



Fine Art Collection Illuminates the Heritage of Our Community



Kristi Sloniger and Peter Conover (above) recently donated this painting by noted Oak Park artist Alfred Juergens to OPRF Museum. Learn more about this remarkable work of art on page 2

When people think of a history museum, some things leap to mind: unique artifacts, striking vintage photographs and informative labels. While Oak Park River Forest Museum has all of those things, our storytelling also includes the sort of fine art that many instead associate with art museums.

Since 1970 when its first one-room museum opened in Pleasant Home, The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest has been quietly building a fine arts collection that includes paintings by artists who lived in our two villages, murals from the WPA federal art project that once adorned Stevenson Playground's shelter house, and paintings and drawings of local buildings and people. They tell a variety of important stories, including the indisputable fact that since their earliest days, our villages have had a robust arts scene.

(Continued on page 2)

New Philander Barclay Society Established To honor both the legacy of bicycling photographer and today's generous museum philanthropists

In fall 2019, The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest invited more than 100 generous supporters to inaugural membership in the new Philander Barclay Society, which recognizes every donor of \$1,000 or more in a given year.

All donors who contributed a cumulative total of \$1,000 or more to the recent capital campaign or to support the operations of the new Oak Park River Forest Museum were invited to be inaugural members of the Barclay Society.

In 2020 and beyond, membership is open to any donor who contributes one or more gifts totaling \$1,000 or more in a given fiscal year toward the operation of our museum and its programs. While donations at any level to support the museum are much appreciated and needed, this heightened level of support is crucial



Charter members of the Philander Barclay Society gathered at the museum on October 24 to kick off the new initiative.

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Art Collection (continued from page 1)

The main collection consists of etchings and watercolor and oil paintings by the likes of Carl Krafft, Josephine Reichmann, Carl Junge, Helen Hudson Below, Charles Dahlgreen, Louis H. Sharp, and Frank Pebbles. Unusual items include a plaster bas relief by sculptor Richard W. Bock which once hung in River Forest's 1889 Lincoln School building and a 20-inch-high maquette of Geraldine McCullough's sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Our scale model currently graces a shelf in our exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*; the actual statue is located outside the Illinois state capitol in Springfield!



Geraldine McCullough's maquette for her sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that stands on the grounds of the Illinois State Capitol building in Springfield

The painting shows a long lost rear view of the property with only a small section of their home visible. The large garden depicted is now the site of other homes and Juergens' sister Helene is relaxing in this sylvan setting.

In late 2019, an Oak Park couple added a gem to our collection when they donated a 1904 painting of the back yard of their Grove Avenue home. It is no coincidence that an artist painted their lovely Victorian home just south of Pleasant Street, since noted artist Alfred Juergens built their home and lived in it for decades.

Unlike a traditional "headshot" of the front of their home, the



This 1961 water color by Anthony Sorce, donated by Barbara Fanta, shows the E. O. Gale House in Oak Park shortly before it was razed. (See Elizabeth Nichols' article on page 8 for more about E. O. Gale.)

The painting's donors are Kristi Sloniger and Peter Conover, long-time members who have enjoyed the painting for years but wanted it to have a permanent home in our collection. Acquired more than a decade ago and cleaned and restored by the couple, it has had a place of pride in their home. In addition to being a source of enjoyment for the couple, they also used it as a guide for choosing the paint colors for their home.



"Along the Des Plaines" by noted landscape painter Carl Weber (1851-1921) was donated to the Historical Society in 1973 by Harriet Broughton Harrold, daughter of John W. and Hattie S. Broughton who were among the first families of River Forest.

The new acquisition is on display now in the second floor gallery with a sampling of some other fine art from our collection. More than just a backdrop to our main exhibits, these paintings tell stories all their own about the artists who have enriched our local arts scene and the subjects that have fired their imagination.



Barclay Society (continued from page 1)

to ensure our museum is bursting with life and activity and not just a beautiful but lonely building.

Inaugural members of the Barclay Society were invited to attend an Oct. 24 cocktail reception at our



The last four presidents of The Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest gathered to unveil the new plaque in the foyer of the museum honoring the generous donors who made OPRF Museum a reality. Left to right are Laurel McMahon, Kelli Kline, current President Peggy Tuck Sinko, and Jan Novak Dressel.

museum to kick off the group and will be invited to attend periodic members-only special events. Jan Novak Dressel, former Historical Society president and long-time volunteer, agreed to serve as the group's chairperson and she leads a stellar committee consisting of Patricia and Ken Hunt, Dennis McMahon, Jennie Stevens, Mary Ellen Warner, and Clyde Watkins.

Call us at 708-848-6755 if you have questions or would like to join this worthy group.



History Matters

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We welcome your suggestions and comments. Please email us at:
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Illinois Association of Museums Recognizes OPRF Museum Exhibit & Long-Time Volunteers



For the second consecutive year, Oak Park River Forest Museum was honored by the Illinois Association of Museums. At the 2019 Annual IAM Conference held in Bloomington in November, OPRF Museum was given the Award of Excellence for Exhibits for *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, our current major exhibit which runs through May 2020. In 2018 we were named Small Museum of the Year.

In addition, two of OPRF Museum's stalwart and tireless volunteers were recognized for their service and dedication. Mary Ann Porucznik received the Lifetime Volunteer Award and Gary Schwab was recognized for 25 years of service to our organization.

Congratulations, Mary Ann and Gary, and thank you for all you have done and continue to do!



Mary Ann Porucznik and Gary Schwab received their awards from Illinois Association of Museums President Karen Everingham

"On My Honor": 100 Years of Girl Scouting in Oak Park and River Forest

By Peggy Tuck Sinko, President of OPRF Museum

One hundred years ago Girl Scout Troop 1 was organized at First Baptist Church in Oak Park. Opening in late March and running through the summer, the Museum's newest short-term exhibit will examine the first decade of Girl Scouting in our villages.

The first American Girl Scout troop was organized in Savannah, Georgia by Juliette Gordon Low only 8 years earlier, but the movement spread rapidly across the country. Oak Park's first Girl Scout leader was Helen Freer Morris, who has the distinction of being one of the handful of women whose name appears on the "Peace Triumphant" WWI Memorial in Scoville Park. She was a nurse who



OAK PARK'S FIRST GROUP OF GIRL SCOUTS

Photo by Hixson

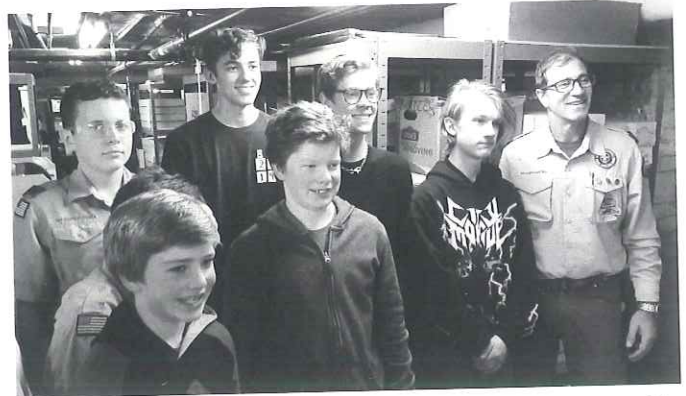
First Row, Left to Right—Pauline Robison, Bessie Gillis, Mary Kipp, Elizabeth Abbott, Nedra Hubbard.
Second Row, Left to Right—Mary Bushinger, Harriett Halaway, Frances Banthin, Virginia Solt, Mary Johns, Margaret Kirkpatrick, Jean Wisnaw, Harriet Hobbins, Marie Mitchell.
Third Row, Left to Right—Kathleen Needham, Edythe Kerns, Genevieve Fuchs, Lucina Tascher, Helen Simons, Marjorie Cook, Louise Kipp, Dorothy Verkuyle.
Fourth Row, Left to Right—Margaret Bolgar, Ruth Barney, Bessie Gillis, Margaret Powers, Eleanor Chestnut.

Oak Park's Troop 1 was pictured in Oak Leaves on October 23, 1920 supervised a tuberculosis hospital in France during World War I.

The exhibit will feature early Girl Scout activities, including the establishment of Troop 19 in River Forest in 1925; badges; camping; Oak Park's earliest recipients of the Golden Eaglet, Girl Scouting's highest award at that time; and a look at some national controversies over what were appropriate roles for girls and how they impacted an organization for girls that was run by women.

Boy Scouts Offer Time, Material, and Energy to Improve Museum Storage

In December Eliot Moore and a group of scouts from River Forest Troop 4066 from Grace Lutheran Church transformed a portion of our basement storage area. They spent a day assembling shelving



Eliot Moore (third from right) and other volunteers from Troop 4066.

units and rearranging the basement storage area in the museum, greatly increasing our storage capacity. The basement at 129 Lake Street serves as the largest storage area for the museum's collection of historic artifacts. Moore organized the much-needed project to earn his rank as Eagle Scout. A team of a dozen scouts spent an entire Saturday cleaning and dusting, moving boxes, and setting up steel shelving units, which Moore personally purchased and donated, to make the area more efficient and better organized.



The efforts of volunteers from Troop 4066 resulted in a major upgrade for OPRF Museum's basement storage area.

Still Bending and Shaping

by Rachel Berlinski, Museum Operations Manager

For those of you who were teenagers living in Oak Park or River Forest in 1969, I bet you had some memorable moments listening to music. Boy, was it a year for music! In Oak Park that summer, the Oak Park-River Forest Jaycees hosted the Wild Goose concert series in Ridgeland Commons and brought in bands like Chicagoland favorites New Colony Six, then up-and-comers Three Dog Night, and The American Breed, who had not only a smash hit on the pop charts but also a very interesting connection to Oak Park and River Forest.

That connection is Lee Graziano, the band's drummer. His family moved to River Forest shortly before he began attending Bishop Quarter Military Academy in Oak Park in the late 1950s. While there, he decided he wanted to join the school band and was told, if I may paraphrase, "Congratulations, kid, you'll be playing the French horn." He went on to high school at Fenwick and eventually discovered his knack for the drums. He joined The American Breed, a band formed in Cicero, and his brass training from Bishop Quarter paid off later in the orchestral arrangements on songs like their best-known hit "Bend Me, Shape Me." Not only is he behind the iconic beginning drumbeat of this song; he's also responsible for the knockout blow of the trumpet at the end.

After The American Breed fizzled out in 1970, he and his fellow band members began to work on a new project: a band called Rufus, as in one of the 2020 contenders for induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.



(Above) Graziano in the 1957 Bishop Quarter Yearbook
(Center) The drumhead he donated to the Museum

Although he left the band after recording their first album, Graziano fondly recalls young Chaka Khan's first days in the band, practicing at his home in Chicago's Galewood neighborhood north of Oak Park. So, support your local garage band, because you never know...

I first came across Mr. Graziano while looking through an *Oak Leaves* newspaper from July of 1969. I stopped on the cover, featuring a collage of photos from one of these Ridgeland Commons concerts, including a photo of a mass of dancing youngsters as well as a photo of a drummer looking extravagant in a satin shirt and sporting massive mutton chops. The caption for his photo said, "Lee Graziano, a native of River Forest, who plays in The American Breed band." I'm a huge fan of 60s pop, and the American Breed is one of Chicago's finest. I definitely had to find out whatever I could about this former River Forester. So I tracked down an address, sent him a fan letter asking him to visit the museum, and much to my surprise, soon he called the museum and said he'd love to visit.

He first visited this past summer and chatted with me about his time at Bishop Quarter, his long-time home in Galewood, and his years coaching hockey. Not exactly what I expected to hear from a rock musician. I was thrilled that he agreed to sign a 45 record of "Bend Me, Shape Me" and at least not think poorly of me for being star-struck. So when he offered to look for one of his old drumheads to donate to the museum as well, I was a little speechless. He's certainly a local legend in my book.

As for the Wild Goose concerts, the series began to fail when you kids out there realized that you could bypass the \$2.50 admission price and hear the music clearly enough while congregating outside the building. Rotten teenagers, always trying to beat the system!



Smooth and Pungent Stuff: Some Letters of Otto McFeely

by Robin Wardle, OPRF Museum volunteer

One fine day in November 2018, a man walked into OPRF Museum with a box. The man was Franklin Moore; the box contained letters from his grandfather, one of Oak Park's most colorful figures.

As a volunteer, I enjoy cataloguing new donations because I learn so much from the photos, letters, books, and objects about my adopted home of Oak Park. However, as I soon learned, this box was more like a jack-in-the-box where Otto McFeely popped out and started giving me his opinions about most everything. The box contained letters mostly from the 1950's written by McFeely, former editor of the *Oak Leaves*. Since then I have not had a day with his letters where I haven't laughed. Mr. McFeely wrote what he thought about religion, the media, news of the day, and Congress. He carried on a lively correspondence with authors, editors, politicians, and his family.

McFeely was born in 1875 in Marion, Indiana, and raised in a staunch Republican household. When he came to Chicago to work in journalism, he was recruited to work on the *Chicago Socialist*. In 1908 he was on the "Red Special," the campaign train for Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist candidate for President, as his press secretary. Shortly after that he joined *Oak Leaves* newspaper as a reporter and soon became its editor, serving for over three decades until his retirement in 1941. He was active in the campaigns for Adlai Stevenson when he opposed Dwight D. Eisenhower for President in 1952 and 1956.

His family received many letters from him. Most frequent in this set of letters were ones to Donald, his son, and Dennis, Donald's son. Other letters went to his daughter Jean and her husband, C. Eugene Moore

and to his brother William. The phrase "smooth and pungent stuff" comes from an unsent letter to Donald dated April 19, 1956. The letter is one of several about an article concerning "The Fifth Estate", which Otto saw as a description about an entity of some kind possibly including lawyers and unionists; in the 1960's the term referred to the counterculture, and more recently to bloggers and others in social media.



Otto McFeely, circa 1913

He would write letters to almost anyone, including President Eisenhower, Senator Joseph McCarthy, Ernest Hemingway, and others. Letters to the Editor of the Chicago papers are frequent; he also wrote to *The Saturday Review*, *Life* magazine, and other publications. Never one to mince words, he would state his opinion forcefully, while pointing out the deficiencies of the author's point of view.

Besides the above letters, he was a frequent correspondent with Robert St. John, who at the time lived in Switzerland, and travelled to the Middle East, Africa, among other places. St. John was a journalist, radio newsman, and author of numerous books. St. John grew up in Oak Park, but in their

letters St. John sometimes signs himself as Sinjin, a light-hearted phonetic spelling of the British pronunciation of his last name.

Mr. McFeely had some ungentle things to say sometimes, as with this letter.

Excerpts from Senator Wiley letter, June 1951:

"I looked forward to seeing and hearing the Senate Crime Committee. This morning I did." "Those negroes, dope fiends and the colored welfare worker were so clearly articulate, so prompt and clear in their answers, so intelligent in replying and so ready to admit it when they did not know."

*"Then you and the other senators spoke.
The difference was striking and appalling.*

You senators are among the most powerful men in the world.

But you fumble the language. You struggle with you vocabulary. You uttered no words to indicate you comprehended the nuances.

You humed [sic] and hawed, erred and erred and monkeyed around with your questions and discussions in a manner to shock one who realizes your powerful positions.

If your language is evidence I fear for my country. You Senator Wiley seemed exceptionally lost and hopeless."

Then there was the gentle but uncompromising barb:

*To Mr. Ernest Hemingway,
November 1957.*

"Sir - This note is the result of a visit to my house by your sistet [sic] from Detroit.

After she left it occurred to me that but two native sons of this village, the Middle Class Capital of the World, had ever burst through the crust of obscurity into international distinction with their names in dictionaries and encyclopedias.

*The two;
Charles Jules [Julius] Guiteau
Ernest Hemingway*

[Guiteau was the assassin of President James A. Garfield. A line dismisses Frank Lloyd Wright with "Unfortunately Mr. Wright was a foreigner from Wisconsin."] He goes on:

"It would be a nice historical event if you could find Guiteau's grave and lay a flower for your brother in dictionaries."

The letter concludes with a postscript: "Oak Park is a fertile field for a Dostoevski. Too bad you did not cultivate it."

[Guiteau was born in Freeport, IL and lived in Oak Park for a time with his sister Frances, who married into the Scoville family. For more on Frances, see the Spring 2019 issue of our newsletter, on our website oprfmuseum.org.]

Otto had feet of clay:

A letter from the Encyclopedia Britannica, dated March 1954, says

"Certainly the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA is an acceptable authority but you must be sure that you do not simply transcribe or condense the material. In other words, the writing in your book must be your own unless you are making direct quotations."

He was prescient, too, as witnessed by this:

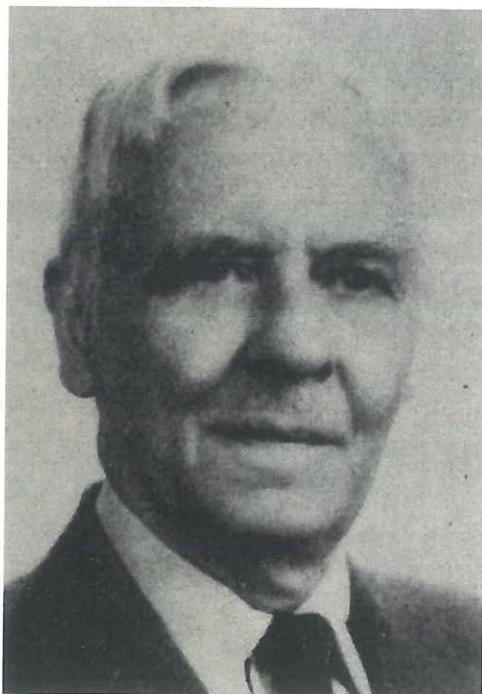
In November, 1957, he wrote to I. F. Stone, the producer of *I. F. Stone's Weekly*. He noted that V. I.

Lenin had looked for the most talented students and gave them an education "at the expense of the national government." Continuing on, he says that in the US, "talented students without parental help must work their way through school." His final paragraph: "It seems to me that we should quit flubdubbing around and provide the higher learning for all students who can take it..."

He was a reformer, using the bully pulpit of the *Oak Leaves* to fight for the Mother's Pension and clean, paved alleys; he also was instrumental in establishing the DesPlaines Mosquito Abatement District (MAD) in 1927. Clearly,

the idea of meeting such challenges head-on was right up McFeely's alley! The results of all three are still around today: investment in alleys is a major project of the Village, the Mother's Pension can be seen in Aid to Dependent Children laws, and the DesPlaines MAD, now an obscure taxing body on local tax bills, still works to control mosquitos. One of his more enjoyable letters was his detailed analysis of his use of a car given him by the board of trustees of the MAD.

The family has more boxes containing the paper trail of Otto's life, and I hope to be able to spend more time digging through the record of Otto McFeely and bringing my results to you.



Otto McFeely, circa 1950

Old Scrapbooks Are Treasure Troves and Troublemakers

By Elizabeth Nichols, OPRF Museum Archivist

Among the plethora of artifacts in Oak Park River Forest Museum's collection, scrapbooks are a source of endless wonder and frustration. Scrapbooks are bound pages meant to collect an organization or individual's memories, usually represented by glued-



Edwin Oscar Gale, circa 1890

on documents, newspaper clippings, and photographs. They capture the character of their subject in unique and unexpected ways, presenting the history of a person or group as they wished it to be told. Scrapbooks sometimes contain historic materials that do not exist anywhere else.

These same, cherished scrapbooks are also in constant danger of falling to pieces.

With few exceptions, the materials used to bind and compile scrapbooks are not meant to last for generations. As I discussed in my 2019 seminar *Preserving Your Family History*, scrapbook paper is naturally acidic, which means it quickly breaks down over time. The brittle brown pages of an old newspaper, crumbling at the mere touch of a finger, are a classic example of highly acidic paper. The glue that adheres precious memories to scrapbook pages can also speed up the deterioration of the paper, and even damage documents or photographs in the long run. In addition, the materials used to bind the scrapbook can break and cause the paper to crack and tear.

Scrapbooks created in the 19th and early 20th centuries are especially notorious for their brittle, easily torn pages. The invention of cheap wood pulp

paper in the 19th century resulted in the widespread use of highly acidic paper that started to degrade in as little as ten years. We have several examples of these early scrapbooks at OPRF Museum, and each has its own unique preservation challenges.

One of my favorite scrapbooks in our collection falls into that category. Edwin Oscar Gale (1832–1913), better known as E.O. Gale, was the son of pioneer settlers in Chicago and Oak Park. He attended school at Fort Dearborn, and later became a druggist with his own firm of Gale & Blocki at the Palmer House in Chicago. E.O. Gale and his family lived on the northwest corner of Lake St. and Kenilworth Ave. in Oak Park. Gale's scrapbook makes him at once a genealogist, historian, author, and poet. He curated his scrapbook to reflect his interests and family history while also capturing pivotal moments in local and national history. It is unclear exactly when the scrapbook was compiled, but based on its acidic covers, binding, and pages—and the fact that the bulk of the materials are from the 1800s—our best evidential guess is that it was created in the mid to



Gale's scrapbook includes this newspaper with a faint note scribbled at the top: "This was the first newspaper printed after the fire."

late 19th century.

Turning through the fragile, brown pages of E.O. Gale's scrapbook, one finds such notable materials as an 1800 *Ulster County* (New York) *Gazette* newspaper; his father Abram's War of 1812 commemorative ribbon and 1822 Independent Boston Fusiliers membership certificate; an 1862 two dollar bill from the Confederate States of America; an 1865 *New York*

(Continued on page 9)

Herald newspaper decrying the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln; the front page of the October, 9 1871 *Evening Journal* (the first newspaper printed after the Great Chicago Fire); and an 1872 *Dedication Services* flyer for Oak Park's Unity Church. Numerous articles on early Chicago history are also included and denote Gale's particular interest in the subject. Surrounding these historic gems are articles about the births, lives, and deaths of the Gale family and their relatives: a treasure trove for genealogists and researchers.



Abram Gale's Independent Boston Fusiliers membership certificate

When Kathryn Schock Gale (1906–1993) donated it to the Historical Society of OPRF in 1989, the scrapbook's inherent acidity had already caused the pages and materials inside to

deteriorate. The cover of the scrapbook is scratched and worn, and its decorative marble design and leather accents are peeling away in layers (a process called delamination). The spine is torn, and the pages inside are wrinkled and cracking at the edges. The acidic newspaper print inside is even more brittle than the scrapbook pages themselves, and some loose articles only survive in pieces. Most notably, the adhesive that E.O. Gale used to glue materials to the pages of scrapbook has warped both the scrapbook paper and the materials themselves.

In spite of its condition, the incredible historic materials inside the scrapbook—and the importance of E.O. Gale to both Chicago and Oak Park history—warrant its preservation. The key to keeping this valuable scrapbook in as stable a condition as possible is to store it in an “acid-free” container at a consistent, cool temperature with low humidity. “Acid-free” storage containers, also called archival-grade storage containers, are pH neutral, which means that they will not contribute to the deterioration of stored materials over time. First, Gale's scrapbook is wrapped in archival-grade tissue, and then placed in an appropriately sized “acid-free” box. Any intact newspaper articles that were not adhered to the

scrapbook are then enclosed in pH neutral, clear polyester sleeves, and placed on top of the closed scrapbook inside the box. The box is stored flat to reduce the amount of stress on the scrapbook's binding, and consistently kept at a cool temperature with low humidity on metal shelving in the Fields Research Center. With these preservation methods, OPRF Museum staff can ensure that E.O. Gale's scrapbook will be accessible to researchers for as long as possible.

Scrapbooks present us with a strange contradiction. We use them to keep mementos and memories, intending that they should be saved, remembered, and shared. Yet these same scrapbooks are victims of their own acidic construction, and instead can become as ephemeral as the moments in time that they are supposed to capture. E.O. Gale himself spilled a lot of ink ruminating on the passage of time, and how he would remember and write about years gone by. At age 74, he compiled his poems into a book called *Falling Leaves: A Collection of Poetic Reflections*, published in 1906. E.O. Gale's scrapbook, too, is an unpublished companion to *Falling Leaves*, bringing us back to the yesterdays of his life. In his poem “Prelude,” he at once describes his impetus to publish his work and to compile scrapbooks:

*Oh! if a single leaf can give
To one his hours of gladness,
Recalling the days he used to live
Beyond his nights of sadness,
May “Falling Leaves” to you restore
What gave childhood pleasure,
Bring back those yesterdays once more,
The heart so loves to treasure.*

Paging through E.O. Gale's scrapbook more than a century after he compiled it is a fascinating and worthwhile experience. It puts the visitor in conversation with E.O. Gale, immersing them in the pioneer-historian's 19th century world. In turn, OPRF Museum staff will act as responsible stewards for all of the collection's scrapbooks, preserving the browned “leaves” of memories for years to come. With proper preservation methods, we can make the ephemeral last, and as an archivist I find that a very worthwhile endeavor.



Mark Your Calendar for These Great

Violin duo Synchronia brings classic love songs to Museum on Feb. 13

The sweet sound of violins will bring OPRF Museum to life on Thursday Feb. 13 at 7:30 p.m. to kick off Valentine's Day weekend.

Violinists Kathryn Siegel and Marty Hackl, who perform as *Synchronia*, will play classic love songs from stage and screen on the eve of this lovely holiday. So bring a friend or your significant other for a night of live music and refreshments.

Siegel has been performing internationally for more than two decades on concert stages around the




Kathryn Siegel & Marty Hackl

world, including tours of Europe and South America. She is currently a member of Elgin Symphony Orchestra and Rockford Symphony Orchestra.

Hackl, a former Oak Park resident and Historical Society volunteer, has performed for many years as a recitalist and a member of several notable ensembles,

including Chicago Chamber Orchestra, Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, Northwest Indiana Symphony, and Rockford Symphony Orchestra.

Tickets are \$10 for members, \$15 for others. Order on-line at oprfmuseum.org, or by calling 708-848-6755 or at the museum that evening if not yet sold out. Space is limited. 

Frame Warehouse owner shares stories of "Framing History" on Feb. 15

Most people have a piece of family history they like to display proudly or to pull out of a photo album to share with family or friends. These pieces are treasured possessions, but they often need special care if they are to survive for future generations.

For more than 35 years, Frame Warehouse at Harrison and Ridgeland in Oak Park has been


helping residents preserve, repair, and display their photos, documents, artwork, and even textiles. Owner Paul Hamer, an Oak Park resident who also owns a store in Evanston, has been involved in the community in many ways including past service on the boards of the Oak Park Housing Center and the Historical Society of OPRF.

Hamer will share stories of the work he has done through the years and offer tips for caring for and displaying photos, posters, documents, and other fragile items.



Paul Hamer with a map that Frame Warehouse stabilized for OPRF Museum

The presentation begins at 3 p.m. at OPRF Museum on Saturday, Feb. 15 as part of the museum's "3rd Saturday at 3 Series." There will be time for questions after the talk, so you can ask about your own unique family objects that may need conservation or framing. We'll also unveil two 1920s Oak Park maps that have been stabilized and preserved by Frame Warehouse on a pro bono basis.

This event is free to OPRF Museum members and \$7 for non-members (\$5 for OPRF residents), which includes the chance to wander the museum and check out exhibits before and after the program. 


"Fair Housing," "Integration," "Diversity," and "Equity" in Housing: What's Next? on Feb. 22

Fifty years ago, Oak Park was in the first chapter of its reinvention as a welcoming community for people of all races. For the past two years, our *Open House* exhibit has put the spotlight on this important story and how it fits into the "big picture" of race relations as they have played out over the past 125 years. But what's next when it comes to this important topic and what are the issues we need to address in the new decade of the 2020s?

Events Coming in February & March

Fair Housing... (continued from page 10)

In 2019, community controversies included the aftermath of the documentary *America to Me*, disputed taxes funding for the Housing Center, and divisiveness over language used in the so-called community Diversity Statement. This panel will explore how the community might find positive ways forward and re-commit to the optimism of the 1968 Fair Housing ordinance.

This Black History Month panel discussion will begin at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 22. Admission is free, with donations appreciated. 

Emilie LeBeau Lucchesi tells a tale of justice gone wrong on March 21

In 1923 Sabella Nitti, an Italian immigrant, became the first woman sentenced to death in Cook County. She had been convicted for the murder of her husband. A 24-year-old attorney from Oak Park




Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi

named Helen Cirese, herself the daughter of Italian immigrants, stepped forward to fight for Sabella Nitti's life. Cirese put her own promising future at risk defending this unpopular client who the courts, the press, and the public all assumed was guilty.

Author and journalist

Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi, tells the whole riveting story in her book, *Ugly Prey*. On Saturday, March 21, Lucchesi will share the tale with us and tell us more about the career of Oak Park's Helen Cirese.

Lucchesi holds a PhD in communication from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has written for dozens of newspapers and magazines, including *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Discover Magazine* and *The Atlantic*. She currently is Visiting Assistant Professor of Communication at North Central College in Naperville.

Lucchesi's presentation starts at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 21, and is free for members. Regular Museum admission rates apply for all others. 

"A Night at Your Museum" presents gallery talks, previews, stories, & more

OPRF Museum is open from 7 until 8:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month for *A Night at Your Museum*. It's a fun, casual mid-week "evening out" and a great opportunity to visit the Museum if you can't come during our regular daytime hours.

Each First Wednesday will feature an informal gallery talk offering a "behind the scenes" peek at your OPRF Museum. Whether it's a look at an historic artifact, a story from our community's past, or a sneak preview of an exhibit or event, you'll get a glimpse into both the history of our villages and the operation of OPRF Museum. Here is what's coming up on First Wednesdays:

February 5- Sarah Doherty and Frank Lipo, co-curators of the award-winning exhibit *Open House: The Legacy of Fair Housing*, kick-off Black History Month by sharing insights about the exhibit and the broader story of African Americans who have shaped our community through the decades. Find out about plans for a traveling version of the exhibit and share your ideas for exhibits in 2020 and beyond.

March 4- The building known today as Trailside Museum has been a landmark in River Forest for 140 years. Learn a little bit about what we know— and what we don't know— about the couple who built this historic building.

April 1- Get a sneak preview of the 2020 edition of the annual "Tales Our Houses Tell" Spring HouseWalk that will take place on Sunday May 3. Find out where the walk will take place, why the area was selected, and a peek at the houses on the walk.

Admission is always free for OPRF Museum members. Regular Museum admission prices apply for all others. Doors open at 7:00 with speaker programs starting at 7:30.



This marvelous home will be on the 2020 "Tales Our Houses Tell" HouseWalk



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Preserving history and changing with the times

Oak Park River Forest High School is a central institution of our joint community and its striking architecture, shown here in a circa 1950 postcard, sets it apart from many other cookie-cutter schools located around metro Chicago. But beginning in 2020, the most significant building renovation in 50 years will add an addition to the west side along East Avenue for a new Student Commons and Student Resource Center, among other proposed changes. Our communities are always evolving, even as we hold on to valued parts of our heritage. Our archives and museum contains a large selection of materials about OPRF High School, including yearbooks, photos and memorabilia. And OPRF Museum is a great place to host a reunion event or to visit as part of a reunion weekend. We also preserve so much history from so many other facets of our villages, even as we keep on evolving to tell your stories. Pop over to 129 Lake St. today and find out more!

Make a New Year's resolution to visit us in 2020!

Our museum's exhibits, research center, and gift shop are open to the public Wednesdays through Saturdays between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Just walk in and enjoy our latest exhibits or ask us your local history question. (For large research projects call first so we can better help you.) Staff and volunteers are in the museum Mondays and Tuesdays, too, working on projects, and can frequently answer your questions or sell you something in the gift shop. So call or email if you need an appointment Mondays or Tuesdays. But that's not all! Our website is open 24/7, with information about our latest exhibits and programs and lots of stories about the people and places that make us so unique. Our on-line store offers a wide range of photos and merchandise. Check it out around the clock!



Some of the OPRF Huskie Booster Club merchandise available through the OPRF Museum Store. Shop in person or order online at oprfmuseum.org.