter of Oak Park River Forest Museum
129 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302 / Phone (708) 848-6755
Published by The Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest
P.O. Box 771, Oak Park, Illinois 60303-0771
oprfmuseum.org

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We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at: oprhistorymatters@sbcglobal.net



Oak Park Vintage Car Club and OPRF Museum Bring Classic Cars and Crowds to the Museum on June 11th

Fords, Fiats, Packards, Plymouths, Mustangs, Morgans and more lined the streets surrounding OPRF Museum for this free exhibition of beautifully restored classic cars. Thank You to everyone who came out for this terrific event. Plan on joining us again next year when we hope to once again partner with Oak Park Vintage Car Club for another edition of the show. In the meantime, if you weren't able to attend, please enjoy a few photos of just a fraction of the beautiful vehicles that were on display at this year's exhibition!

Thank you to **The Autobarn Volvo of Oak Park**; **Thrivent Financial Services**; **Oak Park & North Auto Service**; and **Secret Weapon Art** for their generous sponsorship of this event. And special thanks to our neighbors at **School of Rock Oak Park** for providing live music on the Museum plaza during the show— the perfect accompaniment for a classic car show on a beautiful Saturday morning!

