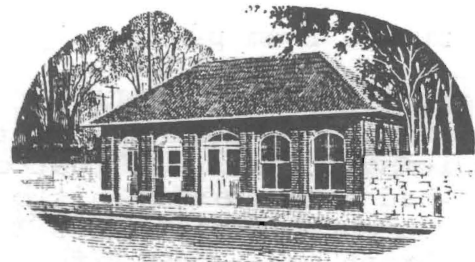


HYDE PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter



Volume I, Number 3

July, 1979

**BIGGER &
BETTER**

Welcome to our Super Summer issue. It offers over twice as much reading as the Newsletters we have published previously. Designed to entertain and inform you while you laze in hammock or porch chair, it is also substantial enough to prop tent-like over your face as a shield from summer sun.

Our special thanks go to the authors of our signed articles. Any reader who would enjoy an occasional writing assignment comparable to these is invited—no urged—to telephone Muriel Beadle at 493-2119, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

JOYCE FOUNDATION GRANT

The campaign to raise the money necessary for the renovation of the Hyde Park Historical Society headquarters, the 19th century cable car station at 5529 Lake Park Ave., is going forward.

To date our efforts have been rewarded with a \$2500 grant from The Joyce Foundation. Proposals are being sent to other foundations, and fund-raising activity will continue throughout the summer. □

Henry Who?

PUNNY PARTIES HONOR NOVELIST FULLER

By Mary Hynes-Berry

Early this year, the Committee for Fuller Recognition of the Deservedly Obscure sent out invitations to honor the 122nd birthday (Jan. 9) of Henry Blake Fuller, the mildly well-known Chicago author and Hyde Park resident. The appointed night (Jan. 13) came, along with the Blizzard of '79 and 40 guests.

This was the third birthday party given by my husband and me since we discovered that, 50 years ago this summer, Fuller died of a heart attack in a room he rented in our house. Before happening by chance on this information, we had never heard of Fuller. Since then, we have learned a lot.

One delightful source, which we acquired, is a 1927 letter from Fuller to Mrs. Lorado Taft. In it, he mentions moving to 5411 So. Harper Ave., with "Mrs. Ryan, but American" as his landlady.

After reading all the way through some of his eight novels (including the two he wrote in our upstairs bedroom), we decided that Fuller was

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✂ GUEST OF HONOR'S GHOST HASN'T YET MANIFESTED ITSELF

Continued from previous page

a competent not brilliant writer of some historical interest. It was exciting to discover that one's house had had a brush with history. It was somehow realistic to learn that the brush was—like life is so often—of passionate interest to those involved and forgotten by everyone else.

The most appropriate reaction was to celebrate the Deservedly Obscure. Although Henry was a notoriously shy bachelor, there was always the off-chance that his ghost might join in the festivities. But, alas, Henry didn't manifest himself at the first party. Nor, at the second, did he attend the premiere performance of a hitherto undiscovered manuscript entitled The Brushman Cometh (which bore a remarkable textual resemblance to the letter in the Berrys' possession).

It was on the agenda of this year's gathering to decide if Fuller should be promoted to the status of Free Spirit. The title is granted to only the most deservedly obscure. So, once the evening had sufficiently progressed, the group was asked to debate before voting a recommendation to the Powers-That-Be. Debate they did.

One faction argued heatedly that the man who wrote the first realistic novel with Chicago as its setting (With the Procession), who wrote another which became the name of a famous club (The Cliff Dwellers), who was admired by such writers and critics as Hamlin Garland, Theodore Dreiser and Edmund Wilson, who greatly aided Harriet Monroe in the editorial work of Poetry magazine, and who counted Lorado Taft as a close friend--such a man did not deserve obscurity.

Others argued that perhaps obscurity was deserved when academics who had devoted their careers to the man made comments like: "Whenever a critic needed another example of arrested literary development, all he had to do was to point to Henry B. haunting the fringes of literary recognition." (Charles Silet)

Still a third set pointed out that the previous birthday parties had seriously threatened Fuller's obscurity, no matter how well deserved.

The secret ballots were counted. A majority had voted to make Henry a Free Spirit. Even so, when the lights were dimmed and the 122 candles lit, Henry still didn't feel free to waft down the stairs and blow them out. Maybe next year . . . □

**SPECTACLE AND HISTORICAL DRAMA
AT SPRINGFIELD**

At 9 PM every evening except Mondays until September 8 (weather permitting), "Sound and Light at the Old State Capitol" will be presented free of charge at the handsomely restored Old State Capitol building in Springfield. The 45-min. electronic production, now in its fourth season, was narrated by the late Lee J. Cobb and focuses on the fateful issues facing Abraham Lincoln and the nation in 1860.

"Your Obedient Servant, A. Lincoln" is also in its fourth season at Kelso Hollow Theater in New Salem. The play is presented nightly except Mondays through August 25. For ticket information, write The Great American People Show, Box 401, Petersburg, IL 62675, or telephone 217-632-7755. □

CALL FOR GIFTS!

Many libraries store historical material



By Victor Dyer

What sort of historical materials should community libraries or historical societies collect? What should the relationship be between historical society and library, especially when the one collects and the other stores the material?


At a May 16 conference on local history, sponsored by the Chicago Historical Society, speakers included Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, Assistant Archivist in the Special Collections Division of the Chicago Public Library.

She reported that 15 major historical collections—most of them dating from the 1930's—are now housed in branch libraries. Typically, these collections originated with neighborhood historical societies, some of which have gone out of existence. (The Woodlawn Historical Society is an example.)

Ms. Schoelwer's remarks stimulated a lively discussion of public library/historical society relationships and obligations. It was evident that clear guidelines are necessary, with special attention given to the disposal of collections if a historical society should become defunct.

Information and ideas from this conference will aid the Hyde Park Historical Society Board of Directors in planning our acquisitions policies. The Acquisitions Committee (Jean Block, Kathleen Conzen, Victor Dyer and Albert

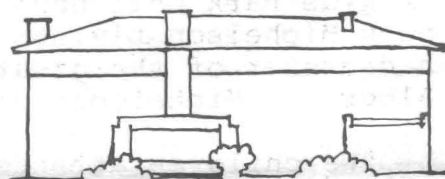
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WEDDING BELLS
rang out on June 5, 1885, for Ina Ott, 5146 S. Harper Ave., and architect W. I. Beman.

According to the Hyde Park Herald, "Presents included an upright piano, an elegant oak cabinet, a hammered wood hod, an oriental water pitcher, a decorated French butter dish, cut glass and Bohemian glass fruit dishes, an embroidered piano cover, a French mantel clock and a rocking chair."

Rosenwald UPDATE



Efforts to save the historic and architecturally significant Julius Rosenwald house at 4901 Ellis Ave. have gained momentum in recent months.

Representatives of the Committee to Save the Rosenwald House have met with Fourth Ward Alderman Timothy C. Evans, Kenwood community leaders and the owner of the property.

The committee has widely distributed a statement contending that the only economically feasible way to preserve the building is to permit it to be sold as three condominium units, one on each floor.

To date, 770 people, more than 270 of whom live in the immediate vicinity of the Rosenwald house, have endorsed the statement and joined the committee. If you would like to do likewise, send your name and address on a postcard to the head of the committee, Victoria Post Ranney, 4915 Woodlawn Ave.

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Early Black Music in U.S. did have Roots in Africa

By Muriel Beadle

"The break from their African cultures was so abrupt and so complete that slaves who were brought to the United States were in effect without any culture. White society, especially missionaries, was the source of whatever music they later developed." True or false? FALSE.

On May 6, members of the Hyde Park Historical Society heard Dena Epstein, music librarian at Regenstein Library, and Ruth Fouché, ethnologist at the DuSable Museum of Afro-American History, discuss "Myths of Black Music." Our thanks to both for an enlightening presentation.

Our speakers said that the erroneous statement above derives from the fact that incoming slaves had no common languages. What they did have, however, were mutually comprehensible tonal systems. They also had the traditional musical instruments of their homelands—cannily provided by slave traders to encourage dancing by their human cargo during the long sea voyage. The slaves arrived in better condition if they exercised enroute.

O tempora! O mores!

Two delightful excerpts from "A Hyde Park Childhood," by Dorothy Michelson Livingston, who is a daughter of the great physicist Albert A. Michelson:

"We children attended the Laboratory School, [which] was called the University Elementary School when I entered there for first grade in 1912. We were taught the nursery rhymes in Latin, and in sixty-eight years I have not forgotten: Domina Maria, tota contraria/Quibiti crescit in horto?"

*

"My sisters and I were taken to hear Frederic Stock conduct the Thomas concerts at Orchestra Hall. We saw Pavlova do her famous 'Dying Swan'. We heard Galli-Curci sing and saw Joseph Schildkraut play in 'Lilliom'. But my personal taste was for a more vulgar form of entertainment. Whenever possible I escaped to the Frolic Movie House on Fifty-fifth Street, where for ten cents I saw hero William S. Hart rescue maiden Blanche Sweet from the villain..."

--from the University of Chicago Alumni Magazine, Winter Quarter '79

Nor did spirituals make up the bulk of the slaves' later American music. They also had secular music, the "sinful tunes" in the title of Dena Epstein's recent book, Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War (University of Illinois Press). Until recently, the existence of such music during the antebellum years was so poorly documented that Mrs. Epstein's book is being highly praised by other experts in her field.

*

Its site added additional interest to the May 6 meeting. At the turn of the century, when Washington Park was one of the jewels of the Chicago Park District, the building that is now the DuSable Museum was the park's Administration Building.

It overlooked a sunken garden, of which only the formal pathways and edging balustrades remain today. There is no trace at all of the handsome conservatory that was once situated at right angles to the Administration Building, just east of the sunken garden. □

Our Roving Reporter

SOUTH SIDE TOUR VISITS FAMOUS OLD NEIGHBORHOODS

By Lesley Bloch

If you have always wanted to know

... where the original Magnificent Mile was

... where there is a statue of President McKinley which—before it was melted down, re-cast, and moved to a new location—depicted Christopher Columbus

... where the garbage dump mentioned in Upton Sinclair's The Jungle used to be...

you should have been on the bus with Dominick Pacyga for the Chicago Historical Society tour, "People and Industry on the South Side" on Saturday, June 9.

The four-hour excursion focused on changes in industry, land use and movements of ethnic groups. In the Near Loop area we looked at the abandoned industrial buildings, wondering if plans for Soho in Chicago would attract tenants whose activities will make the area live again.

When passing the old Dearborn St. Station, we heard about the neighborhood of the future which is being built on railroad land, and how the station will be a school and a community center. Viewing these wide open spaces, we found it difficult to visualize the area in the days

when the great trains were coming through Chicago and industrialists were benefiting from the closeness of the Loop, the river, the workers and the trains.

Further south, we saw the remnants of Prairie Avenue and understood how encroaching industry and the noise and dirt of the trains closed the grand houses and drove the people away.

On to the Stockyard neighborhoods of Bridgeport, McKinley, Back of the Yards and Canaryville (Irish nickname for hogs). Here we heard about the importance of the parish church, the ward office, the tavern, the drugstore and the funeral parlor in the life of the community.

A busy Saturday afternoon on West 47th St. attested to ethnic variety, with shop signs in Polish, Lithuanian and Spanish. Only we tourists seemed to be bothered by pungent fumes from a fertilizer plant which has replaced the stockyards and their much heavier odors.

All the live animal pens are gone (except one for animals destined to be koshered in Philadelphia). Land where thousands of people once labored has been left to go wild or to become sites for small industries or sprawling truck lots employing a few hundred people.

As our tour continued, we learned about physical barriers such as expressways, railroad tracks, sports arenas; and how everything changes once you cross the boundaries between them. Each ethnic group is memorialized in churches, synagogues and other institutions. We traced the movements of the Irish, for example, through the architectural grandeur of their buildings as they (and we, in 1979) went west on Garfield Blvd.

Our guide defined a "corridor neighborhood" for us; showed us some streets without character and some with the wrong kind of character (too many fast food outlets, parking to page 8



HISTORY AS ART: BADGES TO BOATERS TO BOOKS

By Clyde Watkins

Those who visited the 57th Street Art Fair this year were blessed with two special treats. The weather was the nicest in memory, and the Hyde Park Historical Society had a patriotic booth selling a full line of "dry goods."

There were items catering to the budget of every age group, from badges to boaters to books. Especially popular were the new HPHS t-shirts, displaying a picture of our headquarters-to-be. Also available were handsome prints of the building, suitable for framing. These pictorial subjects were particularly appropriate because all profits will go toward the renovation project.

Behind the counter, a progression of volunteers from our ranks handled sales totaling over \$800. Our thanks to: Theresa McDermott, Linnea Anderson, Kathleen and Michael Conzen, Tom Jensen, Cheryl and Clyde Watkins, Donald Miller, Christine O'Neill, Tom and Georgene Pavelec, Margaret Fallers, Betty Davey, and Jean Block. Their enthusiasm also helped recruit 36 new members from among the passing throngs.

Next to our booth was a display on the Rosenwald House, including an excellent scale model by Kenwood Academy senior Josh Gerick. After many hours and repeated explanations of the issues, the Committee to Save the Rosenwald House had secured another 300 signatures!

If you missed your chance to purchase Hyde Park Historical Society paraphernalia, don't fret. We have some left, and will be offering them at future meetings and other events. □

HISTORICAL MATERIAL....from page 3

Tannler) is considering several possible locations for future archival and book collections of the Society.

In the meantime we are anxious to begin assembling histories of local institutions, pamphlets, biographical materials on residents of the community, scrapbooks, photographs, posters, etc. The committee would be happy to consider gifts of these and other historical materials relating to Hyde Park-Kenwood.

Call Kathleen Conzen at 285-2181 to describe or discuss your possible contribution. □



U.S. HOUSING IS AGING

According to the News Service of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, more than a third of the nation's housing was built before World War II.

Of the 80 million year-round housing units, 34% were constructed before 1940. Of the 48 million owner-occupied units, 29% pre-date 1940. And 43% of the 26 million renter-occupied units are more than 40 years old.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, from the 1976 annual housing survey. □



HONORS LIST

The Chicago Foundation for Literature Award has been given by Friends of Literature to HPHS President Jean Block for "her carefully researched and handsomely illustrated book Hyde Park Houses, a wonderful source book and guide to the architecture of an area where the past is present to be understood and enjoyed." The book was published by the University of Chicago Press.

*

The American Institute of Architects this year presented six of its 15 Honor Awards to historical preservation projects. One of them was the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center at Michigan and Randolph.

Tours of this handsomely restored building are offered by the Friends of the Library on Thursdays at 11 AM and 1 PM and on Sundays at 1:30. Groups of 10 or more may schedule tours at other times. Call 269-2922 between 10 AM and 4 PM during the business week.

*

The Illinois State Historical Society gave its Award of Merit for local and regional history to HPHS Board member Devereux Bowly, Jr. for his book, The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976 (Southern Illinois University Press).

Describing the book as "carefully researched", the citation said further: "Although it deals with the Chicago experience, it has implications for all cities faced with the problem of providing housing for poor people."

NOW AVAILABLE BY MAIL

CITY HOUSE GUIDE

City House: A Guide to Renovating Older Chicago-area Houses is the printed sequel to the popular "City House" exhibition at Navy Pier in February, about which we had an article in our last Newsletter.

The Guide, a treasury of information and advice, has been published by the city's Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, 320 No. Clark St., Room 800, Chicago, IL 60610. It can be ordered by mail for \$5.45. □

ROSENWALD....

from page 3

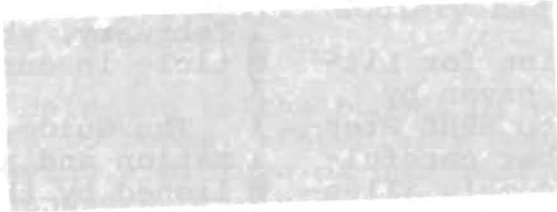
Mrs. Ranney is associate editor of the papers of famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead and chairperson of the Illinois Humanities Council. Other organizers of the committee include Edna Epstein, 1120 E. 50th St.; John McDermott, 4811 Kimbark Ave.; and Gary Husted, 4900 Ellis Ave.

The Rosenwald house was open to the public in May as part of the Ancona School Kenwood House Tour. Visitors were glad to see that it is in good condition despite the fact that it has not been occupied for more than two years.

With the increasing interest in local history and in preserving significant architecture, it is hoped by the HPHS Board of Directors that soon the Rosenwald house will again be occupied. Its preservation will give future generations some insight into the life of a most remarkable civil rights leader and philanthropist. □

The Hyde Park Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly.

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Sierra Club Book Tells the History of the Great Lakes

Reviewing Jonathan Ela's The Faces of the Great Lakes in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Orvetta M. Robinson of the Illinois State Museum describes as "absorbing" this account of the ecological, geological and human history of our great inland "river of lakes."

Published by the Sierra Club and priced at \$24.50, this beautiful book includes a preface by conservationist Sigurd Olson and 87 pages of photographs by B.A. King, "arranged by region from East to West, from the Thousand Islands to Duluth; remarkable photographs [which] depict not only the natural landscape but also the cultural phenomena." Ms. Robinson says this is much more than a good coffee table book (although it is that too). □

Chicago Tribune, Nov. 13, 1881:
"Yesterday, in Hyde Park, a horse belonging to Oloff Johnson was frightened by a bicycle and ran away, throwing George Johnson, a young lad, out of the wagon and fracturing his arm."

SOUTH SIDE TOUR... from page 5

lots and gas stations are almost sure to ruin the neighborhood); and said that electing to stay in a changing neighborhood can be cause for growth. Hyde Parkers who lived through urban renewal here would surely agree.

For your own guide to changes in Chicago, look for Dominick Pacyga's and Glen Holt's Chicago—A Historical Guide to Neighborhoods, to be published this month by the Chicago Historical Society. Paperbound \$7.95 □